



COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN PRIMER



Re: PUBLIC
urbanism

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION 1.0	INTRODUCTION	1
SECTION 2.0	THE COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN	2-6
2.1	What is a CIP?	2
2.2	Legislative Authority	2-3
2.3	What does a CIP Look Like?	4
2.4	Plan & Incentive Program Administration	5-6
SECTION 3.0	CREATING A CIP	7 - 11
3.1	Getting Started	7
3.2	Steering the Process	8
3.3	Branding	8
3.4	Gathering Data, Refining Key Issues, & Identifying a CIPA	8-9
3.5	Drafting the Plan	9-10
3.6	Adopting the Plan	10
3.7	Implementation & Monitoring	11
APPENDIX A	INCENTIVE PROGRAM EXAMPLES	12 - 23
A.1	Tax Increment Grant (TIG)	13
A.2	Façade Improvement	14
A.3	Landscaping	15
A.4	Housing	16
A.5	Structural Improvements / Code Compliance	17
A.6	Rural Focused	18
A.7	Sustainability	19
A.8	Heritage	20
A.9	Brownfields	21
A.10	Development Charges / Permit Fee Rebates	22
A.11	“Win This Space”	23
APPENDIX B	CIPA BY-LAW EXAMPLE	24 - 26



SECTION 1

Introduction

Across Ontario, municipalities are striving to maintain the continued economic health and vitality of their communities. This is no small task, as they must face a number of challenges associated with adapting to an everchanging economic landscape, balancing social responsibility with feasibility, as well as addressing the impacts of climate change on the local and global environment. In an effort to address these challenges, communities across the province are seeking out ways to:

- foster business and public interest in downtowns/main street areas;
- encourage heritage conservation, education, and preservation;
- promote a well-designed public realm and public spaces;
- support healthier lifestyles and less vehicular-orientated spaces;
- provide a more accessible and affordable housing mix; and/or,
- create innovative development strategies to help diversify and grow the economy.

More often than not, many of these goals can prove very difficult to achieve, especially for smaller municipalities who are tasked with balancing tighter resources, budgets, and strong competition from their (often larger) municipal counterparts.

Considering this, it is important that municipalities take advantage of all available tools to help them face these challenges head-on and achieve their goals. One of the more common tools used by Ontario municipalities is the Community Improvement Plan or “CIP”. A

CIP, as its name would suggest, is a municipally adopted plan that identifies an area (or areas) of a municipality in need of physical improvement, and gives a municipality the authority to facilitate improvements in these areas with help from the private sector; most notably by providing incentives to businesses and property owners.

To date, two of Middlesex County’s eight local municipalities have adopted a CIP (Strathroy-Caradoc & Middlesex Centre). To support all municipalities within the County in determining if a CIP is right for them, Middlesex County has retained Re: Public Urbanism to produce this primer on CIPs to be used as a reference by the County and local municipalities. This document seeks to provide a general overview of what a CIP is, how it works, as well as some guidance on how local municipalities can approach the creation of their own.

SECTION 2

The Community Improvement Plan

2.1 WHAT IS A CIP?

A Community Improvement Plan (CIP) is a powerful tool used by Ontario municipalities to facilitate the (re)development, rehabilitation, and/or revitalization of selected areas in a community. This is done by identifying a Community Improvement Project Area (CIPA), where the plan will be focused, and encouraging physical improvement projects that will benefit the public realm. Depending on the community, the overall vision for the plan area could be increasing commercial activity on a main street, promoting (re)development of vacant, underutilized, or former industrial lands, or even generally improving the economic landscape for targeted sectors throughout the entire municipality. Whatever the vision may be, a CIP will clearly identify the goals, initiatives/interventions, and tools that the municipality can pursue to achieve its vision for an area.

Most CIPs today provide a selection of financial incentive programs specially tailored to encourage property or building owners to undertake improvement projects that are aligned with the goals and vision of the plan. These programs typically offer grants to assist with eligible projects such as façade improvements, signage, landscaping, or even professional studies or fees (see **Appendix A** for more examples of incentive programs). Without a CIP, municipalities are prohibited from offering financial assistance to the private sector in any way. As such, a CIP provides this unique opportunity for municipalities. A further explanation of the legislative framework is outlined in Section 2.2.

It is also important to consider that a CIP should ultimately be developed in consultation with the community, local business owners, residents, community organizations, public/private agencies, administration, and members of council. Through the development and adoption of a CIP a municipality can collectively assess its “needs” against its “wants”, develop a coordinated and comprehensive vision for the future of an area, and encourage participation from the community. Whether the community wishes to improve the pedestrian experience along a main street, increase housing options in the downtown core, or just encourage the rehabilitation and occupancy of underutilized spaces, a CIP is a great tool to help communities set goals, and work with the community to achieve them.

2.2 LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Under Section 106 of the *Municipal Act*, a municipality cannot provide assistance to any manufacturing business or other industrial or commercial enterprise through the granting of “bonuses”. Assistance in the form of a bonus can be summed up as:

- giving or loaning any municipal property or money;
- guaranteeing the borrowing, leasing or selling of any municipal property below fair market value; and/or,
- giving partial or full exemption from any levy, charge, or fee (i.e. development charges, building permit fees).

However, notwithstanding this, Section 106 (3) states that municipalities can provide assistance in the carrying out of a CIP adopted under Section 28 of the *Planning Act*.

