



Thames Centre

Thames Centre Community Improvement Plan

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1 INTRODUCTION

The Municipality of Thames Centre, with a unique mix of urban and rural, is a community with a full range of available community and commercial services in Middlesex County. Thames Centre is a fully serviced community with a population of approximately 13, 980. The Municipality is centred around the Town of Dorchester, approximately a 20-minute drive outside the City of London, ON. Thames Centre is also located in close proximity to Highways 401 & 402 for convenient travel to Chatham, London, Toronto, and the border cities of Sarnia and Windsor.

As part of the Thames Centre Strategic Plan, one of the key strategic pillars is, '#1 Community Development which serves as a comprehensive framework outlining Thames Centre's multifaceted objectives across short, medium, and long-term horizons. The *Municipality* of Thames Centre wants to initiate guiding community improvement activities in existing businesses and in maintaining Thames Centres as a desirable place to live and work. The development of Community Improvement Plan (CIP) for the Municipality of Thames Centre will not only support the development of a vibrant, safe community for all stages of life, but will also provide the Municipality with tools to sustain and grow the community.



1.1 What is a CIP?

A CIP is a strategic municipal planning and economic development tool under the Ontario Planning Act that is used by municipalities across Ontario. Although there are hundreds of CIPs in effect, they are not a commonly known planning tool. Therefore, it is useful to describe what a CIP is intended to achieve.

Similar to an Official Plan or a Zoning By-law, a CIP is primarily focused on the use of land and buildings within certain areas of a *Municipality*. A CIP is also like an Official Plan or Zoning By-law in that the Ontario Planning Act sets out how and when it can be used (as discussed later in this section of the report). However, a CIP is different than other municipal plans and planning tools because it is not intended to direct/regulate how land and buildings are used; rather, it has one or more of the following overarching goals:

- Facilitating change and transition in certain areas;
- Stimulating economic growth and development;
- Motivating rehabilitation and *redevelopment* of private buildings/properties; and
- Raising awareness to local needs and priorities.

Simply put, a CIP is a plan or framework that sets out tools and strategies for improving the built, economic, and social environment in a designated area of a *Municipality*.

Normally, under Section 106 of the Municipal Act, municipalities are prohibited from directly or indirectly assisting local businesses by giving or lending money. However, having a CIP in place allows the *Municipality* to assist financially with improvements to private properties. Financial assistance may be available through incentive-based programs, such as grants and loans, reduction (or cancellation of) certain fees required by the *Municipality*, and tax assistance.

Traditionally, CIPs have been used in a very focused manner; for example: to improve downtown or ‘core areas’ in a *Municipality*, or to encourage/facilitate the remediation and *redevelopment* of *brownfield* properties. However, over the past 10 years or so, CIPs have been used more innovatively and strategically to encourage municipal-wide goals related to: economic development, sustainable development (i.e., energy efficient buildings), the creation of *affordable* housing, intensification, and even the diversification of economic activity in agricultural areas.

1.2 Why Prepare a CIP?

Under Section 106 of the Municipal Act, municipalities are prohibited from directly or indirectly assisting local businesses by giving or lending money (considered “bonusing”). However, under Section 28 of the Planning Act, having a CIP in place effectively cancels this prohibition against ‘bonusing’ and allows the *Municipality* to assist financially with improvements to private properties.

These financial incentives (grants, loans, tax relief, other) are intended to encourage and facilitate improvements that may ultimately result in spin-off benefits for the community:

- Physical improvements to existing buildings (structural, mechanical, aesthetic, etc.) may help improve the long-term sustainability of the buildings, and the viability for continued operations or new businesses – new commercial space, new *rental housing units*, etc.;
- Physical improvements can improve the overall accessibility of the community, reducing barriers for all members of the community regardless of age or ability;
- Aesthetic improvements, when coordinated or complementary, can help create and identify a sense of place that draws people in, creating a high quality pedestrian realm. This sense of place (or ‘placemaking’) promotes social interaction, and the overall social, physical, and economic health of a community;
- Elements of the CIP are also geared towards larger scale development/*redevelopment* projects (e.g., tax incentives, planning application fee grants), which can facilitate significant change in the community, such as attracting new employment opportunities, or increasing the availability of housing units which, in turn, support local businesses; and
- Some sites have been contaminated through past land uses through the placement of contaminated fill from other locations, or through the use of hazardous building materials or products. These sites can create significant health and safety risks, as well as impacts to surrounding areas and natural habitats. Rehabilitation of these areas can be very costly, and often make *redevelopment* nonviable. Encouraging *brownfield* development through CIP tools can provide long term benefit to the natural, social, and economic sustainability of the community.

In addition to the physical impact of a CIP on targeted areas of a *Municipality*, there can also be a less obvious economic impact, often referred to as 'Return-on-Investment' (ROI). For example, in the Township of Wellington North reports that over a six-year period between 2012-2018, 40 applications for financial incentives have been received, and nearly \$85,000 in grants has been provided to local businesses, motivating almost \$270,000 of investment into land and buildings on behalf of the landowners/tenants. Using the case of Wellington North, the ROI can be calculated based on the total value of improvement projects (\$270,000) versus the Township investment (\$85,000). Therefore, for every \$1.00 invested by the Township, \$3.17 has so far been invested by the private sector.

1.3 Contents

The Thames Centre CIP includes the following:

Goals and Objectives

- which set out specifically what the CIP aims to achieve;

Municipal Leadership Programs

- which the Municipality may undertake to demonstrate leadership and an overall commitment to improving the project area;

Financial Incentive Programs

- which may be provided to local businesses and landowners to assist with improvements to public property;

An Implementation Plan

- which may set out a process for reviewing applications for financial incentives; and,

A Marketing Plan

- which helps the *Municipality* advertise and "get the word out" about the CIP's financial incentive programs & municipal leadership programs;

A Monitoring Plan

- which helps measure the extent to which the CIP's programs are successful.

2 BASIS OF THE CIP

Normally, municipalities are prohibited from offering financial incentives to private landowners. That said, Section 28 of the Planning Act (supported by other Provincial legislation) provides municipalities a broad toolkit to facilitate private investments that may have spin-off benefits for the community through a Community Improvement Plan.

The CIP must operate within the applicable provincial, upper-tier (i.e., Middlesex County) and local *Municipality* plans and policies. This section provides an overview of the key legislation that enables the development of CIPs in Ontario and within the *Municipality* of Thames Centre.

2.1 Legislative and Provincial Policy

2.1.1 The Planning Act

The Planning Act is the primary piece of legislation that provides for the preparation of CIPs and sets out:

- Types of projects/activities/works that are considered ‘community improvement’;
- A process by which a *Municipality* can identify a ‘community improvement project area’ and prepare a ‘community improvement plan’;
- Tools that can be implemented once a ‘community improvement plan’ is prepared; and,
- *Eligible costs* for which a *Municipality* can provide incentives.

COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT

Section 28(1) of the Planning Act defines ‘community improvement’ as “the planning or replanning, design or redesign, resubdivision, clearance, development or *redevelopment*, construction, reconstruction and rehabilitation, improvement of energy efficiency, or any of them, of a Community Improvement Project Area (CIPA), and the provision of such residential, commercial, industrial, public, recreational, institutional, religious, charitable or other uses, buildings, structures, works, improvements or facilities, or spaces therefore, as may be appropriate or necessary.” Section 28(2) states that where there is an official plan in effect in a local *Municipality* or in a prescribed upper-tier *Municipality* that contains provisions relating to ‘community improvement’, the Council may, by By-law, designate the whole or any part of an area covered by such an official plan as a ‘community improvement project area’.

COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT PROJECT AREAS

Section 28(1) of the Planning Act defines the term ‘community improvement project area’ 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”.

COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Section 28(4) of the Planning Act states that once a ‘community improvement project area’ has been designated by By-law, “the Council may provide for the preparation of a plan suitable for adoption as a Community Improvement Plan for the Community Improvement Project Area”.

