

REPORT

REPORT TO: Mayor Bonnette and Members of Council

REPORT FROM: Damian Szybalski, Manager of Economic Development, Innovation and Culture

DATE: October 16, 2017

REPORT NO.: ADMIN-2017-0032

RE: Community Improvement Plan (CIP): Implementation and Environmental Site Assessment Grant Program

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Report ADMIN-2017-0032, dated October 16, 2017, regarding the Community Improvement Plan (CIP) Implementation and Environmental Site Assessment Grant Program be received;

AND FURTHER THAT, as appropriate and as outlined in this report, all programs and initiatives detailed in the Halton Hills Community Improvement Plan be made available to applicants provided that they meet the applicable criteria;

AND FURTHER THAT the authority for reviewing and approving funding under the Community Improvement Program be delegated to Town staff, subject to applicants meeting applicable criteria;

AND FURTHER THAT, recognizing that unique circumstances may arise as new programs are activated, the Town's Chief Administrative Officer be given the authority to approve Community Improvement Plan applications that may require minor administrative refinements to the Plan's criteria/requirements, provided that such approvals do not result in a material change to the Plan's objectives.

BACKGROUND:

The Town introduced the Halton Hills Comprehensive Community Improvement Plan in 2010. The Plan offers a "Tool Box" of programs that, depending on demand and Town objectives, can be used to promote strategic business investments in designated areas of the Town.

The Plan provides a full operating manual with appropriate forms and applications which are used for all the programs.

Beginning in 2014, Council approved an annual capital budget of \$75,000 in order to fund implementation of the CIP. Any unused funds in a given year are carried over to the next year. Initially, with the CIP program being new, the program was not fully subscribed in 2014 and 2015. Since then, in 2016 and 2017, however, the applications submitted have accounted for the full \$75,000 available annually. Funding carried over from 2014 and 2015 is being used to fund additional projects since the Program's awareness and uptake have increased significantly.

When the CIP began implementation in 2014, two programs were approved – the Façade Improvement Grant and the Revitalization Grant. These programs were applicable in Downtown Acton, Downtown Georgetown and the Guelph Street Corridor. In 2016, additional programs were approved by Council, specifically the “Brownfield Parkland Dedication Reduction Program” for all brownfield locations in Halton Hills and the “Landscape Improvement Program” for the Georgetown and Acton Industrial Sub Areas.

It was always envisioned that other programs from the CIP would be activated to advance projects and Town objectives as necessary. The Town is now in receipt of one completed application for the “Environmental Site Assessment Grant Program”. A second application is anticipated to be filed in the near future. The two applications total approximately \$33,500 in CIP funding.

The “Environmental Site Assessment Grant Program” provides a financial incentive to promote the undertaking of environmental studies so that more and better information is available with respect to the type of contamination and potential remediation costs on brownfield properties. The program is a 50-50 matching grant where the Town provides a grant of up to 50% of the cost of an eligible environmental site assessment. The maximum grant amount is \$12,500 per environmental site assessment, with a maximum of two (2) environmental site assessments per project and a maximum total grant of \$22,500 per project. This program helps offset the costs of redeveloping brownfields.

COMMENTS:

To date, it has been an informal policy that Town staff would bring a report to Council if there was demand to introduce or ‘activate’ additional CIP programs. Consistent with that process, staff is now recommending that all programs contained in the CIP be made available subject to applicants meeting applicable CIP criteria and adequate funding being available. This approach will allow for streamlined CIP implementation which in turn allows for more timely implementation of subject developments. In addition, making all CIP programs available, will enable the Town to promptly respond to changing market conditions.

Upon receipt of applications for programs that have not previously been accessed, Town staff will evaluate applications according to applicable CIP criteria and determine if Town participation, through the CIP, is appropriate.

It is important to note that some of the programs will require additional discussions and frameworks to be put in place prior to them being activated. The latter will be presented

to Council for review and approval first. In particular, this will apply to programs that entail changes to municipal tax collection such as the cancellation of municipal property taxes and/or reductions in development charges.

In addition, as per the recommendations of this report, recognizing that unique circumstances may arise as new CIP programs are launched, it is recommended that the Town's Chief Administrative Officer be given the authority to approve applications that may require minor administrative amendments to the Plan's criteria/requirements, provided that such approvals do not result in a material change to the Plan's objectives. For example, Town staff are aware that an incoming ESA grant application will entail studies that have already been completed, whereas the ESA Grant Guide stipulates that study preparation may commence following Council's approval of the application. In this case, the Town's CAO could waive that requirement, and Town staff would still ensure that all other applicable CIP requirements are met. A second ESA grant application has been submitted and the applicant is waiting to proceed pending the approval of the recommendations of this report. Another example is an application for a landscape grant which entails work that has been completed prior to an application being filed with the Town.

In the near future, Town staff will provide Council with a more comprehensive Economic Development update which will include a detailed overview of the CIP – among other matters.

RELATIONSHIP TO STRATEGIC PLAN:

This report advances the "Employment Areas Development" priority of Council's Strategic Plan, specifically the need to:

- Develop a strategy to address the underutilized employment areas in Acton; and
- Implement the approved Community Improvement Plan for employment areas

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

There is no Financial Impact associated with this report.

COMMUNICATIONS IMPACT:

Future CIP marketing will highlight all the available CIP incentives.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS:

The Town is committed to implementing our Community Sustainability Strategy, Imagine Halton Hills. Doing so will lead to a higher quality of life. The relationship between this report and the Strategy is summarized below:

Do the report's recommendations advance the Strategy's implementation? Yes

Which pillar(s) of sustainability does this report support?

By providing financial incentives for revitalization, redevelopment and renewal, the CIP has the potential to improve all four pillars of sustainability, specifically: Cultural Vibrancy; Environmental Health; Economic Prosperity; and Social Well-being.

Overall, the alignment of this report with the Community Sustainability Strategy is:
Excellent

CONSULTATION:

This report includes input from the Planning and Sustainability Department.

CONCLUSION:

The CIP contains numerous programs. Since 2014, only some of these programs have been introduced in response to demand and changing market conditions. Thus far, focus has been placed on the façade improvement program. Recent interest in the redevelopment of brownfield properties offers the Town an opportunity to unlock significant development potential. By adding the "Environmental Site Assessment Grant Program" to the regular roster of programs the Town will support bringing brownfields to productive use and thus generate economic benefits for Halton Hills. It will also support infill and intensification objectives.

In addition, in order to streamline implementation of the CIP, it is recommended that responsibility for program implementation be delegated to Town staff, and that the CAO have the ability to approve minor administrative program adjustments.

Respectfully submitted,

Damian Szybalski
Manager of Economic Development, Innovation and Culture

Reviewed and Approved by,

Brent Marshall
Chief Administrative Officer