Section 28 of the *Planning Act* (the “Act”) outlines the authority and means with which community improvement planning can be undertaken by Ontario municipalities. This section generally states that where there is an official plan in effect within a municipality that contains provisions respecting community improvement, a municipal council may designate (by by-law) all or part of the area covered by the official plan as a Community Improvement Project Area or “CIPA”. Council may then prepare and adopt a Community Improvement Plan (CIP) to help facilitate the improvement goals of the municipality.

Sections 28(6) & 28(7) of the *Act* outline the actions that a municipality may undertake for the purposes of carrying out a CIP, which include:

- constructing, repairing, rehabilitating or improving buildings on land owned by the municipality;
- selling, leasing or disposing of any buildings or land owned by the municipality;
- creating and issuing grants, loans, or other incentive programs to owners and tenants of buildings and lands within the CIPA, to assist with eligible improvements covered under the CIP.

While the *Act* does allow for a considerable amount of flexibility in how municipalities can structure and administer their incentive programs, it does outline some general criteria for what constitutes an “eligible cost” of a CIP, which municipalities must adhere to. These “eligible costs” include:

- environmental site assessment or remediation;
- development/redevelopment;
- construction and reconstruction of lands and buildings for rehabilitation purposes; and,
- provision of energy efficient uses, building, structures, works, improvements, or facilities.

2.3 WHAT DOES A CIP LOOK LIKE?

Every community has their own unique history, economic landscape, built and natural amenities, challenges, and opportunities. It should come as no surprise then, that municipalities are strongly encouraged to develop CIPs that are built on their own community priorities and grounded in local context. With that said, many plans do share some common building blocks that give structure to the overall document. The following is a general framework for a basic CIP, which can be adjusted to suit the needs of the community or desired function of the document.



Figure 1 – Community Improvement Plan General Framework

2.4 PLAN & INCENTIVE PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

The successful implementation of a CIP and administration of its incentive programs can often be attributed to a few key factors.

Incentives That Respond to Needs

A key to the success of any CIP will be the development of incentives and programming that respond to the needs of an area and a community. To that end, careful consideration is needed to develop incentives and programming that will actually be of use to an area, and that can be feasibly implemented by a municipality. An obvious way to achieve this is through engaging with the community on its needs (as discussed further below), but more importantly it requires the municipality to also carefully examine the development of programming with thresholds and requirements that will be well received by the community. For example, while building improvements may be beneficial for a downtown, a local market may consider façade improvements more feasible than wholesale redevelopment of lands and buildings. Further to that, limited municipal resources and budgets may restrict the feasibility of offering significant grants solely focused on major redevelopment or improvement projects.

Leading by Example

A CIP and its incentive programming are largely tailored to encouraging property owners and businesses to undertake projects that align with the goals and vision of the plan area. While the majority of these projects are going to be located on private property, the overall intent is to benefit the public realm. In addition to incentive programming, another way for a municipality to encourage property owners to undertake projects is to lead by example. In doing so, the municipality should be prepared to undertake its share of public realm improvements and initiatives in the plan area such as improving walkability of a street, landscaping/park development, or simply undertaking general infrastructure improvements. By carrying out public improvements within the plan area, a

municipality can inspire private property owners to invest in the vision and pursue projects of their own.

Community Involvement & Buy-in

While a municipality can develop a great CIP with an exciting vision and attainable goals, it cannot succeed without community buy-in and involvement. During the development of a CIP, relationships should be built with community leaders, community groups, and organizations (BIAs or chambers of commerce) who are willing to be local “champions” for it. Every effort should be made to involve these individuals or groups not only in the development of the CIP, but also in its implementation (marketing, promotion, etc.). Further to this, the municipality should seek to celebrate the various projects that receive grants or other programming assistance through the CIP via social media, promoting success stories in local newspapers, or even through notices on the municipality’s website. Together, these positive messages can all help to build excitement, inspiration, and foster on-going community buy-in of the plan.

A Clear, User-Friendly Administrative Process

With a significant portion of a CIP being implemented through private investment and projects, it is crucial that a CIP outlines a clear and user-friendly administrative process for the intake, review, and approval of applications for incentive programming. Depending on the size of the municipality and anticipated volume of applications for incentives, a council may wish to delegate a member of staff or establish a committee to oversee the administration of the various incentive programs under the CIP. This individual or committee would be responsible for reviewing applications for incentive grants and providing a recommendation to council (or their designate). In the case of a committee, it can and should be made up of a mix of members of municipal staff, council, and/or community organizations to allow for different perspectives on each proposal. While incentive programming will vary from one municipality to the next, the process for reviewing applications and

administering incentives can typically follow a common structure (shown below).