TOOLS

The *Municipality* may then prepare and use a ‘community improvement plan’ to:

- Acquire, hold, clear, grade or otherwise prepare land (Section 28(3));
- Construct, repair, rehabilitate or improve buildings on land acquired or held by the *Municipality* (Section 28(6));
- Sell, lease, or dispose of any land and buildings acquired or held by the *Municipality* (Section 28(6));
- Make grants or loans to owners and tenants of land and buildings within the CIPA to pay for the whole or any part of ‘*eligible costs*’ related to community improvement (Section 28(7)).

ELIGIBLE COSTS

‘*Eligible costs*’ are specified in Section 28(7.1) of the Planning Act, and include costs related to “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”. The word *rehabilitation* is emphasized above because it is important in understanding the definition of *eligible costs*. While the term ‘*rehabilitation*’ is not defined in the Planning Act, it is generally understood to mean the restoration of something back to its former capacity. By this definition, ‘*rehabilitation*’ would therefore not apply to lands that have not previously been developed. Consequently, this section of the Planning Act does not generally allow for CIP tools to be applied to vacant areas, unless for the provision of energy efficient uses, buildings, structures, etc. Finally, Section 28(7.3) states that the total of the grants and loans provided in respect of the lands and buildings shall not exceed the *eligible costs* of the community improvement project with respect to those lands and buildings.



Upper Tier Participation

An upper-tier *Municipality* can contribute financially to CIP programs adopted by its local municipalities. Section 28(7.2.) of the Planning Act states:

“The council of an upper-tier *Municipality* may make grants or loans to the council of a lower-tier *Municipality* and the council of a lower-tier *Municipality* may make grants or loans to the council of the upper-tier *Municipality*, for the purpose of carrying out a community improvement plan that has come into effect, on such terms as to security and otherwise as the council considers appropriate, but only if the official plan of the *Municipality* making the grant or loan contains provisions relating to the making of such grants or loans”.

This means that the County of Middlesex can participate financially in a CIP adopted and implemented by one or more of its local municipalities, including Thames Centre, subject to having required Official Plan policies in place. While the existing County of Middlesex Official Plan does not have the required policies in place, the current undertaking of a Five-Year Review of the County Official Plan by the County provides an opportunity for the County to create enabling policies that allow for County participation in local CIP's.

2.1.2 The Municipal Act

BROWNFIELD DEVELOPMENTS

Section 365.1 of the Municipal Act enables municipalities to implement the *Brownfields* Financial Tax Assistance Program, which is intended to bring *brownfields* back into productive use. Under this program, municipalities may pass by-laws providing for the cancellation of all or a portion of the taxes for municipal purposes levied on eligible properties for which a phase two environmental site assessment has been conducted, confirming that additional remediation is required. The cancellation of taxes applies to the *remediation and redevelopment period*, as defined by the Municipal Act, Section 365.1 (1):

Rehabilitation period means, with respect to an eligible property, the period of time starting on the date on which the by-law under subsection (2) providing tax assistance for the property is passed and ending on the earliest of,

- a) the date that is 18 months after the date that the tax assistance begins to be provided,
- b) the date that a record of site condition for the property is filed in the Environmental Site Registry under section 168.4 of the Environmental Protection Act, and
- c) the date that the tax assistance provided for the property equals the sum of,
 - i. the cost of any action taken to reduce the concentration of contaminants on, in or under the property to permit a record of site condition to be filed in the Environmental Site Registry under section 168.4 of the Environmental Protection Act, and
 - ii. the cost of complying with any certificate of property use issued under section 168.6 of the Environmental Protection Act;

Development period means, with respect to an eligible property, the period of time starting on the date the rehabilitation period ends and ending on the earlier of,

- a) the date specified in the by-law made under subsection (2), or
- b) the date that the tax assistance provided for the property equals the sum of,
 - i. the cost of any action taken to reduce the concentration of contaminants on, in or under the property to permit a record of site condition to be filed in the Environmental Site Registry under section 168.4 of the Environmental Protection Act, and
 - ii. the cost of complying with any certificate of property use issued under section 168.6 of the Environmental Protection Act;

This program also includes provisions for participation by the Province through the cancellation of the education portion of the taxes by application to the Minister of Finance.

Middlesex County already offers a CIP Program under this Section of the Planning Act. This program is detailed in Section 2.2.3 below.

2.1.3 The Provincial Policy Statement

The Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) provides direction on matters of provincial interest related to land use planning and development. It provides a vision for land use planning in Ontario and sets the foundation for regulating current and future development within the Province.

There are several key PPS policies that provide direction and support for the Thames Centre CIP including the following:

1.1.3.1 Settlement areas shall be the focus of growth and development, and their vitality and regeneration shall be promoted;

1.1.3.3 Planning authorities shall identify appropriate locations and promote opportunities for intensification and *redevelopment* where this can be accommodated taking into account existing building stock or areas, including *brownfield* sites, and the availability of suitable existing or planned infrastructure and public service facilities required to accommodate projected needs;

1.7.1.c) Long-term economic development should be supported by maintaining and, where possible, enhancing the vitality and viability of downtowns and main streets;

1.7.1.d) Long-term economic development should be supported by encouraging a sense of place, by promoting well-designed built form and cultural planning, and by conserving features that help define character, including *built heritage resources* and *cultural heritage landscapes*;

1.7.1.e) Long-term economic development should be supported by promoting the *redevelopment* of *brownfield* sites; and,

2.6.1 Significant *built heritage resources* and significant *cultural heritage landscapes* shall be conserved.

2.2 Local Plans and Strategies

2.2.1 Municipality of Thames Centre Official Plan

The Thames Centre Official Plan (TCOP) currently contains a number of Community Improvement Planning policies, including general CIP goals outlined below. The TCOP states that, in addition to other planning policy tools, Community Improvement measures should be used within the *Municipality* to achieve a high standard of urban and rural design.

The below goals provide a flexible starting point for the CIP.



Figure 1 Goals for the Municipality of Thames Centre CIP

The TCOP has policies in place for community improvement areas, more specifically designating areas where the effects of physical and/or socio-economic change are present. These areas are then determined by Council and the Municipality to encourage rehabilitation, conservation, and/or redevelopment of the area.

Guiding policy and criteria is also provided within the Official Plan for identifying areas potentially suitable for designation as a CIPA. These areas may include the following:

1. *There is a deficiency or deterioration in one or more of the following municipal services:*
 - (a) *Sewers and watermains;*
 - (b) *Roads and streets;*
 - (c) *Curbs and sidewalks; and/or*
 - (d) *Street lighting and utilities.*
2. *There is a deterioration or deficiency in one or more of the following recreational and social facilities:*
 - (a) *Public indoor/outdoor recreational facilities;*
 - (b) *Public open space; and/or*
 - (c) *Public social facilities, such as community centres, libraries, clinics, cultural facilities.*
3. *That at least 25 percent of the housing stock is in need of rehabilitation, whether interior or exterior;*

4. *That the area is potentially stable in terms of land use and densities, whether they be residential or commercial, and that there are no indications of major redevelopment plans other than those in the form of improvements;*
5. *That the area is composed of predominantly low- and moderate-income households in relationship to average provincial household income or to the rest of the community;*
6. *For residential Community Improvement Areas, the area may be at least 50 percent residential, and for commercial Community Improvement Areas, the area may be at least 50 percent commercial and appropriately zoned; and*
7. *For commercial areas, the area may be in whole, or part defined as the Core Areas. The area may exhibit symptoms of physical, functional and/or economic decline in the form of, for example, buildings in need of rehabilitation, decrease in retail sales, high vacancy rates, or declining tax base.*

2.2.2 The County of Middlesex Official Plan

The County Official Plan encourages local municipalities to include general development policies within local official plans related to community improvement and requires that local municipalities actively encourage public participation when preparing CIPs.

