



# **IN VIEW**

## **The Township of Augusta Community Improvement Plan**

August 2020



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## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 WHAT IS A COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN (CIP)?

A Community Improvement Plan (CIP) is a planning and economic development tool for municipalities to promote community revitalization and often serves as a catalyst for achieving economic, community planning and urban development goals. Municipalities use CIPs to enable a wide range of programs and policies that encourage private investment, and to support strategic municipal initiatives aimed at the revitalization of targeted areas. CIPs can provide several benefits for a community, including:

- Stimulating private sector investment in targeted areas through grants and loans provided by the Town;
- Promoting revitalization and place-making to attract tourism, business investment, and economic development opportunities;
- Developing affordable housing;
- Promoting brownfield cleanup and redevelopment;
- Enhancing streetscapes, landscaping, building façades, and signage;
- Improving energy efficiency; and
- Encouraging the effective use of community infrastructure.

Under Section 106 of the Municipal Act, municipalities are prohibited from directly or indirectly assisting industrial or commercial enterprises. However, municipalities are exempt from these restrictions if they are exercising their authority under Section 28 of the Planning Act. Section 28 of the Planning Act enables municipalities to:

- Designate by by-law a specific property, area, or entire community covered by an Official Plan as a community improvement project area;
- Acquire, hold, clear, grade, or otherwise prepare land for community improvement;
- Construct, repair, rehabilitate, or improve buildings on municipal land;
- Sell, lease or otherwise dispose of municipal land;
- Provide grants or loans to owners, tenants and their assignees within the community improvement area to pay the whole or any part of identified eligible costs; and
- Provide property tax assistance for environmental remediation purposes.

A municipality's Official Plan must contain policies to enable the preparation of a CIP, and the municipality also requires a by-law designating a Community Improvement Project Area.

Under Section 28 of the Planning Act, once an area has been designated a community improvement area, a variety of financial assistance programs may be implemented. These programs may include grants or loans to property owners and tenants to help cover the costs of improvements to eligible properties.

In general, CIPs are not intended to support initiatives on open greenfield lands, but rather to improve conditions in areas with existing development. The most common use of a CIP is to enable grants to assist private property owners in improving their properties, including undertaking improvements to façades, signage, and landscaping,

A key component of a CIP is the eligibility criteria that establish the conditions and goals by which an application for a financial incentive will be evaluated. For example, to be eligible for a façade improvement grant, a CIP may require that the proposed improvements be consistent with specific urban design guidelines or criteria. Through the thoughtful identification of eligibility criteria for financial incentive programs that are tailored to the municipality, the CIP can advance a wide range of planning, urban design, and economic development objectives.

## 1.2 PURPOSE OF THIS CIP

In June 2020, Township of Augusta staff were advised that a CIP would be required to disburse and report on the municipality's allocation of Main Street Revitalization Initiative funds from the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs by October 2020. The Council of the Township of Augusta subsequently directed Township of Augusta staff to prepare a CIP, and to undertake a planning- and economic development-focused community survey to inform the development of the CIP and other strategic plans.

The Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing was consulted to inform the development of this CIP, which describes the framework for the preparation of the CIP, establishes the Plan's vision and goals, identifies the initial financial incentive program, and sets out implementation and monitoring strategies for the CIP. This CIP is intended to be an initial effort that will be amended and expanded on as per the future directions outlined in Section 8, then be promoted and implemented with the assistance of the Township of Augusta's newly-established Community Development Committee.

## 1.3 CIP PROJECT AREA

The Township of Augusta has a land area of approximately 77,754 acres (314.66 km<sup>2</sup>). These lands include settlement areas, commercial properties, rural agricultural operations, and the Maitland Industrial Park, all of which could benefit from a CIP.

Thus, to maximize available benefits, consideration for grants and partnerships, and opportunities for community improvement, the entire municipality has been selected as the most appropriate Community Improvement Project Area for revitalization through the CIP process.



**Figure 1: Community Improvement Project Area**  
**All Lands Within Township of Augusta Municipal Boundary**

## 2 PLANNING CONTEXT & POLICY REVIEW

### 2.1 PLANNING ACT

The Planning Act outlines the tools, methods and procedures that municipalities can use to plan for and regulate the use of land and buildings in Ontario. The Act also outlines the powers that municipalities can exercise through a CIP.

Section 28(1) of the Planning Act defines community improvement as: “...the planning or replanning, design or redesign, resubdivision, clearance, development or redevelopment, construction, reconstruction and rehabilitation, improvement of energy efficiency, or any of them, of a community improvement project area, and the provision of such residential, commercial, industrial, public, recreational, institutional, religious, charitable or other uses, buildings, structures, works, improvements or facilities, or spaces therefore, as may be appropriate or necessary.”

Section 28 of the Planning Act allows municipalities whose Official Plans contain provisions regarding community improvement to prepare and adopt Community Improvement Plans for designated Community Improvement Project Areas (Section 28(2)).

A Community Improvement Project Area is the area to which the Community Improvement Plan applies, and is passed as a by-law by Council (Section 28(3)). An area can be designated as a Community Improvement Project Area for various reasons. The criteria for designation include:

“...age, dilapidation, overcrowding, faulty arrangement, unsuitability of buildings or for any other environmental, social or community economic development reasons.” (Section 28(1))

The breadth of the definition allows municipalities the flexibility to address specific local community improvement issues, such as downtown revitalization, as well as issues that are more generally present in a municipality at large, such as the presence of brownfields.

Where a by-law designating a Community Improvement Project Area has been passed, Council may adopt a plan in accordance with certain subsections of Section 17 of the Planning Act.

Section 17 outlines the statutory process for adopting the document, including the provision of at least one public meeting, which must be held no earlier than 20 days after publishing the notice of the public meeting and making the CIP publicly available for review.

Under the Planning Act, a CIP may be used by the municipality to:

“construct, repair, rehabilitate or improve buildings on land acquired or held by it in the community improvement project area in conformity with the Community Improvement Plan, and sell, lease or otherwise dispose of any such buildings and land appurtenant thereto.” (Section 28(6a)) and/or:

“sell, lease or otherwise dispose of any land acquired or held by it in the community improvement project area any person or governmental authority for use in conformity with the community improvement plan.” (Section 28(6b))

This permits the municipality to make direct interventions to improve properties, or to build new buildings and facilities, as needed.

