

TOWNSHIP OF STONE MILLS

COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN



August 5, 2020

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Section 1 – Introduction/Background

1.1 Purpose

Community Improvement Plans (CIP) are one of the many sustainable community planning tools found in the *Planning Act & Municipal Act*. Community Improvement Plans can help communities and municipalities to address areas that prevent optimization of areas that are currently underutilized. This tool provides a means of planning and financing development activities that effectively assist in the use, reuse and restoration of lands, buildings and infrastructure. The priority of the Plan is to improve community development and encourage economic growth in specifically targeted areas within the municipality.

A CIP is a document that identifies an area or areas of a municipality where, in the opinion of a Municipal Council, improvement is desirable based on age, dilapidation, overcrowding, faulty arrangement, unsuitability of buildings or for any other environmental, social or community economic development reason (Section 28 (1) of the *Planning Act*). For a municipality to have the ability to approve a CIP, it must have policies in its Official Plan that set out where, what, and how these plans should be utilized.

After a detailed evaluation process comparing several settlement areas within the County of Lennox & Addington and its lower tier municipalities, the Township of Stone Mills initiated the creation of its own Community Improvement Plan, with target areas identified in the Township of Stone Mills Official Plan.

A CIP allows municipalities to provide incentives in the form of financial assistance to property owners in defined areas to overcome shortfalls and obstacles for improvement. A CIP also allows a municipality to acquire, rehabilitate and dispose of land and to provide financial incentives to owners, as well as to undertake infrastructure and public space improvements to existing and vacant lands.

CIPs have been proven as an effective option for encouraging change and improvement using a focused approach that allows a municipality to be a partner with private sector property owners.

Section 2 – Legislative Context

2.1 Legislative Authority and Policy Basis

Community improvement planning is intended to provide opportunities for municipalities to contribute financial incentives to private development projects which provide broader

community benefit. The Provincial Policy Statement, *Municipal Act*, and *Planning Act* include provisions which work in harmony to enable municipalities to direct financial incentives towards specific improvement projects. The following provides a review of the policy framework and enabling legislation for the allocation of municipal funds to support and encourage public initiated community improvement plans.

2.1.1 Provincial Policy Statement, 2020

The Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) provides policy direction on matters of public interest related to land use and development. It attempts to strike a balance between the Province's economic, social and environmental interests as it relates to providing guidance to the Township of Stone Mills and its development of its own community improvement plan, the PPS provides the following direction:

- a. healthy, integrated and viable rural areas should be supported by: a) building upon rural character, and leveraging rural amenities and assets; b) promoting regeneration, including the redevelopment of brownfield sites; and f) promoting diversification of the economic base and employment opportunities through goods and services, including value-added products and the sustainable management or use of resources; (Section 1.1.4.1)
- b. recreational, tourism and other economic opportunities should be promoted; (Section 1.1.5.3.)
- c. planning authorities shall promote economic development and competitiveness by providing opportunities for a diversified economic base, including maintaining a range and choice of suitable sites for employment uses which support a wide range of economic activities and ancillary uses, and take into account the needs of existing and future businesses; (Section 1.3.1 b))

Based on these policies, the development of this CIP which seeks to enhance the quality and appearance of the Township of Stone Mills and provide new business opportunities is consistent with the directions established within the PPS.

2.1.2 Municipal Act

The *Municipal Act* provides rules to regulate the provision of financial or other similar incentives to private business operations, a practice known as 'bonusing'. The purpose of the regulation is to ensure public finances are accounted for and distributed in a transparent manner. Section 106 of the *Municipal Act* prohibits municipalities from assisting "...directly or indirectly any manufacturing business other industrial or commercial enterprise through the granting of bonuses for that purpose" (Section 106(1)).

Such prohibited actions include:

- a. "giving or lending any property of the municipality, including money;
- b. guaranteeing borrowing;
- c. leasing or selling any property of the municipality at below fair market value; or
- d. giving a total or partial exemption from any levy, charge or fee."

The *Municipal Act* S. 106 (3) does provide exceptions to these regulations and allows municipalities to make grants and loans for the purposes of carrying out a CIP that has come into effect in accordance with S. 28 (6), (7) and (7.2) of the *Planning Act*.