The County also has a Community Improvement Plan Partnership Opportunity that was implemented this past year (2020) to encourage the development of lower-tier CIPs. The County is also in the process of undertaking a Five-Year Review of the County Official Plan and economic development is one of the topic areas being reviewed. This Official Plan review provides an opportunity for the County to create enabling policies that allow for County participation in local CIPs.

2.2.3 The County of Middlesex CIP Implementation Program

To advance its 2021-2025 Economic Development Strategic Plan, Middlesex County's Economic Development Department (EDD) has made it a priority to support CIPs developed within Middlesex County and has established the 2023 CIP Implementation Program. This investment is being made in pursuit of all 4 Strategic Objectives identified in the 2021-2025 Middlesex County Economic Development Strategic Plan, as strong and sustainable CIPs play an important role in each. The 4 Strategic Objectives are identified below:

1. Invest in people and places via rural revitalization
2. Entice talented workers and entrepreneurs to relocate here by leveraging the pace of rural life and nearby urban amenities
3. Attract investment in tech-based manufacturing, food production, and ag-tech
4. Advocate for investment readiness and implement improvements in business development services

The County CIP Program CIP Implementation Program allows eligible municipalities to request a Reimbursement of 50% to help offset their contributions to CIP projects approved in a previous year. In order to ensure municipal eligibility in the County Program, this CIP has aimed to align its Goals, Objectives, and Evaluation Criteria with that of the Strategic Objectives and the needs of the key stakeholders outlined in the 2021-2025 Middlesex County Economic Development Strategic Plan.

3 COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

3.1 Overview

A goal statement has been developed based on the findings of the background work and consultation activities undertaken as part of the Thames Centre CIP Project. The goal statement articulates how the Thames Centre CIP may provide an overall public benefit to the Municipality and represents the overall intended result of this Plan. Objectives have also been identified, which represent the tangible actions and outcomes that the Municipality aims to achieve through the implementation of the Thames Centre CIP. For each of the objectives, a set of measures has also been established for the purpose of monitoring the effectiveness of this CIP. The measures are presented as part of a monitoring strategy in Section 9 of this Plan. Importantly, in order to be eligible for any of the Financial Incentive Programs offered through the Thames Centre CIP, a proposed project must directly support the goal statement and one or more of the objectives below.

3.1.1 Goal Statement

As defined by the TCOP and further summarized herein, the following is the goal statement for the Thames Centre CIP:

The Thames Centre Community Improvement Plan (CIP) will protect and enhance the Municipality's hometown feel by strategically supporting the retention and attraction of businesses, encouraging agri-tourism initiatives, and assisting in the revitalization and beautification of urban and rural areas to illustrate the investment readiness of Thames Centre.

3.1.2 Objectives

The following objectives for the CIP have also been identified:

- Reduce the number of underutilized buildings along major arterial roads within the Municipality.
- Encourage the rehabilitation of underutilized residential and commercial buildings for purpose-built rental to diversify the housing stock.
- Beautify the community and improve safety through streetscape and façade improvements
- Improve the visual appearance of the community by encouraging the relocating of non-conforming land uses and incompatible land uses
- Reduce barriers for agri-tourism and rural-based businesses
- Encourage businesses in prioritizing green initiatives during their building or business process to be in alignment with Green Building standards

4 CIP PROJECT AREA

In accordance with the Planning Act, the Thames Centre CIP designates certain areas of the Municipality as Community Improvement Project Areas (CIPAs), for:

- Implementing Municipal Programs (as described in Section 5), subject to the availability of municipal resources; and
- Providing Financial Incentive Programs (as described in Section 6) to eligible applicants.

Based on community feedback, there is not one specific location in Thames Centre that should be the sole focus of investment but rather all areas within the Municipality should receive equal opportunity for investment and improvement. To achieve the goals and objectives of this CIP, the entire Municipality of Thames Centre has been identified as the CIPA. Financial Incentive Programs may be available to registered owners, assessed owners, and tenants (with written consent of the owner) of lands and buildings located within the CIPA, subject to the eligibility criteria within Section 6.0 of this CIP.

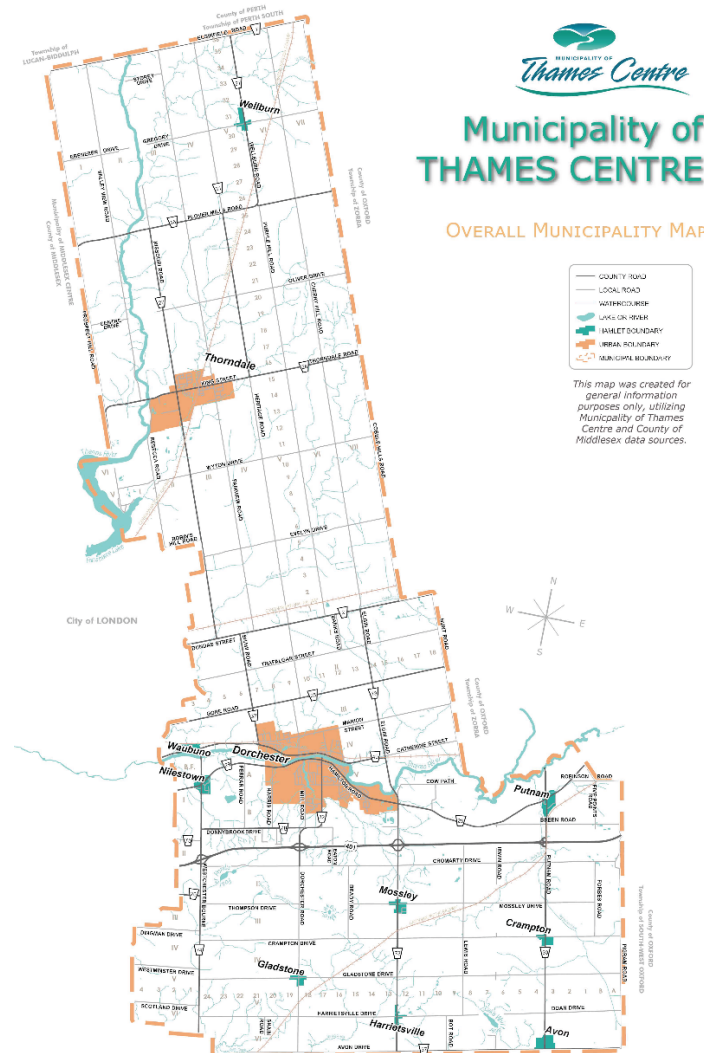


Figure 2: CIPA Map

5 MUNICIPAL PROGRAMS

5.1 Overview

A set of Municipal Programs has been identified as a means for the *Municipality* to participate in community improvement and to provide proactive and visible leadership in achieving the objectives of the Thames Centre CIP. While the Financial Incentive Programs in Section 6 are dependent upon private sector participation for results, Municipal Programs use public resources, such as staff time and municipal properties, to implement improvement projects and initiatives. They can also act as stimulus to leverage private sector investment into the designated CIPA. The *Municipality* may engage in any of the initiatives outlined in this Section as part of implementation of the CIP, subject to the *Municipality's* capital budget and the availability of resources. An indication of anticipated timing is also provided as a target; however, it should be noted that the *Municipality* is not committed to implementing these programs during the lifespan of this CIP if resources do not allow for such.

5.2 Arterial Streetscape Improvements

The impression visitors take away from a community can be shaped by their experience driving or walking through it. As they drive or walk, visitors experience views and form a series of visual images in their mind—either positive or negative—which in turn influence their overall impression of the place. This impression can influence whether they decide to return in the future and can also influence potential business enterprises whether Thames Centre is where they want to invest.

Streetscaping recognizes that streets are public places where people engage in various activities not just limited to motor vehicle travel. Improved streetscaping elements at key intersections and in key commercial areas of the Municipality, including emphasizing significant features and screening less desirable views, can be integrated to help promote Thames Centre's brand.