Under Section 28(7), the municipality may issue grants and loans to property owners and tenants to help pay for eligible costs. Eligible costs are broadly defined to include “costs related to environmental site assessment, environmental remediation, development, redevelopment, construction and reconstruction of lands and buildings for rehabilitation purposes or for the provision of energy efficient uses, buildings, structures,



works, improvements or facilities” (Section 28(7.1)). Under no circumstance can the amount of a grant or loan made in respect of particular lands and buildings exceed the eligible cost of the Community Improvement Plan with respect to those lands and buildings (Section 28(7.3)).

The Planning Act also contains provisions that allow the municipality to enter into agreements concerning any grants or loans it may issue, and permit the municipality to register the agreement against the title of the land (Section 28(11)).

Once Council is satisfied that a Community Improvement Plan has been carried out, Council may pass a by-law to dissolve the community improvement project area. Following the dissolution of the project area, any previously effected Community Improvement Plans are rendered non-applicable (Section 28(13)).

In addition to Section 28, Section 69 of the Planning Act allows municipalities to reduce or waive the amount of a fee in respect of a planning application where it feels payment is unreasonable. Many Community Improvement Plans offer application fee refunds as a financial incentive.

## 2.2 MUNICIPAL ACT

Section 106 of the Municipal Act prohibits municipalities from directly or indirectly assisting any manufacturing business or other industrial or commercial enterprise through the granting of bonuses (Section 106(1)). Prohibited actions include:

- giving or lending any property of the municipality, including money;
- guaranteeing borrowing;
- leasing or selling any property of the municipality at below fair market value; or
- giving a total or partial exemption from any levy, charge or fee. (Section 106(2))

Section 106(3) of the Municipal Act provides an exception to the above, indicating that a municipality may exercise powers under Section 28(6), (7) or (7.2) of the Planning Act or Section 365.1 of the Municipal Act.

By including an exception to the Section 106(1), the Municipal Act grants a municipality powers and tools for community improvement. These include tools related to the remediation and redevelopment of brownfield properties. Brownfield properties are considered to be properties that are (or are perceived to be) contaminated as a result of a prior land use (for example, a property where a Phase II Environmental Site Assessment has been conducted and which did not meet the standards specified under Section 168.4(1) of the Environmental Protection Act). Under Section 365.1 of the Municipal Act, municipalities may provide property tax assistance to eligible properties to offset all or part of the remediation costs. The Municipal Act also grants municipalities the authority to cancel or defer the municipal portion of property taxes on eligible properties.



Municipalities may also apply to the province to match the municipal tax rebate with the education portion of the property tax through its Brownfields Financial Tax Incentive Program (BFTIP). Under the program, the province can cancel all or part of the education property taxes of a property for up to three years. However, applicants to this program must obtain approval from the Minister of Finance, and there must be a CIP in place for the property before they may apply. It should be noted that other municipalities' experience with the BFTIP indicates that the application process can be complex and the turnaround time for a decision from the province can be considerable. However, the program should be considered for inclusion in the CIP. The Township may choose to pursue a BFTIP on behalf of a landowner in a "trial run" and, if the process is too onerous, cease to use the program.

Section 107 of the Municipal Act outlines municipalities' powers to make grants, including the power to provide a grant in the form of a loan or by guaranteeing a loan, subject to criteria outlined in Section 106. Additional powers include:

- selling or leasing land for nominal consideration, or granting land;
- providing land owned and occupied by the municipality for use by anyone, upon terms established by council; and
- selling, leasing, or disposing of any municipal property at a nominal price, or by way of a grant, to provide for the use of the property on terms established by council.

Additionally, the Municipal Act permits municipalities to provide tax relief to owners of eligible heritage properties (Section 365.2). Municipalities may pass a by-law to establish a local program that provides tax reductions or refunds to owners of eligible heritage properties. To be eligible, properties must be designated under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act, or part of a Heritage Conservation District designated under Part V of the Ontario Heritage Act, or subject to a separate heritage conservation agreement between the owner and the municipality. This type of program may be identified as a component of a municipal leadership strategy through a CIP. However, these grant programs are typically implemented and administered separately by municipalities from the CIP.

### 2.3 ONTARIO HERITAGE ACT

The Ontario Heritage Act is relevant to the preparation of a CIP, as it may support heritage conservation through financial incentives or municipal leadership programs. Under Section 39(1) of the Ontario Heritage Act, municipalities may pass by-laws to implement separate grant or loan programs to help owners of heritage properties designated under Part IV of the Act to pay for alterations to the property, in accordance with the terms established by the by-laws.

The Township of Augusta does not currently administer any grant or loan programs for the preservation and maintenance of heritage properties or buildings.

## 2.4 ACCESSIBILITY FOR ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) establishes the framework for the development of province-wide, mandatory accessibility standards in all areas of daily life. It guides building design through amendments to the Ontario Building Code, and also guides the design of public spaces that are considered to be “new construction” or are undergoing major changes to existing features. Revitalization and redevelopment efforts supported by the CIP will need to consider AODA standards.

## 2.5 PROVINCIAL POLICY STATEMENT (2020)

The 2020 Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) outlines the province’s policies regarding community planning in Ontario. Though the PPS does not explicitly reference Community Improvement Plans, it supports the revitalization of Ontario’s communities through specific policies.

As stated in the PPS: “The Provincial Policy Statement focuses growth and development within urban and rural settlement areas while supporting the viability of rural areas. It recognizes that the wise management of land use change may involve directing, promoting or sustaining development.”

Policy 1.1.3 indicates that the vitality and regeneration of settlement areas is critical to the long-term economic prosperity of our communities. Policy 1.1.4.1 promotes the regeneration of rural areas, which are acknowledged in the PPS as being important to the economic success of the Province and our quality of life.

In Policy 1.3.1 of the PPS, planning authorities are expected to promote economic development and competitiveness by providing opportunities for a diversified economic base, and facilitating the conditions for economic investment by identifying strategic sites for investment, and seeking to address potential barriers to investment.

Policies 1.6.2 and 1.6.3 ask planning authorities to promote green infrastructure, optimize the use of existing infrastructure, and consider opportunities for adaptive re-use, wherever feasible.

