



## 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: RED Grant Program Application**

**Date of Report: January 4, 2023**

**Date of Meeting: January 9, 2023**

**Report No: 2023-DS-001**

#### 1.0 Issue / Origin

Ontario's Rural Economic Development (RED) program provides cost-share funding to support activities that create strong rural communities in Ontario, and opens doors to rural economic development through:

- funding assistance to address barriers to economic development, better position rural communities to attract and retain jobs and investment, and enhance economic growth;
- funding to build community capacity and support for economic development in Ontario's rural communities;
- investments in rural communities to help diversify and grow local economies.

The next intake for funding applications under the RED program will be open on January 23, 2023.

#### 2.0 Background

##### Downtown Community Improvement Plan

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 9 years, several local 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 adjustments and updates are necessary for successful implementation of the Plan.

### On-farm Diversified Uses

The Township has a large rural area, and the agricultural sector is and will continue to be a significant part of the Township's economy. As the rural economy changes, there is a stronger demand for on-farm diversification, and other agricultural-related uses.

In 2016, the Province released Guidelines on Permitted Uses in Ontario's Prime Agricultural Areas to help municipalities interpret the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) with respect to permitted uses in prime agricultural areas. The intent is to preserve and protect the agricultural sector, while allowing for small-scale on-farm diversified uses, provided these uses are compatible with and do not negatively impact neighbouring farms and businesses.

The Township's Official Plan (OP) provides the policy support at a high level for agricultural-related uses, agri-businesses and secondary uses that produce value-added agricultural products from the farm operation.

However, the Township's Zoning By-law 287-78-PL (which was approved in 1978) is quite limiting with respect to permitted uses in the Rural (RU) zone. A more comprehensive review is needed with regards to agricultural-related uses and on-farm diversified uses to help diversify the Township's rural economy.

## **3.0 Analysis**

Township staff would like to work with Regional Economic Development staff to submit an application for funding assistance under the Provincial RED program to:

- i. Help undertake a review and update of the Downtown CIP, and
- ii. Review the Township's Zoning By-law with respect to agricultural-related uses and on-farm diversified uses to help expand permitted uses within the rural area.

These 2 initiatives will help to support downtown revitalization and address zoning barriers that will help to diversify the local rural economy.

The RED program will only fund up to 50% of a project and therefore, the Township also needs to contribute some funds.

In 2022, \$20,000 was included in the budget for the Downtown CIP program and no applications were received under the CIP program. Another \$20,000 was included in the 2022 budget for main street revitalization and no funds were spent. Staff recommend that these funds, totalling \$40,000, be used as the Township's contribution to the Downtown CIP review and Zoning By-law review focused on on-farm diversified uses, which that can be used to get more funding through the RED program.

#### **4.0 Related Policies / Procedures**

Section 4.6 of the Township's OP outlines policies related to Community Improvement and supports a CIP for the 3 Regional Centres/downtown areas.

Policies within the Township's OP and Zoning By-law 287-78-PL guide permitted uses throughout the Township and within the rural area. Strategic direction 2.2.7 in the Township's OP speaks to protecting rural areas and agricultural lands by supporting the continued prosperity of agriculture with complementary agri-business activities and agri-tourism. Section 3.2.1 of the Township's OP includes policies related to agricultural lands and support for agriculture-related uses and agri-businesses.

#### **5.0 Financial / Budget Assessment**

Township staff are requesting that unspent funds from the 2022 budget, totalling \$40,000 for the Downtown CIP and main street revitalization be re-allocated as the Township's contribution as part of an application for financial assistance under the Provincial RED program. The funds were previously set aside in the Committed Projects Reserve.

#### **6.0 Climate Change Impacts**

N/A

#### **7.0 Communications**

Should the Township be successful in getting a grant through the RED program, public consultation will be undertaken as part of the review process for the Downtown CIP and a statutory public meeting will be held as part of the Zoning By-law Amendment process for on-farm diversified uses.

#### **8.0 Conclusion**

The Provincial RED program provides an opportunity for the Township to obtain additional funding to help review and update policies that will help to improve the local downtowns and the rural economy. Staff recommend that Council authorize staff to work with Regional economic development staff to submit an application under the RED program for funding to complete a review of the Downtown CIP and zoning to address on-farm diversified uses and approve the use of unspent funds from the 2022 budget as the Township's contribution as part of these initiatives.

## **9.0 Recommendation**

That staff report 2023-DS-001, regarding Funding for a RED Grant Application, be received; and  
That Council approve \$40,000 from the 2022 budget (from unspent funds in the CIP and main street revitalization accounts) be used as the Township's contribution as part of an application under the RED program.