A more aesthetically pleasing public realm fosters local pride and encourages further beautification, and these improvement efforts further leverage private sector investment into the community. On this basis, the *Municipality* could invest in a range of streetscape improvements:

- Gateway features and street furnishings to beautify views leading from Highway 401 corridor to key commercial areas.
- Traffic calming measures at key intersections to improve walkability within commercial areas.
- Attractive paving to communicate pedestrian traffic pathways and desired pedestrian crossings.
- Promoting permanent and temporary outdoor eating areas for restaurants/cafes.
- Street furnishings along key arterial roads, within or adjacent to commercial areas (i.e., lampposts, street signage, benches, planters, garbage bins).
- Public art installations, murals, and information boards along view corridors.
- Tree planting within key commercial areas of the Municipality.

Collectively, these types of streetscape improvements are a high-priority Municipal Program and implementation should begin as soon as possible. However, it should be noted that a long-term, phased strategy may be required outlining the Municipality's specific priorities. Change may not happen overnight,

but rather small, short-term improvements are desirable and necessary in addition to larger, long-term improvements to meet the overall intention and objectives of this CIP.

5.3 CIP Applicant Recognition Award

To further encourage private landowners to become involved in the beautification of their community and to highlight successes of the CIP program, the *Municipality* could undertake the development of a CIP Applicant Recognition Award. This Award may recognize applicants who have applied for CIP Incentive Funding and have played a pivotal role in achieving the goal and objectives of this CIP.

Each year, out of the finalists, a winner is chosen by the *CIP Implementation Committee*. The winner is announced before Council with the winner receiving a prize of local significance, in keeping with the theme of celebrating and supporting a local achievement. The CIP Recognition Award may also act as free advertising for the successful business or applicant.

This is a high-priority Municipal Program and implementation should begin after a year of successful implementation of the Section 6 programs.

5.4 Urban Design and Green Building Guidelines

The new Official Plan encourages the establishment of Urban Design Guidelines. Urban Design Guidelines are a flexible tool used by municipalities to guide design and development and would assist Thames Centre in achieving the CIP objectives related to community beautification and efficient building standards. The guidelines are not strict “policies” or “regulations” and are not a means to restrict design but are rather a recommended target goal for revitalization and improvement projects within the *Municipality*.

The *Municipality* of Thames Centre could prepare Urban Design Guidelines as a supporting document to the Municipal CIP to guide revitalization of existing buildings, new developments, and the built environment. As green building and energy efficient buildings standards are also of interest to the Municipality, relevant policies and guidelines could also be included in the Urban Design Guidelines to further encourage private investment in efficient buildings. The Urban Design portion of the Guidelines could focus on guidelines for elements such as streetscapes, the built environment, facades, parking areas and driveways, and directional signage. The Green Building portion of the Guidelines could focus on elements such as emissions reduction, climate change mitigation, nature-based solutions, dark sky promotion, and green infrastructure.

The Design Guidelines are intended to complement and assist the Financial Incentive Programs enabled by this CIP as a flexible guide for design and development and could further assist the CIP Implementation Committee in application evaluation and determining which applications receive funding based on the application’s alignment with the Urban Design and Green Building Guidelines.

This is a high-priority Municipal Program and implementation should be implemented as soon as possible, subject to the availability of funding and other resources.

5.5 Gateway and Wayfinding Signage Initiative

The *Municipality* could undertake a *Gateway* and Wayfinding Signage Initiative to encourage more through-travelers to visit and enjoy Thame's Centres agricultural-based tourism and commercial areas. This program should be implemented along key arterial roads, including the Highway 401 corridor. Coordinated signage, wayfinding, and local mapping could be developed as part of this initiative to highlight Thames Centre's rural way of life and hometown feel. Improvements under this initiative could include:

- Signage for significant cultural resources, landmarks, and heritage features;
- Signage for entertainment options;
- Wayfinding for parking locations from major roads;
- Signage indicating opportunities for buying local; and
- Signage for tourist activities.

Coordinated Municipal signage and wayfinding, local mapping, and web-based resources could be developed as part of this initiative. Additional initiatives may include preparing brochures, inserts, and advertisements for local and regional newspapers.

This is a medium priority Municipal Program that should be implemented within 5 years upon adoption of this CIP by Council, subject to the availability of funding and other resources.

5.6 Surplus Property Program & Database

The purpose of the Surplus Property program is to identify lands that are determined to be surplus to the needs of the *Municipality* and that may subsequently be offered through a Request for Proposal ("RFP") process for development purposes. Municipal staff and council should collaborate to identify lands that are surplus and are considered to have reinvestment potential for future businesses enterprises, based on surround land uses, servicing, road access, amenities, etc.

Following the identification of surplus land, the *Municipality* should regularly maintain a database of surplus land. This database then can be readily available for interested parties and enterprises looking to expand their business into Thames Centre, illustrating the investment readiness of the *Municipality*.

This is a high-priority Municipal Program and implementation should begin as soon as possible, subject to the availability of funding and other resources.

5.7 Strategic Property Acquisition, Investment, and Partnership Program

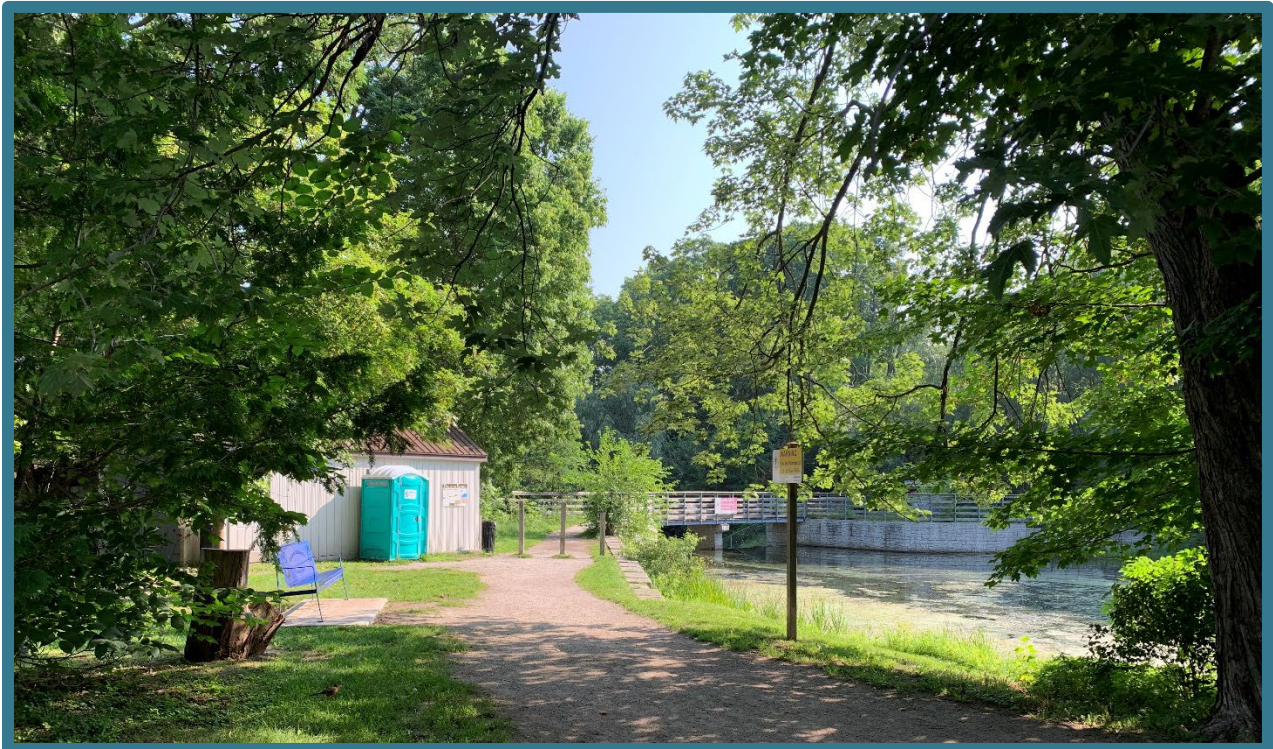
The Strategic Property Acquisition, Investment and Partnership Program is a general program that permits the *Municipality* to become involved in property acquisition, property investment and public/private partnerships to clean-up and/or rehabilitate properties in the CIPA. Property acquisition under this program may be pursued by the *Municipality* either through the marketplace, as a regular real-estate transaction, or through the *Municipality* exercising its powers under Section 28 of the Planning Act.