Long-term economic prosperity is to be supported, as per Policy 1.7.1, by promoting opportunities for economic development and community investment-readiness; maintaining and, where possible, enhancing the vitality and viability of downtowns and main streets; promoting the redevelopment of brownfield sites; and providing opportunities for sustainable tourism development.

## 2.6 UNITED COUNTIES OF LEEDS AND GRENVILLE OFFICIAL PLAN (2015)

The Official Plan of the United Counties of Leeds and Grenville provides growth management and land use policy direction for the Counties’ ten member municipalities, including the Township of Augusta. Local municipal Official Plans are to confirm to the policies of the Counties’ Official Plan.

Policy 2.4.3, on Community Improvement and Revitalization, discusses the powers of local municipalities with designated Community Improvement Project Areas and Community Improvement Plans. These include the authority to offer incentives to stimulate or leverage private and/or public sector investment to maintain and promote attractive, healthy and safe living and working environments through community improvement.

Policy 7.6.6, specifically focused on Community Improvement Plans, recommends that the goal of a local municipality's CIP will be to foster and co-ordinate the physical improvements and maintenance of older or dilapidated areas of a community for environmental, social or community economic reasons. The Counties' Official Plan encourages local municipalities to include Community Improvement policies in their Official Plans to enable the preparation of CIP documents, and to utilize CIP provisions to proactively stimulate community improvement, rehabilitation and revitalization.

## 2.7 TOWNSHIP OF AUGUSTA OFFICIAL PLAN (2012)

The Township of Augusta's Official Plan (OP) was adopted in May 2012 sets out a policy framework to guide the Township's growth, development and change through the year 2029. It identifies Council's vision for the future of Augusta Township, and seven guiding principles which address the growth and development of housing, infrastructure, and the employment base; as well as the preservation of cultural heritage, the natural environment, rural and agricultural spaces, and public health and safety.

- Our Vision: "Augusta Township will manage land use to ensure a balanced, sustainable environment and communities which provide a sense of place respectful of Augusta's unique historical, cultural and natural heritage where citizens can enjoy an unparalleled quality of life."

Specific policies relate to economic development, heritage preservation, brownfield redevelopment, agriculture, infrastructure, energy, innovative technologies, and more.

Section 9.5 provides policy direction for the implementation of Community Improvement Plans, in accordance with the powers conferred upon Council by the Planning Act, the Municipal Act, and other applicable statutes:

Having designated the entire Municipality as a Community Improvement Area (Section 9.5.1), Council may, by by-law designate all or any lands within the Township of Augusta as a Community Improvement Project Area whereupon Council shall undertake the preparation of a Community Improvement Plan for such area or areas.

9.5.3 Subject to Section 28 of the Planning Act, in pursuing the objectives of the Official Plan's Community Improvement Policies, Council may:

- Sell, lease or dispose of lands and buildings acquired or held by the municipality;
- Give loans and grants to owners, tenants and their assignees for rehabilitation purposes;

- Provide tax assistance by freezing or canceling the municipal portion of the property tax on eligible properties for remediation purposes; and
- Issue debentures with the approval of the Ontario Municipal Board.

9.5.4 The policy objectives are as follows:

- To upgrade and maintain essential municipal services and community facilities.
- To ensure that community improvement projects are carried out within the built up areas of the Township.
- To ensure the maintenance of the existing building stock.
- To preserve heritage buildings.
- To facilitate the remediation, rehabilitation and \or redevelopment of existing brownfield sites;
- To encourage private sector investment and strengthen the economic base.
- To enhance the visual appearance of Community Improvement Areas.

In selecting a Community Improvement Project Area, specific considerations related to the redevelopment of commercial core areas include: the need for building rehabilitation, visual appearance and aesthetics, strengthening the economic base of the community. Municipal services, phasing of improvements, brownfield redevelopment, land boundaries and land use designations are also to be examined.

For properties proposed for acquisition and/or rehabilitation, the Township is to consider:

- The estimated costs, means of financing and the staging and administration of projects;
- The provision of sufficient flexibility, as circumstances warrant, where project and costing revisions are necessary;
- The phasing of improvements and the means of their implementation; and
- Citizen involvement during the preparation of a Community Improvement Plan.

Council shall implement the general principles and policies of community improvement:

- Through participation in programs with senior levels of government;
- Through the encouragement of the private sector to utilize available government programs and subsidies;
- By encouraging the rehabilitation of existing buildings and structures which will be used for a purpose compatible with the surrounding area.
- Council shall have regard for the phasing of improvements in order to permit a logical sequence of events to occur without unnecessary hardship to area residents and the business community; and prioritize improvements with regard for available municipal funding.

## 2.8 TOWNSHIP OF AUGUSTA ZONING BY-LAW (2012)

The Township of Augusta Comprehensive Zoning By-law 2965-2012 was adopted by Council in October 2012, and affects all lands within the Township. It regulates the use of land, buildings and structures within Township of Augusta, and sets out requirements concerning lot areas and dimensions, building heights and locations, and parking, among other provisions to guide development within the Township of Augusta. It contains a set of general provisions that apply to all lands within the Township and Planning Area, as well as specific provisions that apply to individual zones.

The following zones are located within the Township of Augusta settlement areas:

- Village Residential (RV);
- Village Commercial (CV);
- Highway Commercial (CH);
- Village Industrial (MV);
- Industrial Park (MP);
- Institutional (I);
- Provincially Significant Wetlands (PSW);
- Rural (RU); and
- Rural Exception Zones (RUX-3, RUX-9).

## 3 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

### 3.1 GREAT AUGUSTA COMMUNITY SURVEY (2020)

This planning- and economic development-focused survey was directed by Augusta Council to inform the development of the CIP and other strategic planning documents. The online survey had 20 questions, featured a mix of open- and closed-ended questions, and ran online for 15 days in July 2020.

The survey was advertised and featured in multiple local and area newspapers, promoted on the Township Facebook page and shared on an Augusta is Awesome Facebook page, and was advertised with post office posters and outdoor digital sign messaging. Augusta Public Library staff printed survey “bookmarks” and shared them with individuals signing out materials. Targeted emails were also shared directly with Augusta’s business networking group, Committee members, and local associations.