2.1.3 Planning Act

Section 28 of the *Planning Act* provides the enabling legislation for a municipality to implement a Community Improvement Plan. Community improvement is defined as "the planning or replanning, design or redesign, resubdivision, clearance, development or redevelopment, reconstruction and rehabilitation, 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, works improvements or facilities, or spaces therefore, as may be appropriate or necessary" (Section 28 (1)).

In order to create a Community Improvement Plan and allocate funds accordingly, a municipality must identify a community improvement project area which is defined as "a municipality or an area within a municipality, the community improvement of which in the opinion of the Council is desirable because of age, dilapidation, overcrowding, faulty arrangement, unsuitability of buildings or for any other environmental, social or community economic development reason" (Section 28 (1)).

Once a community improvement project area is defined in the Official Plan and through a by-law, a municipality may prepare and implement a Community Improvement Plan. Through the *Planning Act* a municipality may:

- a. acquire, grade, clear, hold or otherwise prepare the land for community improvement (Section 28(3));
- b. construct, repair, rehabilitate or improve buildings on land acquired or held by it in conformity with the CIP (Section 28 (6a));
- c. sell, lease or otherwise dispose of any land acquired or held by it in the community improvement project area to any person or governmental authority for use in conformity with the CIP (Section 28 (6b)); and
- d. make grants, in conformity with the CIP, to registered owners, assessed owners and tenants of lands and buildings.

Section 28 (7.1) identifies costs eligible for CIP financing including: "costs related to the 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 69 (1) and (2) of the *Planning Act* allow a municipality to establish a tariff of fees for the processing of planning matters, which are intended to meet the anticipated cost of processing planning applications. This section also permits a municipality to waive or reduce these fees if it is satisfied that it would be “unreasonable to require payment”. This provision can be incorporated into a CIP as an incentive program to encourage economic growth.

2.1.4 County of Lennox & Addington Official Plan, 2016

The purpose of the County of Lennox & Addington’s Official Plan is to provide direction and a policy frame work for managing growth and land use decisions over the planning period to 2036.

The Official Plan is one of a series of policies, guidelines and regulations that direct the actions of the County and shapes the growth and development for all municipalities under the L&A County’s jurisdiction. The Plan is intended to:

- a. establish a broad, upper tier policy framework that provides guidance to local municipalities in the preparation of updated local Official Plans, Official Plan Amendments and zoning by-laws;
- b. implement the Provincial Policy Statement at the County level; and,
- c. establish a framework for coordination and cooperation amongst the local municipalities and the County on planning and development issues that cross municipal boundaries.

This Plan recognizes the importance of the land use planning responsibilities that are vested with the local municipalities. Given that the County of Lennox & Addington Official Plan is intended to establish an overall land use planning framework for the County and its municipalities, this Plan is not intended to duplicate the policies of the lower tier Official Plans. Instead, this Plan is intended to provide the guidance necessary for the establishment of detailed strategies, policies and land use designations at the local level.

Section F5.1 of the County of Lennox & Addington Official Plan encourages lower tier municipalities to identify Community Improvement Project Areas, considering objective such as: efficient physical infrastructure and public service facilities, economic development and community investment-readiness, diversification in economic base and employment opportunities in rural areas, providing diversified tourism, maintenance and renewal of older housing stock, enhance the vitality and viability of downtowns and mainstreets, encourage a sense of place through promoting well-designed built form

and conserving features that define character and promote energy efficiency and sound environmental design.

In accordance with Section F5.2 of the Plan, local municipal councils may designate Community Improvement Areas based on studies and carried out through a designating by-law. This section of the Plan goes on to state that local level Community Improvement Plan must be reviewed and approved by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Section F5.2(c) of the Plan confirms that County Council may provide grants or loans to the council of lower tier municipalities for the purpose of carrying out a Community Improvement Plan, once in effect.

2.1.5 Township of Stone Mills Official Plan, 2014

The Official Plan provides a policy framework intended primarily to manage and direct physical development and its effects on the social, economic and natural environment of Stone Mills Township until the year 2021. The policy framework is to guide changes in physical structure of the municipality while attempting to provide a desirable environment for a variety of lifestyles for present and future generations.