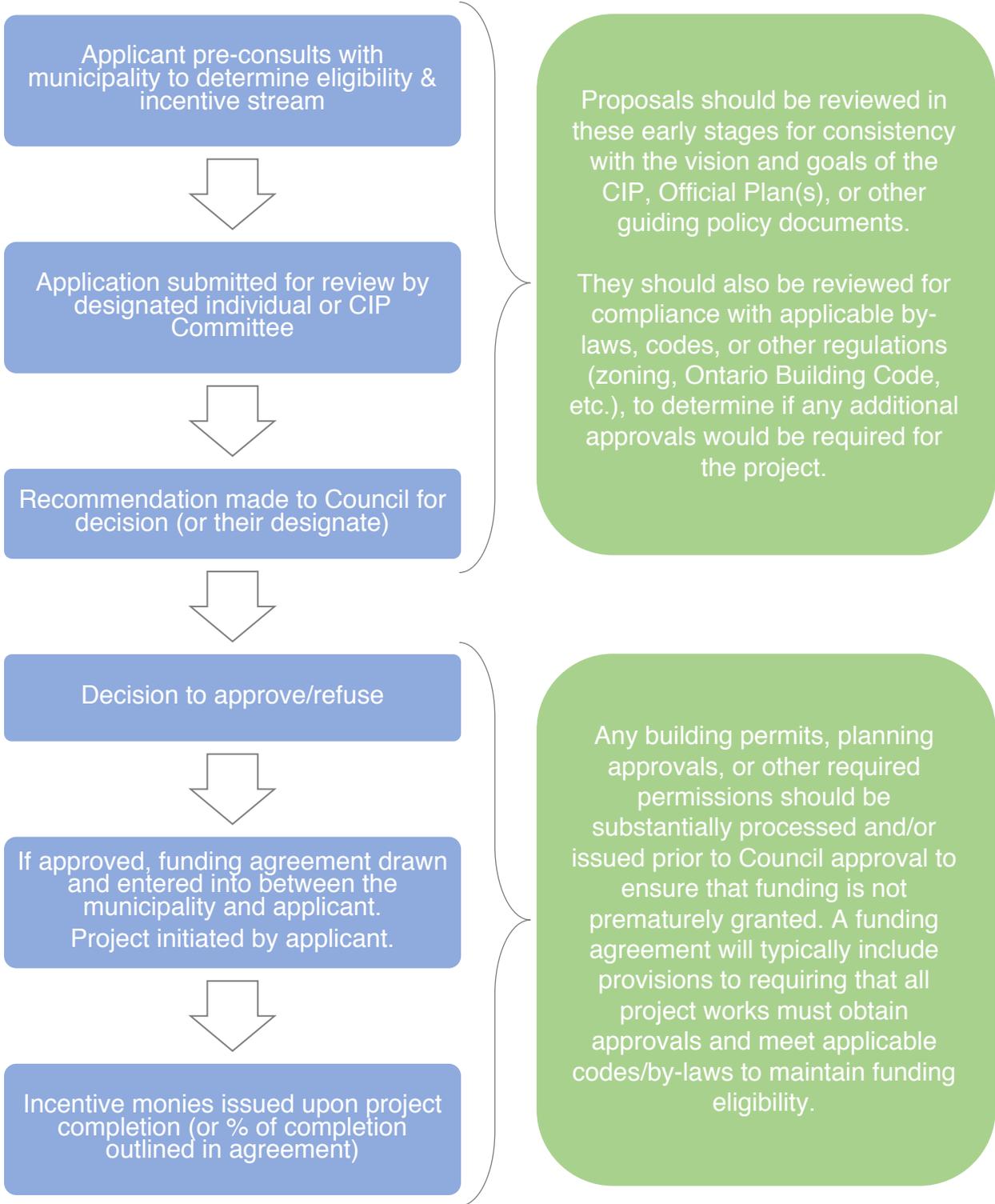


Figure 2 – Example CIP Application Process



SECTION 3

Creating a CIP

3.1 GETTING STARTED

The development of a CIP can be a significant undertaking, even more so if a clear direction is not established in the beginning. Therefore, a first step should be analysing the key issues and needs that are facing the community or an area, and whether a CIP can or should be used to address these issues. In doing so, the municipality should be prepared to explore and answer questions such as:

- **Are there areas of the municipality in need of improvement?**

There are generally two schools of thought on what constitutes an area of a municipality in need of improvement. There are those areas of a municipality that show physical decline such as vacancies, poor infrastructure conditions, poor building conditions, and general lack of investment, but there are also areas of a municipality where signs of physical decline are less apparent. These areas could be under-performing economically or are in need of physical transformation and redevelopment, and would benefit from incentives to improve the overall performance of an area or to spur its physical transformation (e.g. older, single-use, low density commercial plazas that could be redeveloped to more intensive, mixed use developments).

- **What are we trying to achieve?**

As with any planning or economic development exercise, it is important to understand what it is that we are trying to achieve with a CIP and what an overall

vision for the area(s) is. In some cases, this may be just physical improvements to an otherwise economically healthy area of the municipality. In other cases, it may be a wholesale economic repositioning of an area or entire municipality for new types of uses and economic generators such as agri-tourism operations, live-work spaces for start-ups, or more diverse housing choices. In identifying a vision, and understanding what a municipality is trying to achieve, a municipality can more clearly focus and scope a CIP to support broader planning and economic development goals.

- **What are the needs of the community?**

The best way to gather more information about the needs of a community is to engage with local groups and organizations such as chambers of commerce, local BIAs and/or other business associations, or resident communities to get information on the challenges that they may be dealing with. This way the approach to developing a potential CIP can be more closely aligned with addressing these challenges. This can be accomplished in a wide variety of ways including asset mapping exercises, visioning, focus groups/interviews, and surveys. This will allow for a great primary data source to be used to inform the direction for where and how a CIP should be applied.

3.2 STEERING THE PROCESS

Should council decide to pursue a CIP, it is strongly encouraged for a steering committee to be established to guide the process. This committee can and should be comprised of members of council, planning/economic development/building department staff, and/or members of the business community/BIAs in order to incorporate a range of knowledge or experience in the various facets that make up community improvement (economic development, planning, government administration, Ontario Building Code, etc.) and ensure a broad representation of the community itself.