Results from the 168 respondents, including 166 residents, to the Great Augusta Community Survey captured double-digit responses (i.e., 10 or more) from all age categories, received a 99% response rate to all closed-ended questions, and indicated that Augusta residents are generally happy with life in the Township, given:

- 88% of respondents feel that Augusta Township is a good place to raise a family
- 85% of respondents feel that Augusta offers a desirable quality of life, and would recommend living in the Township to friends

When residents were asked to describe, in 1-5 words, what they think of when they hear the name “Augusta,” the terms “Home” and “Community” were two of the most commonly typed. A significant number of residents appreciate the Township’s open spaces and rural setting, which also offers good proximity to services and amenities in larger centres.

Although only one quarter of Augusta residents (25.6%) expressed the notion there is not enough access to green space, parks or natural areas, many responses to open-ended questions requested improved access to the St. Lawrence River and beaches, additional trails for walking and cycling, and upgrades to parks and playgrounds.

In response to a question on whether artists are encouraged to express themselves in Augusta, only 28.3% of respondents answered “Yes”. Just 37% of respondents feel there is enough affordable housing available in Augusta.

Just 7% of respondents feel there are enough meaningful job opportunities available in Augusta Township, and a common theme in responses to open-ended questions was a desire for more jobs, business start-ups, growth in the industrial park, and economic development efforts in general. A good number of respondents expressed excitement about the prospect of the Aqua World Resort starting up in their community as well.

To encourage economic development efforts, three times as many respondents said they would support the use of tax incentives to retain existing businesses and attract new businesses to Augusta, compared to those that would not. The entrepreneurial spirit is also alive and well in Augusta, as nearly than 1 in 3 (31.7%) of respondents say they would consider starting a business in the Township.

Residents want to receive good value for their taxes, and favour was expressed for expanded recycling and environmentally friendly initiatives, and sustainable development. Residents are interested in seeing improvements to buildings, structures, and properties; stores and industry; heritage and environmental preservation, as well as initiatives to support local food production. Requests for technological improvements in cellular and broadband service were made by less than 1 in 5 respondents (18%), even as the COVID-19 pandemic persists, which is comparable to the 19% of business representatives that identified internet service as a barrier to business in the 2018 Business Retention & Expansion (BR&E) Survey,.

### 3.2 BUSINESS RETENTION + EXPANSION (BR+E) SURVEY (2018)

The BR+E program consisted of trained staff and volunteers who visited businesses and conducted confidential interviews with senior management or ownership between June 2018 and March 2019. 40 businesses were surveyed in Augusta Township.





The top 4 responses offered by business representatives for Augusta Township to focus on out to 2030 were: business attraction, business incentives, commercial development, and tourism development. It was further recommended that a workforce attraction strategy be developed to attract and retain more millennials and young families.

Support of the municipality was rated important by 92% of respondents. However, 59% indicated that they had not accessed funding or business support services from public or not-for-profit agencies. It was suggested that the Township create more awareness and promote business funding programs applicable to Augusta.

68% of those surveyed indicated they purchase more than half of their supply chain locally, and 70% of businesses answered that they have no difficulty retaining employees. With respect to investment attraction, participants felt that industrial park signage, infrastructure, and services are important; and new businesses, ventures, and investors should be sought out.

A minority (19%) of businesses reported internet access as a barrier, which may indicate that internet service is generally satisfactory, or that internet access is not generally a main factor in the operation of Augusta companies

83% of respondents indicated that their business had the capacity and/or the interest to increase business activity, and 67% suggested that the community could potentially provide some assistance to support their expansion plans. 55% of participants indicated they conduct research and development activities or are involved in other types of innovation, thus the majority of businesses were already actively pursuing improvements.

All in all, Augusta Township was rated by 90% of the 40 businesses surveyed as a good to excellent place to do business, with 69% of businesses having been in operation for 11 or more years.

The results of the BR+E survey complement the results of the more current Great Augusta Community Survey. Both sets of survey results indicate that members of the (business) community are generally happy with the Township, yet are also open to considering improvements to both their business operations and residents' quality of life factors.

### 3.3 PARKS, RECREATION & CULTURE COMMUNITY SURVEY (2017)

This survey, which ran between February to May 2017, collected approximately 248 responses. It drew its largest number of respondents from Maitland and North Augusta (between 27%-28% for both), and aligned similarly with the responses received on the Great Augusta Community Survey in 2020.



Only 13% of respondents selected that they would not support tax measures to maintain and improve existing parks and trails, acquire more parks and natural areas, or develop more trails, parks and recreation facilities, indicating that many more are open to progressive taxation.

Similarly, only 16% of respondents described themselves as being unsatisfied or very unsatisfied overall with the level of park, open space, and facility maintenance in Augusta Township, suggesting that residents were generally happy with the park amenities and opportunities that are available.

41% felt that upgrades were needed to existing parks, and 56% wanted to see more recreation programs and activities provided. The type of park voted as being needed most was trail systems (57%).

In answer to a question on which of the following benefits of parks, recreation services and open space were most important to them, 52% said connecting people together, building stronger families and neighbourhoods; and 52% voted for providing opportunities to enjoy nature/outdoors.

These themes tie in very well with the concepts of community improvement and enhanced business development, since survey respondents asking for more connective infrastructure and activities may be likely to support connections to areas of community and commerce as well.

#### **4. IDENTIFICATION OF CIP OPPORTUNITIES**

##### Land Use Opportunities

- Vacant storefronts both in rural destination nodes and in other areas of Township create areas of inactivity and empty space, limiting attractiveness of the area
- Vacant properties present potential for infill and redevelopment
- Opportunities are there to improve the mix of retail, services, and institutional uses in commercial core areas
- Potential exists for more public gathering spaces and plazas
- Opportunities for affordable housing development on upper floors of commercial storefronts in commercial cores
- Brownfield sites require remediation and rehabilitation
- Zoning permits a reasonable mix of land uses
- Potential for an increase in service-based businesses in settlement areas with and without existing congregating commercial uses (e.g. restaurants, cafés, general stores)
- Opportunities to improve connectivity between rural destination nodes for pedestrians and cyclists

