



Corporation of the Township of Brock

Staff Report to the Mayor and Members of Council

From: Robin Prentice, MCIP, RPP

Position: Director of Development Services

Title / Subject: Downtown Community Improvement Plan – Recommendation Report

Date of Report: June 10, 2024

Date of Meeting: June 24, 2024

Report No: 2024-DS-008

1.0 Issue / Origin

As part of the 2023 budget and workplan, a review of the Downtown Community Improvement Plan was undertaken.

2.0 Background

A Community Improvement Plan (CIP) is a tool available to municipalities under Section 28 of the Planning Act and Section 106 of the Municipal Act, 2001. CIPs guide the revitalization of communities through programs, grants and incentives, addressing the reuse and restoration of lands, buildings and infrastructure, energy efficiency, growth management challenges and planning for rehabilitation, development and land use change in defined areas. CIPs are an important tool to assist in encouraging local economic development initiatives and can be used to promote and attract tourism and business investments. They are undertaken by municipalities for specific areas and types of development.

Township Council adopted the Downtown CIP in 2013 to help stimulate investment in the downtown areas. The Downtown CIP provides financial incentives to stimulate private investment to lands within the designated Regional Centres (downtown areas) of Beaverton, Cannington, and Sunderland and helps to promote beautification, commercial revitalization, tourism, residential choice, intensification of properties, preservation of heritage and architectural buildings, and sustainable development within the downtown cores.

The Downtown CIP provide opportunities for the municipality to offer financial incentives in the following areas: planning, building, and development charge fee rebates, parkland dedication and parking standard exemptions, property tax grants, commercial façade and residential

rehabilitation grants/loans, project feasibility and design studies programs, as well as programs for environmental rehabilitation.

Over the past 10 years, several businesses in all 3 communities have benefitted from the Downtown CIP grant program to help with façade improvements and residential rehabilitation. A review of the CIP was anticipated after 10 years to assess implementation of the CIP and determine if any updates are necessary for the ongoing successful implementation of the CIP.

In November 2023, the Township retained WSP Canada Inc. to undertake a review of the Downtown CIP.

The project work plan involved several key steps, including:

- Review background materials and resources, policy documents, relevant legislation and regulations, etc.;
- Consultation with agencies and key stakeholders, including the Brock Board of Trade;
- Review and prepare an updated Downtown CIP document; and
- Prepare a final Downtown CIP document for Council.

3.0 Analysis

3.1 Community Improvement Project Area (CIPA)

The Community Improvement Project Area (CIPA) is a map that delineates which properties in the three downtown areas are eligible for the financial incentive programs established by the Downtown CIP. The proposed CIPA can be found in Attachment 1. The foundation for the CIPA is the Regional Centre boundaries as outlined in the Township's Official Plan, which help to delineate the downtown areas in the three communities of Beaverton, Cannington and Sunderland. One of the main changes proposed to the CIPA is the introduction of two "Priority Areas." There is a variation in form, function and revitalization needs of lands and building within Priority Area 1 and Priority Area 2. On this basis, some of the proposed financial incentive programs offer different incentives between the two areas.

3.2 Downtown Community Improvement Plan (CIP)

The proposed new Downtown CIP can be found in Attachment 2. In response to agency and public feedback received throughout the Downtown CIP review process, some revisions have been made to the Downtown CIP that is being recommended for adoption by Council.

The revised Downtown CIP establishes a suite of financial incentive programs to address a broad range of community improvement and revitalization priorities within the downtown areas. The Plan proposes 8 financial incentive programs as outlined below:

1. Planning and Building Fees Program
2. Development Charges Program
3. Façade Improvement Program
4. Signage Improvement Program
5. Property Improvement Program
6. Downtown Housing Program
7. Commercial Support Program
8. Priority Property Program.

The Catalyst Development Program that was originally proposed as part of the draft Downtown CIP has been removed, as it would be too complex to administer and implement based on the staff capacity at the Township.

For each program, the Downtown CIP describes the following:

- the purpose of the program and its intended community improvement outcome,
- which properties and/or land uses are eligible,
- the types of works and projects and associated costs that are eligible,
- the maximum value of the grant available,
- the payment details,
- general and specific eligibility criteria.

For the Priority Property Program, the project team has recommended one property from each downtown area in Schedule B of the Downtown CIP. Generally, properties identified for this program are characterized as being situated in a prominent location in the downtown, are in need of improvement, have significant value to the community or where revitalization would function as a broader catalyst. The properties in Schedule B can be updated over time, but these 3 properties are recommended for the Priority Property Program at this time:

- Beaverton – 383 Simcoe St
- Cannington - 6 Cameron St. W
- Sunderland – 104 River St

It is recommended that Council delegate approval authority to a Plan Administrator, who will process applications received, manage, and monitor the Downtown CIP process and make decisions related to the approval of applications for financial incentives. At this point in time, the Director of Development Services is recommended to act as the Plan Administrator (see Attachment 3). The Downtown CIP proposes to have CIP applications reviewed and evaluated by a Review Panel that consists of Township staff from relevant departments, as well as Regional economic development staff, with the Plan Administrator to have delegated approval authority. From time to time, the Plan Administrator may seek direction or a decision from Council on specific applications for financial incentives on a case-by-case basis. The Downtown CIP permits community-based organizations to be eligible for financial incentives, however, where such organizations are proposing works to structures on Township owned lands within the CIPA (i.e. historical society structures on Township parkland), then the Downtown CIP requires such applications to go through Council for a decision.