Once a project lead or committee is established, the first task should be clarifying the following matters:

- desired outcomes for the project;
- budgetary considerations for developing the plan;
- who is carrying out the work (consultant or in-house);
- who the stakeholders are;
- how the stakeholders will be engaged; and
- timeline for the project, including major milestones.

Once the matters above have been sorted out, it is time to introduce the project to the community.

3.3 BRANDING

While not mandatory, the development of a project branding early in the process can help build recognition and presence within the community. Ideally, branding will reflect some key aspects of the community/CIPA(s), the goals of the CIP, or both, and will help encourage community participation and future use of the programs under the plan. Some branding/marketing initiatives can include:

- Posters/brochures in community centres, local businesses within the CIPAs, or at municipal offices;
- Online advertisements, webpages;

- Education of municipal staff and community groups to help promote the CIP, its programs and their uptake; or,
- Partnerships with real estate representatives who are actively engaged in the local development/business community.

Below is an example of the branding used by the United Counties of Stormont, Dundas, & Glengarry to promote their incentives programming.



Figure 3 – United Counties of SDG Incentives Branding

3.4 GATHERING DATA, REFINING KEY ISSUES, & IDENTIFYING A CIPA

In order to inform the eventual development of plan policies, identify project areas, and ground the process in local context, community data should be gathered and analysed (economics, demographics, social capital, built and natural environment, etc.). This data can be gathered from census information, liaising with various government agencies, reviewing land uses and occupancy rates, and through stakeholder/public consultation. However, one of the most important aspects of gathering data and background information (especially as it relates to plan area selection) will come from physically surveying and analysing areas in need of improvement with its users. Ultimately, all of this data is used to help evaluate the community's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT).

As part of the data gathering/SWOT analysis, initial stakeholder consultations should be held early on to ensure that the community is part of the process as soon as possible. The ways in which public consultation is carried out can be tailored to meet the needs of the community, and may consist of:

- open houses;
- design charettes;
- meetings with agencies or organizations;
- 1-on-1 stakeholder interviews; or,
- online surveys

In addition to the above, it is important for the project team to examine existing documents that may contain policies or direction for community improvement (Official Plans, Economic Development Strategies, Corporate Strategic Plans, etc.). In some cases, through the review of this information, it may be determined that amendments to an Official Plan or economic development strategy may be necessary to align with the intent of the CIP. Consideration should also be given to best practices employed in other similarly sized municipalities.

The main outcomes of the first round of consultation should be clarifying key issues, needs, and establishing a Community Improvement Project Area (CIPA). Under the *Planning Act*, council must identify a CIPA(s) by-law prior to adopting and implementing a Community Improvement Plan. The community may identify one or more CIPAs and may even identify the entirety of the municipality as a CIPA; however, it is crucial that careful consideration be given to identifying these areas as no incentives are permitted to be offered outside these areas (see **Appendix B** for an example of a CIPA by-law).

3.5 DRAFTING THE PLAN

Once the CIPA has been established and identified by by-law, the CIP can now begin to take shape. Using the information gathered from public consultation and meetings with stakeholders, the CIPA should be further analysed, with the intent of developing specific policies, goals, and objectives to address the key issues present in each. At this point, a second round of more focused public consultations can be initiated on the actual programming to be included in the CIP. An example of how a CIP can address and organize issues is shown in **Figure 4**.

Programming in a CIP can take two primary forms: public interventions (i.e. municipal works

and improvements) and private incentives (i.e. grants and other incentives to improve private property). Public interventions can include public realm projects such as sidewalk improvements, park space development, or initiatives to make the approval process easier for businesses/property owners. Identifying these initiatives in the CIP will not only provide assistance to council on determining budget allocation and community priorities, but it can also benefit the municipality when pursuing grants for project funding from other sources.



Figure 4 – Example of how to frame a key issue

For private incentives, intended to encourage and support private sector investment in the CIPA, the CIP should outline a catalogue of incentive programs. Most often, these incentive programs are built on the provision of financial assistance to property owners who pursue eligible projects within a CIPA. As finances will play a large role in whether an improvement project gets off the ground, the CIP is traditionally expected to be a ‘tipping of the scales’ incentive to make a project affordable for a business that would otherwise have not been able to undertake it. A CIP not only supports projects that were already pre-planned by property owners, they may also encourage new projects that may not have been previously considered.

Incentive programs can range from façade improvement grants, to brownfield cleanup grants, to development fee rebates however, the types of grant programming implemented through a CIP will depend not only on the needs of the community, but also the municipal resources available to administer them. Some incentive program examples have been provided in **Appendix A**.

In developing these incentive programs, it is important to carefully consider the following matters:

- How it addresses goals/objectives;
- Eligibility criteria for projects;
- What project area the program applies to;
- What type of incentive is offered;
- Administrative requirements (agreements); and
- Budget implications.

As mentioned in Section 2.4, the majority of a CIP’s utility for private investment will be associated with the incentive programming, so it is important to determine how incentives will be administered (via committee, council, individual designate, etc.). Careful consideration should also be given to how these programs will be marketed to the community, which will play a large role in the uptake and success of the plan following adoption.