The Plan outlines the Township's goals and objectives, states the policies to be followed and outlines the means for carrying out the policies. The goals and objectives of this Plan build on the community strategy and planning principles and provide direction to guide policies and programs.

In accordance with Section 3.6 of the Township Official Plan, the Community Improvement goal is 'to promote the coordinated implementation of community improvement by way of the maintenance, rehabilitation, and redevelopment of the physical environment in a coordinated and fiscally prudent manner while having regard to improvements to the economic potential and social environment'.

The Official Plan goes on to further detail its desire to assist the municipality through the CIP objectives, as identified in Section 3.1.

Section 3 – Community Improvement Plan

3.1 Community Improvement Plan

- a. to encourage participation in programs for the improvement, rehabilitation and renewal of existing residential structures, municipal infrastructure, community services and facilities;
- b. to implement community improvement in a planned and coordinated manner which stimulates economic development, and responds to local problems, priorities and financial resources, so as to optimize the results to be achieved through capital expenditures;

- c. to participate, where feasible and appropriate, in Federal and/or Provincial assisted housing initiatives and in the rehabilitation of existing house and other public buildings;
- d. to identify those deficiencies in the public infrastructure which represent realistic and attainable opportunities for community improvement;
- e. to promote, rehabilitate and restore the existing building stock;
- f. to provide a safe and healthy community for both residents and visitors, by providing an appropriate level of recreational and social facilities, at appropriate locations, and ensuring that municipal services such as roads and sidewalks are sufficient to ensure the safety and welfare of local residents and tourists;
- g. to encourage the development or reuse of vacant lands or buildings to accommodate activities of value or benefit to the community;
- h. to incorporate sustainable elements in community improvement such as to improve or upgrade infrastructure, public service facilities and to maintain, restore or renew buildings and properties, improvement of energy efficiency, construction and the provision of affordable housing;
- i. to provide for the identification, repair, restoration or redevelopment of brownfield sites, environmental site assessment, environmental remediation, development and redevelopment, construction and reconstruction of lands and buildings for rehabilitation purpose or for improving energy efficiency, buildings, structures, works improvements or facilities;
- j. to use financial incentives as provided for under the *Planning Act*.

3.2 General Principles

Community Improvement generally encompasses those public and private activities which serve to regulate, maintain, rehabilitate and redevelop the existing physical environment in urban built up areas to accommodate the social and economic priorities within the community.

It is important to recognize that declining public sector revenues, the cyclical performance of Ontario's economy, and increasing demand for services are requiring all government levels to plan for maximum efficiency in the use and maintenance of services. The need for improvement to infrastructure, and need to establish coordinated intergovernmental priorities in infrastructure improvement, makes it essential that priorities are set when allocating the expenditure of limited financial resources.

Community Improvement Policies are a prerequisite to the designation of specific Community Improvement Project Areas, the preparation of detailed Community Improvement Plans, and municipal participation in Provincial and/or Federal funding programs. The Community Improvement process encourages a strategic planning approach to ensure that potential improvement projects fit into a long range framework of community goals and objectives. The inclusion of community improvement policies in

this Plan represents a statement of the Township's commitment to the ongoing maintenance and upgrading of its developed areas in a planned, coordinated, and fiscally prudent manner.

3.3 Community Improvement Area

The criteria to be used in Community Improvement Area boundaries selection or modification should be established on the basis of a review and analysis of existing deficiencies, and the identification of conditions within the Township that could further benefit from enhancement activities.

Section 6.2 of the Township Official Plan identifies fifteen (15) criteria for improvement, redevelopment and revitalization which may benefit through the adoption of a Township Community Improvement Plan. Those criteria include considerations such as: deficiencies in physical municipal services, presence of vacant or underutilized parcels, sub-standard building conditions and revitalization improvement opportunities, infill opportunities, streetscape and aesthetic upgrades, establishing the presence of points of interest and/or special visual amenities and other barrier to the repair, rehabilitation or redevelopment of underutilized land or buildings.

Section 6.3 of the Plan goes on to conclude that based on the above noted criteria, the resulting Community Improvement Areas within the Township of Stone Mills shall include the Hamlets – as identified in the Official Plan. Consistent with the Township Official Plan, the areas included within the Community Improvement Plan eligible for the financial incentive programs are detailed below and spatially identified on Schedule 'A'.