### Aesthetic and Marketing Opportunities

- Developing a more cohesive, vibrant, and accessible streetscape within rural destination nodes of the Township.
- Introducing aesthetic character to buildings with minimal architectural detailing
- Refurbishing buildings which have deteriorated due to insufficient maintenance
- Coordinating and complimenting façade styles and materials of neighbouring properties
- Developing the attractiveness of storefronts with presently limited window displays and “We Are Open” signage
- Emphasizing and prioritizing the improvement of properties in closest proximity to rural destination nodes and along gateway approaches to those areas
- Recognizing that details matter, such as individual lights, doors, and signs
- Dispelling statements such as “It’s just a side wall” or “It’s just a parking lot”
- Opportunities for increased street trees, vines, flowers, and planters
- Garbage dumpsters in plain sight can detract from the overall aesthetics of an area
- Opportunities to implement logos/banners/street signage to brand rural destination nodes, commercial cores and/or settlement areas
- Public seating, public gathering spaces and parks can draw crowds within rural destination nodes
- Integration of public programming / amenities at key locations (e.g., pop-up book share boxes; pop-up piano shelters) can generate activity and animate streets

### Commercial Access and Parking Opportunities

- Introducing additional on-street, off-street, and accessible/barrier-free parking
- Significant opportunities to incorporate visible and attractive bicycle parking at businesses and public buildings
- Aging population will have greater accessibility needs, resulting in increased need to retrofit existing buildings and create streetscapes that meet accessible design standards
- Lack of outdoor seating/ street furniture along main streets in downtown core
- Opportunities exist for retrofits to improve accessibility
- Opportunities to improve marked crosswalks and pedestrian crossings
- Assess and address limited parking spaces for some commercial businesses

### Waterfront Access and Commercial Opportunities

- Access and viewpoints to the St. Lawrence River and other waterfront areas (e.g., along the South Nation River) can be enhanced
- Waterfront areas could use more public seating
- More accessible parks, boat launches, dive sites, and beaches are needed
- Public washrooms and change areas along the waterfront draw visitors
- Waterfront trails that connect to a broader trail network bring in travellers
- Waterfront playgrounds should be improved and upgraded

- Enhanced waterfront access and amenities generate opportunities for business growth, especially tourism-related and equipment rental operations

#### Leadership Opportunities

- Strong entrepreneurial spirit and enthusiasm exists amongst new business owners in commercial cores
- Longstanding business owners may need some encouragement to buy in to undertake improvements
- Potential for more home-based businesses and industries within residential properties in commercial cores to enhance services and signage
- Vacant or underutilized publicly-owned lands represent opportunities for municipal leadership initiatives (e.g. gateway features)

## **5 CIP VISION STATEMENT**

A Vision Statement is a formal, aspirational statement that identifies what is important to a community, now and in the future. It provides direction for the CIP grant programs.

Responses to the Great Augusta Community Survey identified key ideas for Augusta's future. These components were analyzed alongside previous survey results and the aims of existing strategic planning documents to build a Vision Statement for the community:

“Augusta Township is a community of opportunity; a modern and progressive rural township with redevelopment and reinvestment in view, showing leadership in community and economic development, and in social and environmental sustainability.

We support investments in our rural destination nodes, particularly those with congregating commercial uses, such as Maitland and North Augusta, as well as our broader commercial, industrial and agricultural sectors through the Community Improvement Plan to further enhance our highly-rated quality of life and promote both social and economic development.”

## **6 FINANCIAL INCENTIVE PROGRAM**

This section of the CIP establishes the initial financial incentive program that is intended to encourage private sector development and investment in the Township of Augusta. The incentive program presented is intended to respond to the local needs and opportunities to be addressed through this CIP.

The financial incentive program has been created to encourage private sector redevelopment in Augusta, particularly with respect to the Township's settlement areas with congregating commercial uses which combine to create rural destination nodes in the municipality.

The purpose, description, and eligibility requirements for the financial incentive program are outlined in this section. Eligible projects may also be augmented with other federal and provincial funding programs.

## 6.1 FAÇADE AND EXTERIOR IMPROVEMENT GRANT

### Purpose

The purpose of the Façade and Exterior Improvement Grant is to encourage aesthetic exterior improvements to commercial buildings, including accessibility features, lighting and energy efficiency, paint/siding, landscaping of properties, patios, window/door replacement, masonry work, art/murals, and attractive and pedestrian-oriented signage that contributes to the visual identity and character of the Township.

This grant supports continued maintenance of the building stock in the Township. It is intended to promote building and associated streetscape improvements and contribute to the ongoing development of vibrant and modern rural destination nodes. Rural destinations with commercial cores, such as main streets and downtowns which feature congregating commercial uses that promote community interaction (e.g., restaurants, cafes, general stores) are prime areas for the assignment of these matching funds.

### Grant Funding

A matching grant up to a total of half (50%) of the construction costs, to a maximum of \$5,000.

### Eligible Costs

1. The following eligible improvements apply to front, rear, or exterior building façades that front onto a public street:
  - a. façade restoration of brickwork, wood, masonry, and metal cladding;
  - b. repair or replacement of entablature, eaves, parapets, and other architectural details;
  - c. repair or replacement of windows and doors;
  - d. repair or replacement of signage;
  - e. repair, replacement, or addition of exterior lighting;
  - f. repair, replacement, or addition of awnings, marquees, and canopies;
  - g. replacement of façade elements that were originally in place during initial construction of the building;
  - h. redesigned shop fronts; and/or
  - i. such other improvements/repairs, as may be considered and approved by Council in consultation with the CIP Administrator and/or Review Panel;
2. Painting or installation of mural or other wall art of exterior side walls;
3. Installation of accessibility improvements including:
  - a. installation of new automatic doors;
  - b. installation of new wheelchair access ramps;
  - c. widening of public entryways;
  - d. Leveling or repairs to pathways/accesses and stairs; and/or
  - e. Other improvements designed to improve accessibility, subject to approval by the CIP Administrator and/or Review Panel.

4. Improvements to landscaping features, such as:
  - a. Professional landscaping, including installation of water-efficient ground cover using native plant species or tree planting;
  - b. Resodding, in conjunction with a larger landscaping improvement project (i.e. associated with other eligible projects in this grant);
  - c. Installation or improvement of decorative retaining walls or fences;
5. Replacement, repair, improvement, or installation of signage and associated lighting on building façades of commercial, office, mixed-use, and industrial properties in rural destination nodes.
  - a. Primary signs attached to buildings, particularly those that form part of a building façade's sign board area, or that are located above a building entrance or porch;
  - b. Hanging signs, which may be used either as primary signs or as secondary signs, to complement the main building signage; and
  - c. Stand-alone signs, associated with landscaping, located in front yards and stand-alone signs in rear yards.
6. Professional fees associated with the above improvements.