Upon finalizing the goals, objectives, and projects to be pursued under the CIP, the final step in drafting this document will be establishing measures for monitoring success. These measures typically involve annual reviews/reporting of measures such as: occupancy rates; increases in assessment values; amount of private investment; or simply the number of projects completed to date, all with the intent of tracking progress and letting council know what’s working.

3.6 ADOPTING THE PLAN

Once a draft of the CIP has been developed, there is one final step in adopting and putting the plan into action. In order to adopt a Community Improvement Plan (CIP), the municipality must follow the prescribed process under Section 17

of the *Planning Act*, which is similar to the process required for the approval and adoption of official plans. An overview of this process is provided below.

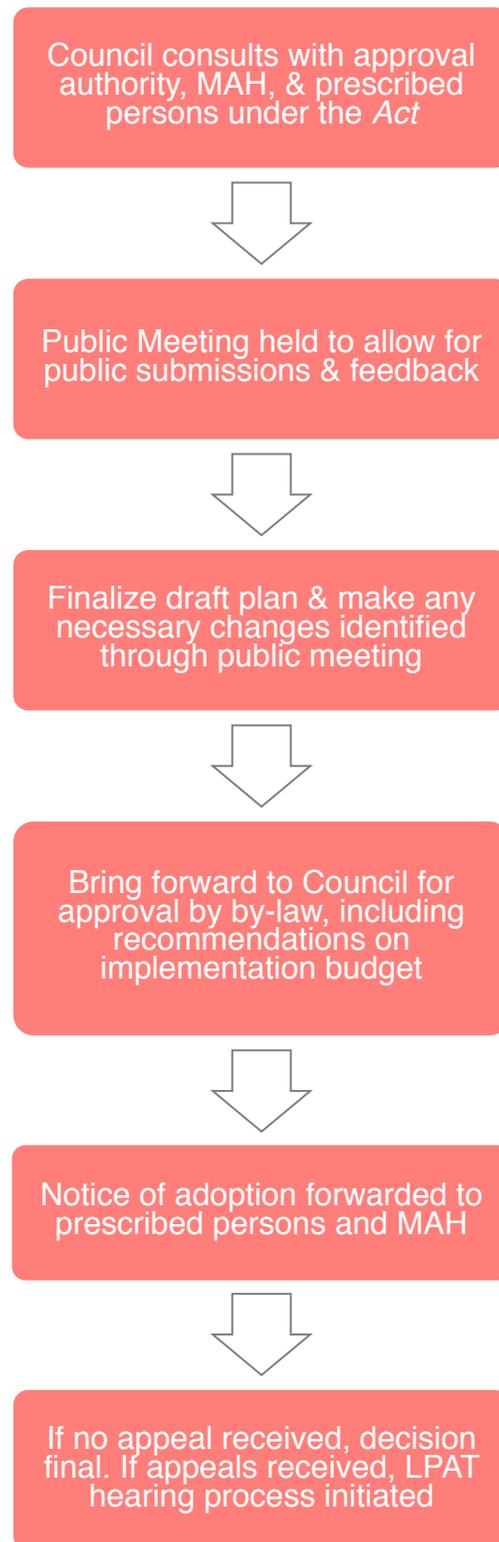


Figure 5 – Overview of CIP Adoption Process

3.7 IMPLEMENTATION & MONITORING

Following adoption of a CIP, monitoring the ongoing implementation of the plan is crucial in ensuring its success. The municipality, whether it be through council, the CIP committee, or designated individual, should ensure that the appropriate processes are in place to track the various measures noted in Section 3.5.

A scheduled analysis of these performance measures and an annual report to council on findings is generally seen as a best practice. In addition to the performance measures outlined in the CIP, the plan may also outline a process for consulting with local stakeholders, businesses, and other groups/organizations through meetings or interviews to gain additional insights as to how the plan is performing and/or meeting the needs of the community. In addition to this, it's important to know when a CIP has actually been carried out in its entirety - if all of the goals and objectives in the plan have been met, the plan should either be updated, replaced, or repealed.



APPENDIX A

Incentive Tools for Consideration



A.1 TAX INCREMENT GRANT (TIG)

To help offset increases in property taxes due to improvements, many municipalities in Ontario offer Tax Increment Grants or “TIGs” as part of their CIP incentive options. Simply put, a TIG is an annual rebate on the municipal property taxes, intended to reimburse the owner for part or all of the increase in taxes resulting from the completion of eligible improvements. TIG grants are typically calculated as a percentage (up to 100%) of the increase in municipal property taxes from “pre-development” to “post-development” and are paid annually over a set term of years outlined in the CIP. It is common for CIPs to restrict the combination of TIGs with any other incentives offered, due to the annual nature of the incentive. Another key feature of a TIG is the self-sourcing budget, as grant payments are sourced from the annual taxes paid by the owner and rebated back.

