



**Subject: Draft Comprehensive Community Improvement Plan**  
**To: Council**  
**From: Development and Legislative Services Department**

Report Number: 2023-191

Meeting Date: September 26, 2023

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### **Recommendation:**

That Development and Legislative Services Department 2023-191 be received.

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### **Purpose:**

This report is being submitted as part of the Statutory Public Meeting required under the *Planning Act* regarding the draft Community Improvement Plan (CIP) that has been completed by RCI Consulting. It will also be accompanied by a PowerPoint presentation by Luc Piccioni, President of RCI Consulting at the September 26, 2023, Council meeting.

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### **Background:**

At the March 8, 2021, meeting, Council approved staff 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 policy;
  - 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.
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## **Discussion:**

Since the fall of 2021, RCI Consulting and the City's Project Review Team (PRT) have been working together to review and update the following:

- CIP Policy Framework;
- Community Improvement Vision and Goals;
- City's existing CIP incentive programs including evaluating their uptake and effectiveness; identifying any gaps/weaknesses; examining other best practices in Ontario municipalities; and making recommendations to maintain, combine, enhance, or eliminate the current CIP incentive programs;
- boundaries of the community improvement project areas to address emerging community improvement needs and encourage more private sector investment.

The City's PRT, comprised of staff from Corporate Services, Economic Development, and Planning, focused on the following guiding principles when reviewing the CIP programs and discussing potential changes with the consultant:

- 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.

A draft Comprehensive CIP has been completed and is being presented to Council for review and comment. Any changes requested by Council will be incorporated into the CIP document which will come back to a Council meeting in October for adoption by By-Law. Assuming no appeals to the new CIP are filed after its adoption by Council, the CIP will be deemed “approved” following a twenty (20) day appeal period, as required under the *Planning Act*.

This new Comprehensive CIP will replace all of 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.

City staff and the consultant are focused on an implementation plan that will allow the programs in the new Comprehensive CIP to be implemented upon Council’s approval of the CIP.

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### **Internal Consultations:**

A City Project Review Team (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:**

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

The 2023 Operating Budget for the City’s current CIP program is \$187,500. This amount funds grants for façade improvement, urban design, environmental site assessment reports, residential rehabilitation projects, and funds for communications and public relations. Tax incentive grants (TIGs) are funded separately from this budget.

Staff are recommending that the 2024 Operating Budget for CIPs be increased to \$246,900 to support the enhanced programs and anticipated demand. This recommendation will be part of the 2024 budget deliberations.

## **Public Engagement:**

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

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 present. 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.

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## **Strategic Plan Alignment:**

The initiative contained within this report supports the following pillars of the strategic plan:

- Environment and Climate Change
  - Welcoming, Livable, Healthy Community
  - Economic Prosperity
  - Increased Housing Options
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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 awaiting Council and agency/public comment before being adopted.

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 more strategically target and leverage private sector investment;
- simplify the processes for incentive plan application review and approval;

- ensure that Port Colborne is investment ready while maintaining financial sustainability of the CIP programs.

This report will accompany a public presentation by the consultant at the September 26, 2022, Council meeting.

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## **Appendices:**

- a. RCI Consulting – PowerPoint presentation

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.