



**Subject: Final – Comprehensive Community Improvement Plan**

**To: Council**

**From: Development and Legislative Services Department**

Report Number: 2023-239

Meeting Date: November 28, 2023

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**Recommendation:**

That Development and Legislative Services Department Report 2023-239 be received; and

That City's new Comprehensive Community Improvement Plan (CIP) be adopted; and

That the by-law attached as Appendix B to Development and Legislative Services Department Report 2023-239, being a by-law to designate the Port Colborne Comprehensive Community Improvement Project Area and repeal By-laws 1847/112/86, 5239/145/08, 5526/123/10, 5722/153/11, 5822/76/12, and any amendments thereto, **BE APPROVED**; and

That the by-law attached as Appendix C to Development and Legislative Services Department Report 2023-239, being a by-law to Adopt the Port Colborne Comprehensive Community Improvement Plan, Repeal By-laws 5525/122/10, 5240/146/08, 5769/25/12, 5823/77/12 and any amendments thereto, **BE APPROVED**.

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**Purpose:**

The purpose of this report is to have Council formally adopt and approve a new Comprehensive Community Improvement Plan (CIP) for the City of Port Colborne.

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**Background:**

At the March 8, 2021, meeting, Council approved Report 2021-68 and a recommendation to retain a consultant to complete a comprehensive review of the City's Community Improvement Plans (CIPs). The City of Port Colborne has six CIPs, namely:

- Brownfield Community Improvement Plan
- Downtown Central Business District Community Improvement Plan
- East Waterfront Community Improvement Plan
- Industrial Community Improvement Plan
- Olde Humberstone Community Improvement Plan
- Niagara Gateway Economic Zone and Centre Community Improvement Plan

The incentive programs in these CIPs were developed by City staff and consultants several years ago based on Council direction to incentivize growth and development in designated community improvement project areas in the City. Part IV of the *Planning Act* outlines municipal authority for the implementation of CIPs and the City's Official Plan includes enabling policy for the preparation, adoption, and implementation of CIPs.

The comprehensive CIP review focused on the following:

- review current CIP programs, project area boundaries, and service delivery;
- review current best practices from other jurisdictions;
- consolidate the 6 CIPs and ensure program integration with the Region's new incentive programs policy;
- update the community improvement vision and goals to address emerging community improvement needs;
- streamline and revise the incentive programs to achieve the updated community improvement vision and goals, and further improve the effectiveness of the CIP programs;
- specify a monitoring program to better measure and track program effectiveness;
- recommendations for budgeting, resourcing, and marketing the CIP programs.

Since the fall of 2021, RCI Consulting and the City's Project Review Team (PRT) have been working together and have been focused on the following guiding principles when reviewing the CIP programs and discussing potential changes:

- ensuring Port Colborne has a competitive advantage in attracting investment;
- ensuring the updated incentive programs will be financially sustainable;
- clarity in program communications to support customer service excellence;
- simplicity in program guidelines and processes to create positive experiences for applicants;
- incorporation of innovative ideas and practices that help facilitate investment;
- forging strong partnerships to achieve public policy objectives and community economic development goals.

This new Comprehensive CIP will replace all the City's existing CIPs, except for the Gateway Economic Zone and Centre CIP, which will remain in place. The new Comprehensive CIP proposes enhanced and expanded financial incentive programs to promote various types of community improvement including commercial and mixed-use

building revitalization in the Downtown, Main Street, and East Waterfront areas, as well as affordable housing and brownfield redevelopment across the urban area of the City of Port Colborne.

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## **Discussion:**

The draft Comprehensive CIP document was included in Report 2023-191 and was summarized in a Power Point presentation by Luc Piccioni of RCI Consulting at the September 26, 2023, Council meeting. The draft document was also distributed to key commenting agencies as part of the Planning Division's normal circulation.

Staff from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) and Niagara Region's Planning Division provided comments. MMAH staff comments focused on the definition of affordability used in the draft document. A virtual meeting was held with MMAH and City staff, and the consultant. Following this meeting, "based on CMHC data" was added to Affordable Rental Housing definition in the draft CIP document.