Any lands that the *Municipality* acquires under the Strategic Property Acquisition, Investment and Partnership Program may subsequently be conveyed by the *Municipality* (including the sale of lands at below market value), if the sale of the land assists the *Municipality* in achieving any of its goals with respect to the Thames Centre CIP. This program may allow the *Municipality* to acquire property or rehabilitate property it already owns, or to participate in public/private partnerships to rehabilitate improve publicly or privately held land to eliminate deteriorating properties that are beyond rehabilitation and causing blight influences on the surrounding area.

The Strategic Property Acquisition, Investment and Partnership Program is a program developed to facilitate direct participation by the *Municipality* as an active player in rehabilitation projects and addressing *vacant or underutilized* properties within Thames Centre's urban area and community area that negatively impact the appearance of the surrounding area. Participation in this program is limited to the *Municipality* itself unless a landowner/developer enters into a partnership arrangement with the *Municipality* by invitation of or agreement with the *Municipality*.

In the case of a partnership arrangement, participation by the landowner/developer in terms of the program is indirect in nature, with the *Municipality* playing the lead role through exercising its powers under Section 28 of the Planning Act. Given that direct participation is limited to the *Municipality*, no eligibility criteria are required. The rehabilitation projects chosen to benefit from the Strategic Property Acquisition, Investment and Partnership Program shall be at the sole discretion of the *Municipality*, as long as project is within the CIPA and contributes to achieving the goal and objectives of the CIP.

This is a low priority Municipal Program that should be implemented after 5 years upon adoption of this CIP by Council, subject to the availability of funding and other resources.



6 FINANCIAL INCENTIVES PROGRAMS

6.1 Overview

The Thames Centre CIP sets out eight (8) Financial Incentive Programs that may be available to *eligible applicants*. The purpose of the Financial Incentive Programs is to provide support for physical improvements to privately owned land and buildings, where such improvements may result in or contribute to the goal statement and objectives in Section 3.0.

The *Municipality* of Thames Centre may provide funding for any of the incentive programs in this Section during the term of this CIP, subject to the availability of resources. Detailed information about how each of the incentive programs work is provided following the General Eligibility Criteria in Section 6.2.

6.2 General Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible for any of the Financial Incentive Programs that may be offered by the *Municipality*, the following General Eligibility Criteria must be met:

- a) The lands and buildings subject to an application must be located within a CIPA designated by by-law for this CIP. Applicants should refer to Section 4.0 and Appendix A to determine the applicable CIPA.
- b) Only certain types of existing or proposed uses in the CIPA may be eligible for Financial Incentives (in accordance with the designations and uses permitted by the Municipal Official Plan, as amended). Unless otherwise stated in the Program Specific Eligibility Criteria (Sections 6.5.1 – 6.6.1), property designated the following within the Municipal Official Plan may be eligible for funding:
 - General Commercial
 - Highway Commercial
 - Settlement Industrial
 - Hamlet
 - Institutional
 - Agricultural
- c) All projects must contribute to achieving one or more community improvement objectives (as identified in Section 3).
- d) All proposed projects must result in some level of improvement or rehabilitation over the existing conditions and may not simply represent a life cycle replacement.
- e) Unless otherwise specified, registered owners, assessed owners, and tenants (with written consent of the owner) of private land or buildings may be eligible for Financial Incentives.
- f) The total value of all grants provided to an owner/tenant shall in no case exceed the total value of *Eligible costs* associated with the community improvement project.
- g) Unless otherwise specified in the Program Specific Eligibility Criteria (Sections 6.5.1-6.6.1), an applicant may be eligible for multiple grants during the term of this CIP; however, the total combined grant payment per project and/or property shall not exceed \$5,000.
- h) Financial incentives may not be applied retroactively to works started prior to approval of applications and any application for costs incurred prior to the adoption of this CIP may not be considered eligible.

- i) The property owner must have no outstanding property tax arrears or any other outstanding municipal obligation on the subject property at the time of application or during the term of the grant.
- j) Applicants may be required to disclose all other funding sources, including governmental, private, or not-for-profit funding to support the project. These shall be taken into consideration in the review of applications and the value of incentives provided by the *Municipality* may be reduced, at the sole discretion of Council.
- k) The proposed works must conform with all applicable policies, standards, and procedures, including (but not limited to) the Official Plan and Zoning By-law, in addition to being subject to a review and the issuance of necessary planning and development approvals and building permits pursuant to the Ontario Building Code.

In addition to these General Eligibility Criteria, a set of Program Specific Eligibility Criteria must also be met, which are outlined in the description of Financial Incentives.

6.3 Availability

As discussed in Section 4.0, the entire municipal area of Thames Centre has been identified as the CIPA for the *Municipality* of Thames Centre CIP. The purpose of the expansive CIPA is to allow for the *Municipality* to respond to unique needs, issues, and opportunities across the *Municipality*.

Each year, the Economic Development Committee will determine which programs are available based on the following criteria:

- Alignment of program with County Strategic Plan and County CIP Primer Eligibility Criteria
- Alignment of program with additional, external grant funding available in said calendar year
- Alignment of program with Provincial policy and/or priorities determined annually
- Alignment of program with Municipal Initiatives and strategic plans.

In the first year of CIP implementation, priority should be given to programs which traditionally and historically gain more traction in the community, namely façade improvement and signage improvement grants. Once marketing efforts have made the CIP more known, the remainder of the programs can be considered for implementation and availability based on the above listed criteria.



6.4 Municipal Incentive Programs

6.4.1 Tax Increment Grant

PURPOSE AND ANTICIPATED BENEFITS

To help offset increases in property taxes due to improvements, the Tax Increment Grants or “TIGs” may provide applicants with an annual rebate on the municipal property taxes. The TIG is intended to reimburse the owner for part or all of the tax increases resulting from the completion of eligible improvements and is calculated as a percentage (up to 100%) of the increase in municipal property taxes from “pre-development” to “post development”.

VALUE OF GRANT

Where a proposed project satisfies the eligibility requirements, a TIG may be provided on approved applications as follows:

- A grant equivalent to the following will be provided for a period of 5 years:
 - Year 1: 100% of the Municipal portion of the *Tax Increment*
 - Year 2: 80% of the Municipal portion of the *Tax Increment*
 - Year 3: 60% of the Municipal portion of the *Tax Increment*
 - Year 4: 40% of the Municipal portion of the *Tax Increment*
 - Year 5: 20% of the Municipal portion of the *Tax Increment*

To determine the suitability of the TIG, the *Municipality* may attempt to estimate the total potential value of the grant prior to submitting an application for the program. The estimate may consider current assessment value, total anticipated investment, and the potential reassessment based on completing the approved community improvement works. Applicants should refer to the definition for *Tax Increment* provided in the Glossary of this CIP to further understand how grant values may be calculated.

