



Subject: External Review of Community Improvement Plans (CIPs)

To: Council

From: Chief Administrative Office

Report Number: 2021-68

Meeting Date: March 8, 2021

Recommendation:

That Chief Administrative Office Report 2021-68 be received;

That Council approves retaining a consultant to complete a comprehensive review of the City's Community Improvement Plans (CIPs); and

That Council approve a project budget limit of \$125,000 plus HST to be funded from the newly proposed Economic Development reserve.

Purpose:

The purpose of this report is to inform Council of an external program review that is proposed to start sometime this spring regarding the City's CIP programs and to seek Council approval for project funding.

Background:

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

These CIP programs were developed by City staff and consultants several years ago based on Council direction to incentivize growth and development in designated areas in the City and leverage private sector investment. Part IV of the *Planning Act* outlines municipal authority for the implementation of Community Improvement Plans and the City's Official Plan includes enabling policy for CIPs. Historically \$70,000 has been budgeted on a yearly basis for CIP programs. These programs are administered by the City's Planning and Development Department.

Discussion:

A Request for Proposal (RFP) was recently issued to retain a consultant to complete a comprehensive review of the City's CIP programs. Some of these programs have been in existence for 10-15 years and staff believe they are due to be reviewed and refreshed.

A City Project Team, comprised of the Director of Corporate Services/Treasurer, the Director of Planning and Development, the Manager of Strategic Initiatives, and the Economic Development Officer, will be established to review and evaluate the proposals and select a consultant. A follow up staff report will come to Council in early April to provide an update. This project team will also work closely with the consultant and help guide the process.

The CIP review will focus on the following:

- review current CIPs, project area boundaries, service delivery, and recommend if the City needs to create any new CIPs;
- prepare an implementation plan that can be adopted and utilized by the City to enable the offering of a range of financial incentives that will leverage potential investments;
- consolidate and coordinate CIPs as well as ensuring integration with Niagara Region's incentive programs;
- identify performance targets to identify the success of the program and when/if changes may be required;
- recommendations for budgeting and resourcing the CIP program;
- recommendations on how to market the CIPs to attract more applications;
- review emerging trends and best practices from other jurisdictions and make recommendations;

- incorporate the principles of sustainability (environmental, social, economic, and cultural), community involvement, along with timely and reasonable development when evaluating and approving CIP projects.

It is expected that this review process, that will also include public consultation, will take 8-10 months. The consultant will present their report and recommendations to Council in the first few months of 2022.

Internal Consultations:

This project has been reviewed by Corporate Services, Economic Development and Tourism Services, and Planning and Development.

Financial Implications:

It is estimated that the total project cost will be in the range of \$100,000 to \$125,000 plus HST. Staff are requesting Council approval for a limit of \$125,000 plus HST and that this amount be funded from the newly proposed Economic Development reserve (Report 2021-81).

Public Engagement:

There is a statutory requirement to have public information meetings and consultations, along with required notice periods regarding any proposed changes or updates to the City's CIPs.

Conclusion:

An RFP has been issued to retain a consultant to conduct a comprehensive review of the City's six Community Improvement Plans (CIPs). These programs have created value for the City by leveraging private sector investment and improving buildings in the City's business districts as well as incentivizing the remediation and redevelopment of brownfield properties. These programs have also helped to attract industrial investment, forge public-private partnerships, and create jobs in the City's gateway economic zone. As the City continues to grow and attract interest and capital from new investors, staff believe there is an opportunity at this time for these programs to be reviewed and updated by an external party to reflect best practices to reposition these programs for the future and ensure that Port Colborne has a competitive advantage and is investment ready.

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 approval is by the Chief Administrative Officer.