#### Program Details

A grant for a total of half (50%) of the construction costs, to a maximum of \$5,000.

#### Eligibility Criteria

1. Applications shall be in accordance with the application process set out in Section 7.5.
2. Only commercial, office, and mixed-use buildings and/or commercially-zoned properties are eligible for this grant.
3. Accessibility improvements applied for shall be in accordance with, or exceed, the requirements of the Ontario Building Code, as applicable to the property.
4. The maximum amount of a grant for professional design, architectural or landscape architectural services shall not exceed 50% of the grant that is calculated for eligible construction costs.

## **7 IMPLEMENTATION**

The successful implementation of the Township of Augusta CIP requires municipal leadership and a clear and comprehensive framework to guide the administration of the Plan, and ensure that the recommended financial incentive program achieves the intended outcomes and goals of this Plan.

This section sets out the interpretation, general administration structure, general eligibility requirements, application process, and other considerations related to the management of the CIP as well as its implementation, monitoring and evaluation in the Township of Augusta.

## 7.1 INTERPRETATION

This CIP must be read and interpreted in its entirety, and in conjunction with the Planning Act, Municipal Act, and all applicable municipal planning documents for the Township of Augusta.

The CIP shall be interpreted at the sole discretion of the Township of Augusta Council, in consultation with, or based on, advice from Township staff.

## 7.2 ADMINISTRATION

This Plan will be administered by the Township of Augusta, as part of the implementation of the Community Improvement policies of the Township of Augusta Official Plan.

The Community Improvement Project Area to which this Plan applies shall be as designated by by-law from time to time.

This Plan is intended to be implemented within a 1-year period. Council may review the Plan at any time to assess the degree of uptake and the overall success of the program, and may elect to amend and continue implementing the CIP beyond 1 year. Amendments or adjustments to this CIP may be made as described in Section 7.8 of this document.

Grant applications shall be processed, subject to the availability of funding as approved by Council. Council may determine that the objectives of the financial incentive program have been met, and decide to terminate or temporarily suspend funding, without the need for an amendment to the CIP.

Once Council is satisfied that this Plan has been carried out, it may enact a by-law dissolving the Community Improvement Project Area and rendering the Plan inoperative.

### 7.2.1 DESIGNATION OF ADMINISTRATOR AND APPROVAL AUTHORITY

Upon approval of this CIP, Council shall appoint one or more members of the existing Township staff as the CIP Administrator(s), to manage day-to-day implementation and approval of applications. The responsibilities of the Administrator would generally include corresponding with potential applicants for the financial incentive programs; coordinating application reviews with a Review Panel and/or Council; undertaking marketing activities; and monitoring and evaluation.

### 7.2.2 FINANCIAL INCENTIVE PROGRAM BUDGET

At its sole discretion, Council may establish a budget for financial incentive programs as part of its annual budget process. This budget may be subject to the availability of funding and other budget priorities, and is therefore not specified in this Plan. Any unused portion of the financial incentive program budget may be carried over to the





following year, or utilized for other public purposes as allowed by partner organizations or levels of government that make funds available.

Further, at its sole discretion and considering any recommendations made by the Administrator during monitoring and evaluation, Council may choose to allocate portions of the financial incentive program budget to specific programs, or choose not to allocate funding to certain programs.

The Township may discontinue any of the financial incentive programs recommended in this CIP at any time, without amending this Plan. However, applicants with approved tax assistance and/or grant payments shall still receive said payment, provided that they continue to meet the general and program-specific requirements and the terms of any executed Financial Incentive Program Agreement entered into with the Township.

### 7.3 GENERAL ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

All the financial incentive programs contained in this CIP are subject to the following general requirements, as well as the individual requirements specified under each program. The general and program-specific requirements contained in this CIP are not necessarily exhaustive, and the Township reserves the right to include other requirements and conditions as deemed necessary:

1. The subject property of an application must be located in the CIP Project Area as designated by municipal by-law;
2. All proposed projects must, in the opinion of the CIP Administrator(s), Review Panel and/or Council, generally contribute to achieving, and not conflict with, the vision of this CIP, and with the objectives of the applicable grant program.
3. Proposed projects must represent a permanent improvement to the property or building. For clarity, and without limiting the generality of the foregoing, trailers, sheds, hanging planters, and similar non-permanent elements shall not be considered eligible;
4. An application for any financial incentive program contained in this Plan must be submitted to the Township prior to the commencement of any works to which the financial incentive program applies and prior to an application for a building permit;
5. If the applicant is not the owner of the property, the applicant must provide written consent from the owner of the property to accompany the application;
6. An application for any financial incentive program contained in this CIP may require plans, estimates, contracts, reports, and other details, as requested by the Township, to satisfy the Township with respect to project costs and conformity to this CIP, as well as all municipal by-laws, policies, procedures, standards and guidelines, including Official Plan, Zoning By-law, and Site Plan requirements and approvals;
7. As a condition of application approval, the applicant may be required to enter into an agreement with the Township. The agreement shall specify the terms, duration, and default provisions of the incentive to be provided;



8. Where other sources of government and/or non-profit organization funding (federal, provincial, etc.) that can be applied against the eligible costs are anticipated or have been secured, these must be declared as part of the application. Accordingly, the grant may be reduced on a pro-rated basis;
9. The Township reserves the right to audit the cost of any and all works that have been approved under any of the financial incentive programs, at the expense of the applicant;
10. The Township is not responsible for any costs incurred by an applicant in relation to any of the programs, including costs incurred in anticipation of a tax assistance and/or grant payment;
11. If the applicant is in default of any of the general or program specific requirements, or any other requirements of the Township, the Township may delay, reduce or cancel the approved tax assistance and/or grant payment and require repayment of the approved tax assistance and/or grant;
12. Township staff, officials, and/or agents may inspect any property that is the subject of an application for any of the financial incentive programs offered by the Township;
13. No two programs may be used to pay for the same eligible cost;
14. The total of all tax assistance and grants provided in respect of the subject property may not exceed the eligible cost of the improvements to that property;
15. All expenses that are eligible for the incentive programs contained herein must be paid in full and the amount of the incentive shall be reimbursed as a grant to the applicant. Grants shall only be paid out when the work has been completed and paid invoices are submitted to the Town;
16. Outstanding work orders from the Township's Fire Department or Building Department must be addressed prior to grant approval; and
17. Applications for financial incentive programs must meet the eligibility criteria set out for the incentive program, as well as the general policies and requirements for submitting applications outlined in the CIP.