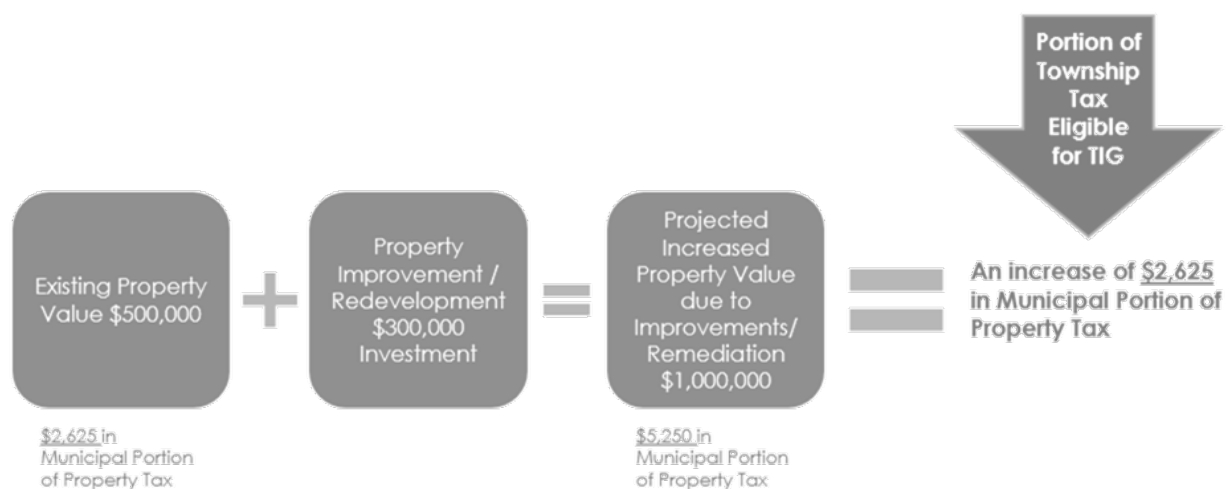


Figure 3 Estimate of Total Potential Value of Grant Calculation

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA:

- Eligible applicants may only include the registered owner/assessed owner of the subject property. Tenants may not be eligible for the TIG.
- Only those projects that are anticipated to generate an increase in assessment may be eligible.
- Properties may be eligible for the TIG if the proposed use is in accordance with the table of eligible uses in Section 6.2 (Table 1).
- All other general eligibility criteria set out in Section 6.2 of this CIP must be met.

ELIGIBLE PROJECTS AND COSTS:

Eligible projects and costs for the TIG include the following:

- Costs associated with the *redevelopment* of a property for the purpose of a new eligible uses;
- Costs associated with the restoration or improvement of an existing building to accommodate an eligible use;
- The conversion or *adaptive reuse* of an existing building to accommodate an eligible use;
- The expansion of a building that results in an increase to the gross floor area of an eligible use;
- Infrastructure work including the improvement or reconstruction of existing on-site public infrastructure (water services, sanitary and storm sewer);
- The services of a professional engineer, architect, or planner to design and implement the project; and
- Other types of projects may also be considered eligible, at the discretion of Council and the Economic Development Committee.

PAYMENT:

The TIG has a self-sourcing budget, as grant payments are sourced from the annual taxes paid by the owner and rebated back. All completed projects must comply with the description as provided in the grant application form. Grants may be provided in accordance with a Financial Assistance Agreement made between the *Municipality* and the owner(s) upon successful completion of the approved project, to the satisfaction of the *Municipality*, and payment of the full reassessed value of Municipal taxes. If a property is sold, in whole or in part, before the grant period lapses, the original owner is not entitled to receive the remaining grant payments and the grant program is cancelled.

6.4.2 Façade Improvement Grant

PURPOSE

This grant program encourages improvements to existing building facades to promote an attractive, active, and pedestrian-friendly streetscape, which may assist to improve the overall character and aesthetic of their building, while contributing to the establishment of an overall sense of place and identity within the CIP area.

VALUE OF GRANT

The proposed value of the Façade Grant is up to 50% of *eligible costs* to complete the project up to a maximum of \$2,500 per project/property. This may be increased to the maximum total grant value of \$4,000 at the sole discretion of the Implementation Committee if the project meets one or more of the following:

- The building has multiple street frontages (e.g., corner lots) or multiple street addresses, where façade improvements are proposed on both frontages;
- The building is considered a 'gateway' feature of the community; and/or
- The building has a secondary access or a prominent view from a laneway, or parking lot.

ELIGIBLE PROJECT AND COSTS

Properties may be eligible for the Façade Improvement Grant if the proposed or potential use is in accordance with the eligible uses identified in Section 6.2. For a Façade Improvement Grant, *eligible costs* include the following:

- Professional fees for exterior/façade redesign;
- Restoration or replacement of exterior building treatments, such as brickwork/cladding/siding;
- Restoration or replacement of cornices, eaves, and parapets;
- Restoration or replacement of windows doors, and awnings;
- Restoration or replacement of exterior lighting;
- Exterior painting;
- Chemical or façade cleaning;
- Redesign of storefront or entrance modifications; and
- Other similar improvements and repairs that may be necessary to improve the appearance of a building façade.

Improvements to the main building façade, and side and/or rear wall may also be eligible where the subject building or property is located adjacent to or is visible from a view corridor or otherwise has a significant public view in the opinion of municipal staff.

PAYMENT

All completed projects must comply with the description as provided in the grant application form. The grant may be provided upon successful completion of the approved project. The grant may be paid in a lump sum as a reimbursement of up to 50% of costs incurred, or the maximum value of the grant, whichever is less.

6.4.3 Landscaping Grant

PURPOSE

When it comes to site development/redevelopment, landscaping can not only help add beauty and interest to a site and the surrounding area, but it can also contribute on a functional level by reducing water runoff and providing shade, for example. The overall intent of this grant is to encourage the incorporation of good landscaping in overall site design, which in turn may increase and improve the public/quasi-public green spaces within the *Municipality*.

VALUE OF GRANT

The proposed value of the Landscaping Grant is up to 50% of *eligible costs* up to a maximum of \$2,000 per *project or property*.

PROGRAM SPECIFIC ELIGIBILITY

- Properties may be eligible for the Design and Study Grant if the proposed or potential use being investigated is in accordance with the eligible uses identified in Section 6.2.
- The studies, plans, or designs must provide new site-specific information in support of a potential improvement project.
- Eligible studies must be completed by a licensed and/or qualified professional as confirmed by the *Municipality*.

ELIGIBLE COSTS

The cost to complete any of the following types of landscape related works may be eligible for the Landscaping Grant:

- Parking lot retrofits to add landscaping/permeable surfaces;
- Increases in tree canopy;
- Planters (either in ground or stand alone);
- Fees associated with professional landscaping design services; and
- Other similar projects or improvements that incorporate good landscaping and increase public/quasi-public green space, in the opinion of the Implementation Committee.

PAYMENT OF GRANT

All completed studies, plans, or designs must comply with the description of the project provided in the grant application form. The grant may be provided upon successful completion of the approved study, plan, or design. The grant may be paid in a lump sum as a reimbursement of up to 50% of *eligible costs* incurred, or the maximum value of the grant, whichever is less. One electronic and one hard copy of the completed studies, plans, or designs shall be submitted to the *Municipality*. All completed studies will become the shared property of the *Municipality* and applicant.

6.4.4 Commercial Conversion/Rental Housing Grant

PURPOSE AND ANTICIPATED BENEFITS

The Commercial Conversion/Rental Housing Grant may be available to eligible applicants to assist in the small-scale conversion of existing *vacant or underutilized* buildings into new commercial, *rental housing units, mixed-use* and/or other eligible uses. It may help support the establishment of new businesses, and the growth of existing businesses within the Municipality, thereby increasing consumer options, employment opportunities, and commercial tax assessment. It is also intended to support improvement to existing *rental housing units*, introduce more housing options, and increase the available supply of rental housing for current and future residents.

VALUE OF GRANT

For Commercial Conversions, a grant may be provided for \$20 per square foot of converted or expanded commercial floor space up to a maximum of \$5,000. For Rental Housing projects, a grant may be provided for 50% of *eligible costs*, up to a total of \$5,000 per *project*.