- Purpose of Grant**
 - Offset or relieve tax increases from improvements
 - Promote significant infill, rehabilitation and/or redevelopment in CIP areas
 - Promote repurposing of underutilized or vacant buildings

- Things to Consider**
 - Number of years for TIG term (3, 5, 10, etc.) up to max \$ amount
 - Whether to utilize a “fixed” or “graduated” structure
 - Percentage rate at which TIG is calculated
 - Minimum investment required by owner

- Example Projects/Costs**
 - General site and building improvements resulting in increased assessment
 - Large-scale rehabilitation or redevelopment of buildings
 - Conversion of existing floor areas resulting in one or more residential units

- Budget Considerations**
 - 80 to 100% of increased assessment value over a 10-year period or until maximum cost of the project is realized
 - No required initial budget outlay required



A.2 FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT GRANT

Façade improvements constitute some of the most common incentive programs offered by municipalities through CIPs. Often enough, property owners can be hesitant to invest in improvements to the aesthetics or visual appeal of their building, especially if there are other, more pressing financial obligations to consider. Through a façade improvement program, municipalities can provide financial assistance and encouragement to property owners to improve the overall character and aesthetic of their building, while contributing to the establishment of an overall sense of place and identity within the CIP area. These types of programs are typically intended to address street facing façade improvements, generally related to the improvement of architectural features, materials and/or lighting. With that said, some programs may also include projects that do not directly involve the building face, such as the implementation of a terrace or beautification of an entranceway.

Purpose of Grant

- Assist with street-front building improvements
- Promote professional and context-sensitive design
- Encourage compliance with any design guidelines or heritage standards
- Create a sense of character or “place” in CIP areas

Things to Consider

- Are there downtown areas/cores that can be focused on?
- What guidelines for design/heritage exist and how can these be incorporated?
- What costs to cover? (professional fees, installation, construction, etc.)
- Restricted to certain types of uses? (commercial, multi-unit residential, etc.)

Example Projects/Costs

- Professional fees for design
- Replacement of windows and rehabilitation of architectural features
- New or improved signage
- Improvements to entranceways
- Material work/painting

Budget Considerations

- Typical formula 50% to up \$5,000



A.3 LANDSCAPING GRANT

When it comes to site development/redevelopment, landscaping can not only help add beauty and interest to a site and the surrounding area, but it can also contribute on a functional level by reducing water runoff and providing shade, for example. Through a CIP incentive stream designed with these benefits in mind, municipalities can encourage property owners to incorporate creative and functional landscaping into improvement projects, or standalone projects to improve the overall beauty and character of community improvement project areas. A landscaping grant can either be standalone or included under the umbrella of another general incentive stream (such as a beautification grant), depending on the structure of the CIP. The overall intent of this stream would be to increase and improve the public/quasi-public green spaces within the designated CIP areas.

Purpose of Grant

- Assist property owners with landscaping of larger open spaces
- Promote beautification and greening of public/quasi-public spaces
- Encourage incorporation of good landscaping as part of overall site design

Things to Consider

- What is the desired streetscape?
- What type of landscaping is desired? (need to consider maintenance, mature size of trees, perennials vs. annuals vs. food-bearing)
- Should a warranty period be imposed to ensure landscaping “takes”?
- Whether to promote soft landscaping (plants), hard landscaping (rock beds, armour stone), or a mix

Example Projects/Costs

- Parking lot retrofits to add landscaping/permeable surface
- Planters (in ground or standalone)
- Quasi-public park space/terraces/patios

Budget Considerations

- Typical formula of 50% to a maximum of \$5,000



A.4 HOUSING GRANT

Many Ontario municipalities are striving to facilitate more affordable and accessible housing options and promoting mixed-use development. Some smaller municipalities may also face challenges associated with maintaining an acceptable level of rental housing. Through a housing grant, municipalities can promote the rehabilitation of existing residential building stock, encourage conversion or re-purposing of vacant or underutilized buildings for residential uses, and facilitate completely new housing developments. The main intent of a housing grant would be to provide financial assistance to those wishing to create new residential units in CIPAs (such as a downtown cores) to help the municipality achieve a more affordable and stable housing market.

- Purpose of Grant**
 - Promote infill and conversion of underutilized spaces to residential units
 - Encourage densification of CIP areas and downtown cores
 - Support alternative and/or affordable housing options and mixed-use development

- Things to Consider**
 - What structure will the grant take on? (\$ per unit, \$ per square footage, % matching of costs)
 - Where do we want to direct more housing?
 - Is the intent to encourage affordable housing, or just units in general?
 - Is there a socio-economic scope? (seniors, assisted living, low income)
 - Can additional funding sources be leveraged with the local grant? (i.e. federal and provincial programs)

- Example Projects/Costs**
 - Retrofitting of an underutilized building/space to accommodate a residential unit
 - New high-density residential development (3-4 units or more) in identified CIPAs
 - Construction of affordable housing units

- Budget Considerations**
 - Typical formulas include: \$5,000 per unit to a maximum of 4 units or \$15.00/square foot to maximum of \$15,000



A.5 STRUCTURAL IMPROVEMENTS / CODE COMPLIANCE GRANT

Certain repairs and/or maintenance works may be necessary throughout the lifecycle of a building, especially if it is underutilized, in a state of disrepair, or is proposed to be used for a purpose not previously intended. However, due to the code requirements between different uses (i.e. residential vs. commercial), there is typically a considerable amount of work that needs to be carried out to meet code. The objective of a Structural Improvement/Code Compliance Grant is to provide financial support for the re-purposing or structural/internal improvement of buildings to accommodate development/occupancy. Generally, these grants would be directed towards the conversion or improvement of underutilized or vacant residential, non-commercial buildings/lands and other underutilized spaces to accommodate commercial uses, markets, public spaces for art and culture, etc. The overall objective of this stream would be to breathe life into vacant or underutilized spaces and buildings.