#### 7.4 APPLICATION PROCESS

The recommended process for submitting a financial incentive program application and the Town's process for accepting and evaluating applications is described below:

##### Step 1: Review and Evaluation of an Accepted Application

Applications for projects which are determined to align with the vision of the CIP and the eligible categories of the grant program will be recommended for approval by a CIP Administrator. A recommending report may be prepared and submitted to the Review Panel and/or Council for review and approval. Funding for the CIP financial incentive programs and individual grant applications is allocated solely at the discretion of CIP Administrator(s) and/or Review Panel and Council.

##### Step 2: Application Approval and Financial Incentive Program Agreement

Upon approval of an accepted application, a Financial Incentive Program Agreement ("the Agreement") will be prepared by a CIP Administrator and entered into between the



Township and the property owner and/or owner-authorized applicant. The Agreement will outline the nature of the works to be completed, the details of the financial incentive programs, and a timeframe for project completion and grant payment(s). A copy of the Agreement will be provided to the applicant.

### Step 3: Completion of Community Improvement Works and Grant Payment(s)

Upon execution of the Agreement, the applicant may begin the approved community improvement works. In the case of grants, payment will occur once the approved works have been completed, as outlined in the Agreement, to the satisfaction of the CIP Administrator(s) and/or Review Panel and Council.

Before the payment is issued, the applicant may be required to provide the CIP Administrator(s) and/or Review Panel with final supporting documentation, such as photographic evidence of the completed works, invoice for all eligible work completed, and proof of payment to contractors, etc., to the satisfaction of the CIP Administrator(s) and/or Review Panel.

The CIP Administrator(s) and/or Review Panel and other Township staff, as applicable, may perform a site visit and inspection of the building or property, as necessary, to ensure the community improvement works have been completed in accordance with the Agreement.

Applicants acknowledge and consent, by applying for CIP grants, to their business, project, and themselves being photographed and/or featured by the Township of Augusta and CIP grant funding partners.

The CIP Administrator(s) and/or Review Panel may take appropriate action as specified in the Agreement if the applicant defaults on the Agreement.

If all program and Agreement requirements are determined to have been met to the satisfaction of the Administrator and/or Review Panel, payment will be issued to the applicant for the approved grant, in accordance with the program and Agreement requirements.

## 7.5 MONITORING AND EVALUATION

This CIP has been developed and designed to be flexible as a planning and economic development tool for the Township of Augusta. It identifies opportunities and provides incentives for private sector investment, as well as for municipal initiatives, to redevelop and beautify land, buildings, and streets in the Township.

To ensure that this Plan achieves the desired results and remains current with respect to local and global market conditions, and to inform decision-making regarding the Township's implementation budget, the uptake and success of the programs should be monitored, evaluated and, if necessary, revised on a regular basis.

### Application Data Collection

The CIP Administrator(s) should maintain a record all pre-application consultations related to potential submissions, even if the consultations do not result in a submitted application. In doing so, the CIP Administrator(s) shall have consideration for the confidentiality of any inquiries.

Carefully selected performance indicators will provide important information regarding the success of this Plan and its individual programs. For each financial incentive application received, the Township should record and monitor, on an on-going basis, the:

- The subject property's tax assessment prior to the project's approval;
- Total construction value of the project;
- Requested grant value, by program and in total;
- Details and purpose of the project, including the square footage of commercial space affected, number of trees to be planted, length of façade improved, etc., as may be appropriate;
- Names of contractor(s) and supplier(s), which may be useful information to provide to future applicants;
- Appearance of the property prior to project initiation ("before" photos);
- Proposed concept plans for the property; and
- Any relevant subjective information about the application (notably, whether the CIP is responsible for encouraging the project).

For unsuccessful applications, the Township should monitor, on an ongoing basis, the:

- Number of unsuccessful applications;
- Reason(s) for the application's denial.

For each approved financial incentive program application, the Township should monitor, on an ongoing basis, the:

- Approved value of grant(s), in total and by program;
- Amount of private investment leveraged by the grant(s);
- Timing of completion of the project and payment of the grant(s);
- Property tax assessment after the completion of the project, if relevant; and
- Appearance of the completed project ("after" photos).

As an outcome of a decision on a financial incentive program application, the Township may survey the applicant to obtain feedback on the financial incentives process.

Updates on the results of the CIP program will be presented to Council annually.

### Annual Monitoring and Evaluation Program

The Township should prepare an annual Monitoring and Evaluation Report that demonstrates the performance of the CIP to Council, and any changes or updates that occur from year to year.

In addition, the Report shall also include, if necessary, recommendations regarding:

- Measures for avoiding any unintended outcomes of the CIP programs in the future;
- Funding of the incentive programs for Council's consideration in budget deliberations or the funding or timing of any Township-initiated projects recommended in this document, or others that are recommended or developed after the adoption of this Plan;
- Potential for revisions to the CIP Project Area, which may be passed by by-law;
- Consideration of amendments or adjustments to the Plan; and
- Administration of the Plan.

Furthermore, the annual Report should include a review, summary, and analysis of potential funding opportunities from the federal and provincial governments or other sources. The Monitoring and Evaluation Report should be made available on the Town's website for public review.

The Township should communicate the results of the Monitoring and Evaluation Program through newsletters and information sheets. These can serve to remind potential applicants of the program, promote the achievements of this Plan, and highlight case studies and successful projects.

Similarly, the Township should identify, recognize, and celebrate successful projects, and ensure they are reflected in CIP promotional material. For example, the Township may wish to signify buildings / properties that successfully completed community improvement works through the available financial incentive programs with signs on the properties or profiles on the Township website, with permission from the CIP applicants/participants.

#### 7.6 AMENDMENTS TO THE CIP

As redevelopment and revitalization is achieved in the Township of Augusta over time and specific CIP goals or objectives may evolve, the Township may deem it necessary to amend or adjust this Plan. It may also be necessary to address financial incentive program issues which may become evident as the CIP is implemented.