ELIGIBLE COSTS

Properties may be eligible for the Commercial Conversion/Rental Housing Grant if the proposed or potential use is in accordance with the eligible uses identified in Section 6.2. The Grant may be provided for the construction and renovation costs related to the following types of projects:

- Conversion of non-commercial or *vacant or underutilized* building space into new commercial, *rental housing units, mixed-use*, and other eligible uses;
- Conversion of upper storey space (whether vacant, office, commercial or other non-residential use) into new *affordable* or attainable residential *rental housing units*, based on provincial definitions;
- Conversion of existing ground floor commercial space to better suit a new commercial use (e.g., retail to restaurant);
- Expansion of existing eligible uses to increase the gross floor area and/or create employment opportunities;
- Adaptive re-use of derelict structures;
- Construction services for the creation of new residential units in the upper storey(s) of a *mixed-use* building OR significant improvement in the quality of one or more existing residential units in the upper storey(s) of a *mixed-use* building, which achieve one of the following: Improve the quality of life for the occupants; Increase the value of the units; Make previously inhabitable units habitable; or, Make the unit *affordable*; and,
- The services of a professional engineer, architect, or planner to design and implement the project may also be considered *eligible costs*; however, the maximum amount for such services shall not exceed 15% of the grant.

PAYMENT

All completed projects must comply with the description as provided in the grant application form. The Grant may be provided upon successful completion of the approved project. The Grant may be paid in a lump sum as a reimbursement of 50% of costs incurred, or the maximum value of the grant, whichever is less.

6.4.5 On-farm Business/Tourism Diversification Grant

PURPOSE

The On-farm Business/Tourism Diversification Grant aims to support local agriculturally related uses by providing retail opportunities for local foods or produce. It is anticipated that the program may assist in the rehabilitation of existing agricultural buildings or their adaptation specifically for commercial (including tourism) and industrial uses or other Value-Added/ Agriculture-related activities such as on-farm retail. The grant may also support the development of semi-permanent or seasonal kiosks/stands along *Arterial roads* (as designated in the municipal Official Plan), and with direct access to such *Arterial roads*.

VALUE OF GRANT

The proposed value of the Grant is up to 50% of *eligible costs* to complete the project up to a maximum of \$5,000 per project/property.

ELIGIBLE PROJECTS AND COSTS

Eligible costs for the Grant may include the following:

- Re-purposing an agricultural building to support expanded agriculturally-related uses and secondary farm occupations;
- Construction of farm-stands and on-farm stores/markets, where permitted in the Zoning By-law;
- Design and construction of Farm stand, or farm gate sales, signage for existing uses;
- Experiential Activities (e.g. Bed & Breakfasts, farm vacations) on existing agricultural operations;
- Farm Stand Operations;
- On-Farm Store/Markets;
- Commercial Processing; and,
- Bringing any existing farm stand structure into compliance with the Ontario Building Code.

PAYMENT

All completed projects must comply with the description as provided in the grant application form. The Grant may be provided upon successful completion of the approved project. The Grant may be paid in a lump sum as a reimbursement of 50% of costs incurred, or the maximum value of the grant, whichever is less.



6.4.6 Building, Property, And Accessibility Improvement Grant

PURPOSE

The Building, Property, and Accessibility Improvement Grant is intended to extend the useful life and viability of the existing building stock in Thames Centre. It is intended to provide for safe, usable, and more energy efficient, sustainable, and accessible spaces. This grant is focused more on functional building improvements and applies to interior spaces as well as exterior spaces, such as patios. It may apply to structural repairs, interior restoration and design, improvements to building infrastructure such as roofing, windows, and doors, and weather and floodproofing. It also encourages the installation of **energy efficient building systems** (Energy Star™ rated windows and doors, renewable energy, or energy savings technology such as motion sensor lighting, smart heating/cooling systems, etc.). This may also apply to climate change adaptation/mitigation projects, including floodproofing. Property owners are encouraged to pursue low impact, sustainable developments, and global standards in green buildings such as “LEED” (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certifications for their projects. It also applies to the construction of ramps, automatic door systems or entrance modifications to improve overall property accessibility.

VALUE OF GRANT

The proposed value of the Building, Property, and Accessibility Grant is up to 50% of *eligible costs* to complete the project up to a maximum of \$5,000 per project/property.

ELIGIBLE PROJECT AND COSTS

Properties may be eligible for the Building, Property, and Accessibility Improvement Grant if the proposed or potential use is in accordance with the eligible uses identified in Section 6.2. For a Building, Property, and Accessibility Improvement Grant, *eligible costs* may include the following:

- Structural repairs to walls, ceilings, floors, and foundations;
- Interior restoration and design;
- Repair/replacement/installation of building infrastructure such as roofing, windows, and doors;
- Repair/replacement/installation of plumbing, electrical, HVAC, and fire protection systems;
- Weather and floodproofing;
- Improvements to energy efficiency through insulation upgrades, Energy Star™ windows and doors, etc.;
- Installation of renewable energy technology, or energy saving technology (motion sensor lighting, smart heating/cooling systems);
- The construction of ramps, automatic door systems or similar measures to improve overall accessibility; and
- Other improvements that may bring a building up to code or address health and safety concerns, as approved by the *Municipality*.

PAYMENT

All completed projects must comply with the description as provided in the grant application form. The Grant may be provided upon successful completion of the approved project. The grant may be paid in a lump sum as a reimbursement of costs incurred, or the maximum value of the grant, whichever is less.

6.4.7 Planning And Building Permit Fee Grant

PURPOSE AND ANTICIPATED BENEFITS

The Planning Application and Building Permit Fee Grant may be available to *eligible applicants* to offset the planning and building fees required by the *Municipality*.

VALUE OF GRANT

Where all eligibility requirements are fulfilled, a Planning Application and Building Permit Fee Grant may be provided to cover 50% of the eligible fees required by the *Municipality* in relation to a proposed project and/or property.

The *Municipality* may provide a maximum of \$3,000 per project and/or property as part of a Planning Application and Building Permit Fee Grant.

ELIGIBLE COSTS

Properties may be eligible for the Planning and Building Permit Fee Grant if the proposed or potential use is in accordance with the eligible uses identified in Section 6.2. *Eligible costs* include fees levied by the *Municipality* associated with the development or *redevelopment* of eligible properties. Applicable municipal fees may include applications/permits associated with:

- Official Plan and Zoning Bylaw amendments;
- Minor variances;
- Site plan control;
- Building permits;
- Cash-in-lieu of parkland dedication;
- Cash-in-lieu of parking requirements; and
- Other applicable fees identified in the *Municipality's* Fees and Charges By-law, as amended.

PAYMENT

Planning and/or Building Applications fees are paid, and the grant in the amount of the fees paid is provided to the applicant following substantial completion of the project/development. This is done to ensure that projects are completed in accordance with the approved CIP application.

6.4.8 Sign Improvement Grant

PURPOSE

This program encourages the improvement of commercial signage to promote an attractive, active, and pedestrian-friendly streetscape, and one that reflects a cohesive vision for the *Municipality*.

VALUE OF GRANT

The Grant may cover 50% of *eligible costs* to a maximum of \$2,500. The maximum grant value may be increased to \$4,000 at the sole discretion of Council if the proposed signage project meets one or more of the following:

- The building has multiple street frontages (e.g., corner lots) or multiple street addresses, where signage improvements are proposed on both frontages; and/or
- The building has a secondary access or a prominent view from a laneway, or parking lot; and signage improvements are proposed at each access.
- A property has been identified as a Priority Project/Site in accordance with Section 6.4.

ELIGIBLE PROJECT AND COSTS

Properties may be eligible for the Sign Improvement Grant if the proposed or potential use is in accordance with the eligible uses identified in Section 6.2. For a Sign Improvement Grant, *eligible costs* include the following:

- Improvements to or replacement of the storefront signs of buildings are eligible, including material and construction costs.
- Where a side and/or rear wall sign is visible from a public street or public space, or fronts onto a laneway or parking lot, improvements to these signs may also be eligible.