Purpose of Grant

- Promote repurposing of buildings and underutilized spaces
- Encourage retrofitting of buildings to meet code
- Increase opportunities for more diverse uses

Things to Consider

- What types of uses are eligible? (commercial, residential, institutional)
- How to distinguish between general maintenance and a bonafide community improvement project.
- What are the evaluation criteria?

Example Projects/Costs

- Retrofitting older buildings to meet code for new uses
- Installation of a wheelchair ramp at the entrance to a commercial building
- Preservation of structural integrity of building

Budget Considerations

- 50% of cost of improvements to a maximum \$5,000 to \$10,000



A.6 RURAL GRANT

It is important to remember that, in addition to the downtown cores of our communities, there is a vibrant economic base of activity in our rural areas. Some municipalities have opted to offer incentives outside of the traditional CIP core areas to businesses and projects that have much to offer in terms of community improvement. Some typical rural grant projects could be geared towards home-based businesses, agri-tourism, or recreation, for example. A rural aspect could also be included under the umbrella of other incentive programs (façade improvements, brownfields, etc.), with a different set of eligibility criteria based on the nature and location of the proposal.

Purpose of Grant

- Provide more support to home-based businesses and ag-related ventures
- Allow a more general stream of incentives that can be applied to a wider rural area

Things to Consider

- What does the “Plan Area” look like? (Balance of municipality? Just rural area? etc.)
- What does the municipality’s economic development strategy outline as its priorities?
- Does it make sense to spread incentives to the rural area or keep focused to more urban centres?
- What is the target development?
- Home based businesses need to be carefully reviewed

Example Projects/Costs

- Business signage
- Parking facilities
- Building improvements

Budget Considerations

- 50% of cost to a maximum of \$5,000



A.7 SUSTAINABILITY GRANT

As our communities grow, it is important to ensure that we are encouraging the use of sustainable development practices and reinforcing environmental stewardship. A sustainability grant can incentivise the conscious selection of green building materials or implementation of sustainable building designs to reduce the impact of development and redevelopment on both the local and global environment. The overall intent of this grant would be to encourage property owners to pursue low impact, sustainable developments as well as certifications such as “LEED” (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) for their projects.

Purpose of Grant

- Promote Low Impact Development (LID) alternatives to site design
- Encourage the pursuit of LEED certification
- Promote retrofitting of building(s) internal and external features such as lighting/heating/windows/insulation etc. to be less consumptive

Things to Consider

- Can this stream be compounded with other sustainability-focused grants from other sources?
- Types of eligible development (commercial, residential, etc.)
- Is funding contingent on achievement of a certain level of sustainability? (LEED bronze, gold, platinum, etc.)
- What is the measure of success/is there monitoring on this goal?

Example Projects/Costs

- LID stormwater landscaping/features
- Bike parking facilities
- Installation of new energy efficient windows/external lighting/etc.

Budget Considerations

- 50% to a maximum of \$10,000



A.8 HERITAGE GRANT

Municipalities may also offer incentives geared towards encouraging the conservation, stewardship and awareness of community heritage assets. Not only can these grants assist with the costs associated with registration and/or designation of a heritage building, they can encourage the incorporation of heritage features and construction methods into new developments as well. Heritage incentives can also be used in conjunction with projects such as educational signage or public art to help tell the story of an area, building, or site.

Purpose of Grant

- Ensure continued support, enhancement and protection of heritage assets and buildings
- Encourage the pursuit of designating or registering heritage buildings/assets
- Promote the use of heritage-sensitive architecture and building design.

Things to Consider

- Where is the heritage stock of the municipality?
- Is designation required for eligibility?
- Will the use of heritage design guidelines be incentivised for new/redevelopment that may not qualify as “heritage”?

Example Projects/Costs

- Retrofitting older buildings to meet code for new uses
- Refurbishing architectural features such as entrances, windows, arches
- Educational materials/signage on or around the building
- Public art, murals

Budget Considerations

- 50% to a maximum of \$5,000



A.9 BROWNFIELD GRANT

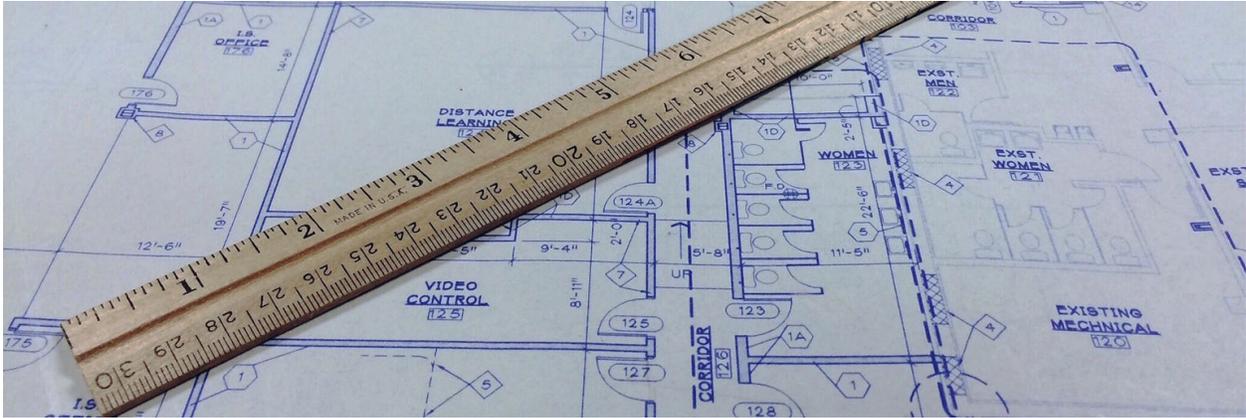
The remediation of contaminated sites formerly occupied by uses such as gas stations or laundry mats can often be a lengthy and financially onerous undertaking. Accordingly, many of these sites can remain either vacant or underutilised for a number of years, often resulting in negative visual and environmental impacts on surrounding properties. The Province of Ontario offers a range of incentives and support streams to assist property owners with the remediation and development of brownfields; one of the ways in which local municipalities can also encourage the clean-up and development of these sites is through their own brownfield grants.