Required adjustments to this Plan shall generally be identified through recommendations from the annual monitoring and evaluation report. This CIP permits adjustments; however, certain adjustments may require an amendment to this CIP, in accordance with Section 28(5) of the Planning Act. Planning Act requirements for a Statutory Public Meeting and related notice must also be met.

The following adjustments to the CIP require an amendment under Section 28(5):

- Change to the Community Improvement Project Area;
- This adjustment requires a by-law passed by Council.

- Extension of the Plan beyond the intended 1-year planning horizon;
- Addition of a new financial incentive program, or complete removal of a financial incentive program;
- Changes to the CIP vision and/or goals;
- Changes to the types of eligible projects or addition of a new eligible project;
- Changes to eligibility criteria; and
- Changes to the value or calculation of grants.

Minor administrative adjustments may be permitted without an amendment. The following adjustments do not require an amendment under Section 28(5) of the Planning Act:

- Dissolution of the Community Improvement Project Area (i.e. the Plan becomes inoperative);
- Requires a by-law passed by Council, once Council is satisfied this Plan has been carried out.
- Changes to the amount of annual funding provided for incentive programs (total or program-specific);
- Changes to the funding or prioritization of the Town-initiated programs;
- Discontinuation of funding for one or more incentive programs; and
- Delegation of administration / approval of the financial incentive programs to a committee or an individual, or a return of the responsibilities to Council;
- Delegation generally requires a by-law, subject to Section 23.1 of the Municipal Act.

## **8 FUTURE DIRECTIONS**

Once established, Augusta Township's new Community Development Committee may be able to play a larger role in promoting and carrying out the CIP, and help drive continuous improvement initiatives in the Township.

CIPs can have many additional purposes beyond the initial funding program identified in this Plan. For instance, a CIP can assist with the costs of improving historic properties; promoting the remediation and redevelopment of brownfield sites; as well as the revitalization of commercial, industrial, institutional, and even rural areas. Under a CIP, a municipality may issue grants and loans to help support redevelopment and infill development projects by providing incentives to increase the assessed value of a property (tax increment equivalent grants), offer rebates on planning and application fees, or provide direct grants or loans to help finance redevelopment and intensification projects.

Municipalities often develop additional plans, strategies and guidelines to accompany and further the goals and objectives of a CIP. For instance, a municipal leadership strategy may address issues related to policy and regulatory gaps or conflicts (e.g. changes required to the Zoning By-law), and identify actions, programs, capital projects, and policies that may assist in revitalizing target areas.

The Township may wish to develop and implement strategic policy initiatives that will support the success of the CIP, such as guidelines for design and/or signage, streetscape or corridor improvement plans, parking strategies, partnership strategies, wayfinding initiatives, active transportation plans, recreation master plans, or waterfront strategies.

The location of Augusta Township and its relationship to the St. Lawrence River represents a premier public amenity and an opportunity to develop a cohesive and vibrant waterfront teeming with local services, shopping, recreation, and tourism opportunities. This is further facilitated by the Township's strategic location along Highway 401, which represents a significant opportunity to draw in the travelling public into the Township and its rural destination nodes.

The Township may also consider public-private partnership (P3) projects to promote redevelopment at strategic, highly visible or otherwise prominent locations within the Township. It may also demonstrate municipal leadership through the acquisition of land for such purposes.

Other initiatives on vacant municipal lands may include the development of community gardens to encourage urban agriculture, local food production, and environmentally sustainable practices with health, social, and economic benefits.

When local streets are being considered and prioritized for road works, the Township should consider implementing streetscape improvements in conjunction with other construction, such as planting of street trees, rehabilitation of sidewalks, development of trails and cycling lanes, installation of street furniture, and other decorative elements such as planters, banners, and hanging flower baskets.

Expanding the type and breadth of available CIP grants can serve to promote additional improvements across the Township. CIP grant programs are often established by municipalities to offset planning, building, and other municipal fees; and to attract investors and developers through the use of tax increment equivalent grants.

While Augusta's Official Plan designates the entire Township as a CIP area, and Augusta Township has established all the lands within Augusta's municipal boundary as a Community Improvement Project Area, the merits of developing a method of categorizing target areas within a single CIP (e.g., by defining Precincts or Nodes), or addressing target areas within separate CIPs should be further examined.

Tax increment financing (TIF) may be applicable where the property assessment increases as a result of development, redevelopment, or major improvement, and there is a subsequent increase in municipal property taxes. For the purposes of calculating such a grant, municipal property taxes generally include the municipal portion of the taxes only, and do not include education or any other special charges. TIF grants may be aligned to a declining percentage of the municipal tax increase resulting from the



improvements, and shall be paid to the owner each year for a maximum of 2 years (e.g., in year one, the amount of the grant shall equal up to 100% of the tax increment and shall decrease by 50% per year until it reaches 0%)

## **9 CONCLUSION**

The Township of Augusta Community Improvement Plan (CIP) is a strategic planning and economic development tool that will be implemented to achieve community improvement and economic development goals.

The focus of this initial CIP for Augusta is on enabling the Township's allocation of Main Street Revitalization Initiative funds to be disbursed; as such, only one grant for façade and exterior improvement has been identified to start.

However, the policy framework and discussion of options for future directions will enable CIP Administrator(s), the Community Development Committee, Township staff, Augusta Council, local business owners and the broader community to have meaningful discussions about desired amendments, budgetary considerations for new types of grant programs, and proposed community improvements with reflection on the input from various surveys completed to date.

Implementation and monitoring of the CIP and its results will be undertaken by the Township of Augusta, in partnership with private sector investment, community members, the CIP Administrator(s), Council, and/or the Review Panel.

The Plan will remain in effect for up to 1 year. It will be periodically reviewed by Council to evaluate its effectiveness and degree of uptake and success. This Plan is designed to be adaptable, with flexibility built into the policies and programs to account for changes in the Township's financial resources and priorities. Accordingly, the Plan may be adjusted or amended, as necessary, to improve its programs and better respond to revitalization needs within the Township.

The successful promotion and implementation of the Plan will require the continued dedication of Township staff and Council, including a dynamic marketing strategy, annual review and reporting, identification of lessons learned, and adaptation to changing priorities and economic conditions.

Most importantly, this CIP represents a commitment to the community for the provision of continued public and private investment opportunities, to ensure Augusta remains a community of opportunity in Eastern Ontario, and a place its residents and businesses are proud to call home.