3.4 Selection of Community Improvement Areas

The criteria outlined within the Townships OP were applied to the creation of the Township of Stone Mills CIP. The resulting Community Improvement Areas are shown on Schedule 'A' and are outlined as follows:

- a. Hamlet of Camden East;
- b. Hamlet of Centreville;
- c. Hamlet of Colebrook;
- d. Hamlet of Croydon;
- e. Hamlet of Enterprise;
- f. Hamlet of Erinsville;
- g. Hamlet of Moscow;
- h. Hamlet of Newburgh;
- i. Hamlet of Strathcona;
- j. Hamlet of Tamworth;
- k. Hamlet of Yarker;

For the purposes of this CIP, the Hamlets as defined on Schedule 'A' of the Township of Stone Mills Official Plan define the areas applicable to this Plan.

In addition, the Cataraqui Trail and the Trans-Northern Trail are also considered community improvement areas in which the Township may allocate public funding to facilitate expanded usability as well as continued maintenance and upkeep.

Section 4 – Township CIP Initiated Financial Programs

4.1 CIP Incentive Programs

The financial incentive programs described in the following section have been incorporated as mechanisms targeted at assisting the multiple Hamlets distributed throughout the Township in effectively rehabilitating and stimulating redevelopment efforts. The program applies a range of land uses in the subject area, residential, commercial and institutional. The incentive programs can be utilized individually or in combination by applicants, with restriction to the maximum funding allocations prescribed. Applicable to each incentive program, a rationale has been included within the CIP.

In addition to the municipal financial incentives offered within this CIP, where possible, provincial, federal and private sector financial programs may be available that can be utilized. The total budget for the CIP will vary annually, and be dedicated to both incentive programs included as well as municipally initiated projects.

4.2 Built Heritage Improvement Program

The Township supports the unique character and quality of each Hamlet, particularly reflected in the aesthetic appeal of the historic main streets and predominant buildings. The Built Heritage Improvement Program is intended to assist continual building maintenance and the overall aesthetics and character of each individual Hamlet.

The Township supports the adaptive reuse of underutilized buildings and promotes mixed use (commercial / residential) developments within each Hamlet.

The format of such program would consist of a grant for a portion of the defined eligible costs. Commercial built heritage improvements include:

- repair or replacement of exterior facades including cladding materials, windows, and doors;
- repair or repointing of façade masonry and brickwork;
- installation, repair or replacement of architectural details and features;
- installation, repair or replacement of awnings or canopies;
- façade restoration, including painting;
- installation of lighting;

- professional design services required to complete eligible work;
- other similar improvement projects may be approved which demonstrate improvement to the quality of the property to the satisfaction of Township Council.

Description: A grant program to assist in the costs associated with Built Heritage Improvements includes a grant equal to 50% of eligible costs up to a maximum of \$3,000 in order to improve exterior building features. Eligible projects include all commercial buildings located within the Hamlets.

4.3 Commercial Façade Improvement Program

The character and quality of each Hamlet is partially reflected in the aesthetic appeal of the main street and those commercial buildings which front onto prominent streets. The Commercial Façade Improvement Program intended to improve the appearance of façades in order to improve the overall aesthetic, user experience and character of each Hamlet. The Township encourages the rejuvenation of commercial facades which are reflective of, and sympathetic to each Hamlet vernacular.

The format of such program would consist of a grant for a portion of the defined eligible costs. Eligible improvements / projects include those which improve the quality of the commercial building stock within each Hamlet. Eligible projects include all commercial building stock located within Hamlets.

Description: A grant program to assist in the costs associated with Commercial Façade Improvements includes a grant equal to 50% of eligible costs up to a maximum of \$5,000.

4.4 Accessibility

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) seeks to achieve accessibility for people with disabilities to services, facilities, employment and buildings. In association with this provincial legislation, the Township wishes to promote increasing physical accessibility for all residents and visitors. Historic development and its built form pose challenges with respect to accessible design and function.

This CIP provides funding to encourage commercial property owners to renovate and retrofit access to ensure facilities are accessible to all members of the community. The format of such program would consist of a grant for a portion of the defined eligible costs. Eligible improvements / projects include those which improve the accessibility of any commercial building located within each Hamlet.