The Region's comments were minor or more question oriented. They were seeking clarity on grant agreement wording, eligible costs for Brownfield Tax Incentive Grants (TIGs), and CIP project area boundaries.

At the September 26, 2023, Council meeting, Council expressed support for the draft CIP document and directed staff to modify the boundaries of the designated CIP project areas that would allow more properties to be eligible for CIP incentive programs. An in-depth review was undertaken by the consultant and the findings, along with potential boundary revisions, were discussed with City staff. These mapping revisions have been made by the City's Geographic Information System (GIS) staff and the updated maps have been included in the final Comprehensive CIP document.

As part of the implementation plan, a marketing strategy is being finalized and there will be a training session for key staff in January that will be conducted by the consultant. This will focus on an overview of the incentive programs and boundaries, eligibility requirements, customer service and application intake, completion of forms, and a streamlined and coordinated review and approvals process.

Assuming no appeals to the new CIP are filed after its adoption by Council, the CIP will be deemed "approved" following the twenty (20) day appeal period required under the *Planning Act*. The by-laws to repeal the existing CIP project area boundaries and the current CIP will also take effect at that time.

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## **Internal Consultations:**

The City PRT comprised of staff from Corporate Services, Economic Development, and Planning, was established in 2021. The PRT has been attending meetings with the consultant, reviewing the policy framework and CIP project area boundaries, and discussing changes and recommendations to the incentives.

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## **Financial Implications:**

There are no direct financial implications associated with this report.

It is expected that the total project cost for preparation of the Comprehensive CIP will be in the range of \$125,000 - \$130,000, which aligns with the project budget of \$125,000 approved by Council and included in the 2021 Capital Budget.

The approved 2024 Operating Budget increased the CIP budget to \$215,000 to support the enhanced programs and anticipated demand. This operating budget covers grants for façade improvement, urban design, environmental site assessment reports, residential rehabilitation projects, and funds for communications and public relations. TIGs are self funding and separate from this budget.

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## **Public Engagement:**

A stakeholder and public consultation session was held on Thursday July 14, 2022, at the L.R. Wilson Archives Research Centre. The consultant presented draft recommendations on the new CIP, including proposed revisions to the incentive programs and community improvement project areas, and requested feedback from participants attending the session. There were fifteen (15) attendees. A survey was also developed and shared with open house attendees and other business owners/investors who expressed interest in the CIP review but were not available to attend the open house. Twenty-one (21) surveys were completed, and the results were shared with the consultant. The consultant reviewed these surveys and incorporated many of the comments into the CIP.

City staff have adhered to the statutory requirements under the Planning Act to provide notice and hold a Statutory Public Meeting prior to the consideration and adoption of the new CIP by Council. In addition to the Statutory Public Meeting held on September 26, 2023, the draft Comprehensive CIP was circulated to commenting agencies and provided to the MMAH. It was also posted on the City's website on August 30, 2023, for comment.

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**Strategic Plan Alignment:**

The initiative contained within this report supports the following pillar(s) of the strategic plan:

- Environment and Climate Change
  - Welcoming, Livable, Healthy Community
  - Economic Prosperity
  - Increased Housing Options
  - Sustainable and Resilient Infrastructure
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**Conclusion:**

The City's six (6) current CIPs were reviewed by RCI Consulting and a cross-divisional PRT and a new consolidated Comprehensive CIP is now complete and has received Council and agency comment.

The objective of the CIP review was to update the City's CIP programs to:

- better address community improvement needs and incorporate best practices;
- streamline and reposition the CIP programs to strategically target and leverage private sector investment;
- simplify the processes for incentive program application review and approval; and
- ensure that Port Colborne is investment ready while maintaining the financial sustainability of the CIP programs.

Staff are recommending that Council approve the new CIP document. If approved, the new CIP will be subject to a legislated twenty (20) day appeal period. If no appeals are filed during this time, the new CIP document will become final and binding following the final day of the appeal period.

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**Appendices:**

- a. Final Port Colborne Comprehensive CIP
- b. CIP Area Designation By-law
- c. Comprehensive CIP Adoption By-law

Respectfully submitted,

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### **Report Approval:**

All reports reviewed and approved by the Department Director and also the City Treasurer when relevant. Final review and approval by the Chief Administrative Officer.