- Purpose of Grant**
 - Encourage brownfield site clean-up/remediation
 - Promote infill and redevelopment of vacant/underutilized properties
 - Reduce number of contaminated sites in community

- Things to Consider**
 - How many brownfields exist in the community? (budget implications)
 - How much and what is the CIP looking to cover?
 - Is it a general grant throughout the community?
 - Can this stream be compounded with other brownfield grants from other sources (i.e. the province)?

- Example Projects/Costs**
 - Carrying out Environmental Site Assessments or other prep work required for remediation
 - Assisting with some of the costs associated with the works

- Budget Considerations**
 - Municipality can pass a by-law to cancel all or a portion of municipal taxes for duration of site redevelopment (i.e. maximum 5 years)
 - 50% to a maximum \$10,000 for background studies



A.10 DEVELOPMENT CHARGES / BUILDING PERMIT FEE REBATES

A common incentive stream used by municipalities is based around rebating part or all of the administrative fees associated with an eligible development. Depending on how the municipality wishes to format the grant, rebates can be offered in part, or in full, on fees associated with:

- Building permits;
- Development Charges; and/or
- Planning applications (zoning, site plan, minor variance, etc.)

This stream can often be paired with other incentive streams to further assist property owners with the costs associated with improvements, as well as encourage the pursuit of the appropriate approvals prior to project initiation.

Purpose of Grant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Providing relief from administrative costs associated with redevelopment ○ Support other streams in CIPs allowing for complementary grants ○ Provide confidence that a development is approved/permitted prior to initiating major projects
Things to Consider	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What types of uses are eligible? (commercial, residential, institutional) ○ Does the municipality want to leverage this stream to encourage the occupancy/revitalization of underutilized or vacant buildings throughout the community? ○ Is a project plan/outcome required for eligibility? ○ Impact on development charge reserves and revenues/department budgets
Example Projects/Costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Rebate on portion or all of a DC or Building/Demolition Permit fees
Budget Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 50% to 100% of permit fees ○ No budget outlay required



A.11 “WIN THIS SPACE” PROGRAMS

“Win This Space” programs are becoming a popular tool used to support entrepreneurs in establishing a ‘brick-and-mortar’ presence for their businesses while reducing commercial vacancies. This is achieved by providing through the provision of a grant covering all or part of monthly lease payments in the first 12 months of operation. The program is typically a competitive program whereby applicants submit a proposal, business plan, and identify any improvements or renovations to be made to vacant space, and the municipality awards vacant commercial space for a limited period of time to permit the business to establish. Programs such as these can be offered under the umbrella of a CIP but have also been developed and administered independently of the municipality (i.e. by a BIA or similar organization).

Purpose of Grant

- Provide relief from part or all of lease costs for a new business locating in the CIPA
- Promote the occupancy of vacant business-ready commercial spaces
- Encouraging entrepreneurship and friendly competition within the local business community

Things to Consider

- What spaces are eligible?
- Are spaces identified by the municipality/BIA or by the applicant?
- Where is funding sourced? (community donations through BIAs or chambers of commerce, municipal budget, etc.)
- How are successful proposals selected?

Example Projects/Costs

- All or part of the lease costs for eligible commercial space(s)
- All or part of the costs for utilities/services

Budget Considerations

- \$1,000 of monthly lease covered for 12 months
- 100% of monthly lease covered for 12 months

APPENDIX B

Community Improvement Project Area
By-law Example



(insert municipality)
BY-LAW NO. ###

Being a by-law to designate a Community Improvement Project Area(s) within the
(insert municipality)

WHEREAS pursuant to Section 28 of the *Planning Act*, R.S.O. 1990. C. P.13, Council may designate the whole or any part of an area covered by an official plan as a community improvement project area;

AND WHEREAS Council has convened public meetings to consider the adoption of the **(insert municipality or document name)** Community Improvement Plan;

AND WHEREAS on **(insert date)**, the **(insert department, position, or committee name, if applicable)** recommended the designation of part of the area covered by the Official Plan as shown in Schedule "A" attached hereto as the **(insert name of CIPA)** Community Improvement Project Area;

AND WHEREAS on **(insert date)**, Council carried the recommendations of the **(insert department, position, or committee name, if applicable)**;

THEREFORE the Council of the **(insert municipality)** enacts as follows:

1. The following area is designated as the **(insert name of CIPA)** Community Improvement Project Area:
 - i. the lands shown in Schedule "A" to this by-law.
2. This by-law shall come into force in accordance with the provisions of the *Planning Act*, R.S.O. 1990, c.P.13, as amended.

ENACTED AND PASSED this **(insert date)**

(insert municipality)
SCHEDULE "A" TO BY-LAW NO. ###

(insert name of CIPA) Community Improvement Project Area
Sample map taken from Strathroy-Caradoc