Description: A grant program to assist in the costs associated with Accessibility improvements include a grant equal to 50% of eligible costs up to a maximum of \$2,000.

4.5 Planning & Development Fee Equalizing

The Township supports investment in its Hamlets, which can be demonstrated through assisting in a fee equalization grant which pertains to Planning and Building fees. The grant seeks to help offset any upfront 'soft' costs associated with development within Hamlets. The Township encourages development and rehabilitation of the existing built form and promotes development and construction activity by rebating *Planning Act* application fees and building permit application fees to eligible properties within the Hamlets.

The format of such program would consist of a grant for a portion of the defined eligible costs. Eligible *Planning Act* applications include:

- Official Plan Amendments;
- Zoning By-law Amendments;
- Site Plan Control;
- Minor Variances;
- Consent Applications;
- Demolition Permits; and
- Building Permits.

Description: A grant program to assist in the costs associated with the Planning & Building fees associated with development applications and building permits. All application and permit fees are required to be paid in full at the beginning of each desired project and at the completion of the project (following final inspection / occupancy / appeal period) an application to refund the fees paid to the Township may be submitted. The Township will provide a grant equivalent to up to 80% of the planning and development as well as building permit application fees paid by an owner.

4.6 Municipal Loan Program

The Municipal Loan Program provides preferential financing for eligible projects within the Township's Hamlets. Eligible projects are those approved under the prior noted Incentive Programs – excluding the Planning & Development Fee Equalizing incentive. An interest free loan to a maximum of \$7,500 amortized over 5 years is available to assist property owners in addition to the incentive programs. Loan financing will be made available upon successful project approval by Township Council.

Description: all eligible projects receiving grant funding are eligible to access the loan program.

4.7 Amendments to the CIP

As the CIP is implemented, the Plan may be refined to best achieve the objectives of the Plan. The individual financial incentive programs contained within this CIP can be altered at any time by the Council of the Township of Stone Mills without amendment to the Plan. An expansion of the CIP area or an increase to the value of the financial programs would require amendment of the Plan in accordance with Section 28 of the *Planning Act*. The County of Lennox & Addington is to be consulted when making amendments.

4.8 Marketing the CIP

The successful implementation of the CIP depends on the ability of the initiatives and funding opportunities to be effectively communicated to property owners, business owners, and community organizations.

The allocations of funds are determined by the Township of Stone Mills Council whereas financial resources vary annually. The Township and the County of L&A will work together to ensure the continued success of the Plan.

4.9 Monitoring the Plan

This CIP is intended to provide a proactive approach to the revitalization of the Township. As such the success of the program will be measured by the adoption of the programs by private property owners. In order to best meet the needs of potential program participants, the CIP is a flexible document responding to the needs of the participants and changing market conditions. Accordingly, a monitoring program is essential to receive feedback and refine elements of the Plan that would best achieve the objectives of the CIP. The following list provides potential qualitative and quantitative measures that staff could utilize to monitor the effectiveness of the program and provide a basis for future amendments.

- a. Monitor the number of approved Applications by financial program type.
- b. Monitor the number of unsuccessful Applications and determine the reason for the project ineligibility.
- c. Monitor the total value of funding allocated by financial program type.
- d. Monitor the additional square footage of commercial spaces created through the programs.
- e. Monitor the improvement of the visual appearance of the community as result of projects accessing the funding programs.
- f. Encourage program participants to submit comments based on their experiences accessing program funding.
- g. Annually report on the success of the Plan.

Based on information from these monitoring procedures, required revisions to the CIP may become evident over time. Amendments to the Plan shall be approved by the Council of the Township of Stone Mills.

4.10 Conclusion

This CIP is a comprehensive framework specifically designed for the Township of Stone Mills to improve and provide economic and visual improvements aimed at revitalizing the existing Township Hamlets. This Plan reflects the vision as outlined in the Township of Stone Mills Official Plan. Council and Staff seek to ensure the continued success of this CIP and its positive impacts on the identified community improvement areas. Furthermore, the Plan establishes revitalization goals through financial incentives for physical improvements and growth throughout the Township.

The approval of this Plan will provide the legislative basis and context for this comprehensive set of programs.

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