3.3 Municipal Leadership Initiatives

Along with the incentive programs outlined in the Downtown CIP document, there are some municipal leadership initiatives that are also recommended for the Township and other potential partners to undertake that will function as a catalyst to further encourage private sector investment and augment continued revitalization of the downtown areas.

The recommended municipal leadership initiatives include:

- Gateway improvements
- Wayfinding and signage
- Heritage recognition and preservation

- Marketing and communications; and
- Investing in infrastructure.

Implementation of the municipal leadership initiatives will be dependent upon the Township's resources, and in response to emerging opportunities to advance the initiatives in whole or in part but should also be monitored and taken into consideration as part of the implementation of the Downtown CIP.

3.4 Next Steps

Once the by-laws are passed by Council, staff will issue a notice of decision and there is a 20-day appeal period. Should no appeals be received, the new Downtown CIP will be brought into effect and eligible parties can submit applications under the new Downtown CIP.

A consultant will be retained to help develop a marketing and communications campaign to promote the updated Downtown CIP and associated incentives.

4.0 Related Policies / Procedures

This project involves a review of the Township's Downtown Community Improvement Plan.

Section 4.6 of the Township's OP outlines policies related to Community Improvement and supports a CIP for the three Regional Centres/downtown areas.

The Municipal Act and Planning Act includes policies and regulations regarding Community Improvement Plans.

5.0 Financial / Budget Assessment

In February 2023, the Township, with assistance from Regional economic development staff, applied for funding through Ontario's Rural Economic Development (RED) program to help undertake a review of the Downtown CIP. The RED grant was approved to fund 50% of eligible costs for this project up to a maximum amount of \$37,539.30. The Region of Durham through the Economic Development department also contributed \$10,000 towards this project.

The total budget for the CIP review update used as part of the RED grant, which includes a review of the CIP and a marketing and communications plan, was \$75,078.60.

The Township's approved 2023 budget included funds of \$30,000 for the Downtown CIP review project and the funds at year-end were transferred to the committed projects reserve. These funds will cover the Township's anticipated portion of this project at \$27,539.30.

The budget for this portion of the project to review and update the Downtown CIP is \$46,390 excluding HST, which is within the overall project budget.

In addition to the review and update of the Downtown CIP, there will also be works involved (and additional expenses) related to the marketing and communications plan. The total budget remaining for this component of the project is approximately \$28,688.

The 2024 budget included \$20,000 for community improvement plan incentives with \$15,000 funded through reserves and \$5,000 covered by the tax levy. Based on already approved grants, there is approximately \$10,000 remaining for the Downtown CIP program in 2024.

There will be ongoing annual budget implications to implement the various programs and recommendations of the Downtown CIP. In response to feedback received and to recognize that overall construction costs have increased, the revised Downtown CIP proposes to increase some of the maximum financial incentive values. To provide some context, over the past 10 years, the total CIP incentives awarded ranged from \$4,000 to \$32,000 on an annual basis. In reviewing some of the proposed changes to the Downtown CIP, the same applications and potential incentives could range from \$5,000 to \$45,000.

For reference purposes, in 2024, the Township of Uxbridge budgeted \$30,000 for their Downtown CIP for incentives under the Building, Façade and Signage grant program. All other programs are dealt with on a case-by-case basis. The Township of Scugog has budgeted \$50,000 for their Downtown CIP.

The annual budget implications for implementation of the CIP depend on Council's financial commitment to the project and the community uptake and eligibility each year. It is important to note that the successful implementation of a CIP will always be based on Council's support for ongoing financial contributions to the various recommended programs.

As part of the 2025 budget discussions, staff would suggest Council consider an overall budget of \$25,000 for the CIP program, to be funded through the tax levy. Any unspent funds would go into a reserve at the end of the year and form part of the discussion for the 2026 budget.

5.1 Asset Management

n/a

6.0 Climate Change Impacts

The Downtown CIP provides financial incentives which help to promote rehabilitation and reuse of existing buildings within the downtown cores. Some of the incentive programs can help to make existing structures more energy efficient and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

7.0 Communications

The work plan for this project involved public and stakeholder consultation to obtain input. In addition to a virtual Open House and Statutory Public Meeting, meetings were held with key stakeholders and there were presentations to Township Council and the Brock Board of Trade. The recommended Downtown CIP is revised based on feedback received throughout the process. Attachment 4 includes a summary of the feedback received and the project team's response.

As part of the next steps, a marketing and communications plan will be developed to promote the updated CIP and associated incentives.

8.0 Conclusion

Over the past 8 months, the project team has worked to undertake a review and update of the Downtown CIP, including several consultation opportunities. Based on the feedback received, the recommended CIPA and Downtown CIP are being presented to Council for a decision.

9.0 Recommendations

Be it resolved that staff report 2024-DS-008, regarding the Downtown Community Improvement Plan Recommendation Report, be received;

That Council endorse the new Downtown Community Improvement Plan and Community Improvement Project Areas found in Attachments 1 and 2; and

That the draft by-laws found in Attachments 1, 2 and 3 be adopted by Council at the June 24 Council meeting.

Attachments:

Attachment 1 – Draft By-law for Community Improvement Project Areas

Attachment 2 – Draft By-law for Downtown Community Improvement Plan

Attachment 3 – Draft By-law to Amend Delegation of Authority By-law

Attachment 4 – Comment and Response Matrix