PAYMENT

All completed projects must comply with the description as provided in the grant application form. The Grant may be provided upon successful completion of the approved project. The Grant may be paid in a lump sum as a reimbursement of up to 50% of costs incurred, or the maximum value of the grant, whichever is less.



7 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The Implementation Plan is an important component of the CIP, as it outlines a number of administrative details.

7.1 Implementation Period

It is anticipated that the CIP may be implemented over a 10-year period ending Spring 2034. The implementation period may be extended or reduce the implementation period as deemed appropriate or necessary, subject to an amendment to the CIP, defined further in Section 9.5.

7.2 Administration

7.2.1 Council Roles and Responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities of the Municipal Council within the CIP are recommended as follows, however, may be shared with the Economic Development Committee:

- a) Municipal Council may adopt the Community Improvement Plan through Bylaw.
- b) Municipal Council may appoint the Director of Planning as the *CIP Administrator*. The *CIP Administrator* may be responsible for managing the day-to-day responsibilities of the CIP, including undertaking pre-consultation meetings with potential applicants for financial incentives and coordinating application submission process.
- c) Municipal Council may delegate its responsibility for reviewing CIP applications for approval/refusal to the *CIP Implementation Staff*.
- d) Municipal Council may annually receive reports from the *CIP Implementation Staff* regarding the approval/refusal of CIP applications. Council may approve the release funds from the CIP Grant Budget for the approved applications, as recommended by the *CIP Implementation Staff*.
- e) In addition, Municipal Council may contribute to the overall administration of the CIP (subject to the *Municipality's* priorities and the availability of resources/funding) as follows:
 - i. Providing approval for which CIP Financial Incentive Programs may be put into effect in any given year during the implementation period, if any; and
 - ii. Providing approval for (as part of the annual budgeting process) a community improvement budget for Financial Incentives that have been put into effect for that year, if any, in accordance with Section 7.3 of this CIP.

7.2.2 Economic Development Committee Roles and Responsibilities

The existing Economic Development Committee shall be responsible for CIP Implementation and will act as the CIP Implementation Staff, as referenced within this CIP. The roles and responsibilities of the Economic Development Committee within the CIP are recommended as follows, however, may be shared with Municipal Council:

- Reviewing and evaluating applications for Financial Incentive Programs;

- Recommending the approval or refusal of applications for Financial Incentive Programs (in accordance with Section 7.2.1 c) to Municipal Council;
- Monitoring the annual County Economic Development budget allocations to assist in determine annual Municipal CIP budgeting allocations
- Marketing the CIP, in accordance with the Marketing Plan set out in Section 8;
- Monitoring the CIP, in accordance with the Monitoring Plan set out in Section 9, and providing annual reports to Council and citizens with respect to the costs and benefits of the CIP;
- Making recommendations to Council with respect to:
 - Financial Incentive Programs to be put into effect in any given year; and
 - Identifying an annual community improvement budget for Financial Incentives.
 - Identifying a CIP Administrator for day-to-day operations
- Annually applying to the County CIP Primer Application fund to receive grant reimbursement

The year-end December Economic Development Meeting scheduled annually shall be utilized to determine grant priorities for the upcoming year. Recommendations from this meeting will guide Council in determining which grant programs are 'turned on' each year. During the first year of implementation of the CIP, the grants implemented should focus on Façade Improvements, Signage Improvements, Landscaping Improvements and Planning & Building Permit rebates.

A staff person with expertise on site-specific or building-specific matters may also be consulted to assist with the review and evaluation of applications. The *CIP Implementation Staff* shall also be authorized to retain other qualified professionals as required.

7.2.3 Administration And Financial Incentives

The *Municipality* may put into effect any number of the Financial Incentives identified in this Plan during the implementation period, subject to the availability of Municipal funds and other resources.

Annually, the *CIP Implementation Staff* may make recommendations to Council with respect to the administration of Financial Incentives. An annual deadline for financial incentive applications may be identified by the Implementation Staff, in alignment with the County's CIP program to ensure the Municipality can utilize the County's program to fund municipal grant programs. All applications may be received and evaluated in accordance with this deadline.

An evaluation matrix and the following criteria may be used to evaluate all financial incentive applications received in advance of the deadline:

- General eligibility requirements, as outlined in Section 6.2;
- Program eligibility requirements, as outlined in each grant program detail (Section 6.5.1 to 6.6.1);
- Program alignment with the County's economic development strategic directions.
- Application requirements, as outlined in Section 7.4.2; and
- A Council approved budget.

Following the evaluation of all financial incentive applications received at the time of the annual, successful applicants may be selected based on the results of the evaluation and on the limit of available funding for that year.

In cases where the Implementation Staff refuse an application for Financial Incentives, all applicants may have the right to appeal the decision to Council. If a decision is appealed, a staff report may be prepared for Council detailing the Staff's decision. The applicant may appear before Council to detail their appeal.

7.3 Financial Management

As part of the annual Municipal budgeting exercise, Council may approve a community improvement budget for Financial Incentives that have been put into effect for that year, if any. The provision of any incentives shall be to the limit of the available funding for that year. During the implementation period of this Plan, Council may determine if funding and incentive levels are necessary or warranted to ensure that the CIP functions properly in respect of the goal statement and the objectives (as set out in Section 3) and the *Municipality's* financial circumstances.

7.4 Applying for Incentives

7.4.1 The Application Process

The following is a summary of the process for the submission, evaluation, and approval of applications for CIP Financial Incentives:

- Applicants must discuss their application with the *CIP Administrator* prior to submitting their application. This is to discuss eligibility, identify application requirements, and to ensure that applicants make use of all available funding opportunities.
- The *CIP Implementation Staff* may evaluate all applications and supporting materials in a timely manner. Applicants may be notified if their submission is incomplete.
- Based on the evaluation of complete applications, the *CIP Implementation Staff* may make a recommendation to Council.
- For applications that are approved, a Financial Assistance Agreement may be prepared and executed by the *CIP Implementation Staff* or *CIP Administrator* and signed by the property owner or tenant (with consent of the owner);
- If an application is not approved by the *CIP Implementation Staff*, the applicant may be provided an opportunity to appeal the decision to the Council. In such cases, Council may reconsider the application. If Council approves the application, the *CIP Implementation Staff* may execute the financial incentive program agreement. An applicant shall not have the option to appeal their application to Council if the reason for refusal is related to lack of funding availability. In the event that an application is refused due to lack of funding availability, the applicant may resubmit their application once funding becomes available. However, in no case shall funding be provided retroactively for a completed project;
- Any program commitments may be cancelled at the discretion of the *CIP Implementation Staff* if work does not commence within six months of approval of an application, or if a project is not undertaken or completed in accordance with the Financial Assistance Agreement;

- When projects are completed, a statement with supporting invoices shall be submitted to the *CIP Implementation Staff* or *CIP Administrator*. Following this, the work may be inspected by the *CIP Implementation Staff* or *CIP Administrator* and, if approved, notice of completion may be issued and the financial assistance may be initiated;
- Upon completion of a community improvement project, the *CIP Implementation Staff* or *CIP Administrator* reserves the right to inspect any properties/buildings, or to audit final costs at the owner's expense;
- Funding approval may lapse if a notice of completion is not issued within twelve months of the date of execution of the Financial Assistance Agreement;
- The *CIP Implementation Staff* or *CIP Administrator* may grant an extension for community improvement works following receipt of a written request by the owner setting out the reasons for the extension and providing a new date of completion; and
- Should the applicant fall into default of any of the requirements of the incentive program or other requirements established by the 'Implementation Staff', incentives may be delayed, reduced, or cancelled and applicants may be required to repay benefits.

7.4.2 Application Requirements

Applications for financial incentives offered through this Plan must include:

- One (1) copy of the completed application form;
- One (1) copy of all supporting documentation, as determined by the *CIP Implementation Staff* or *CIP Administrator*, which may include (but is not limited to):
 - A completed application form;
 - Specifications of the proposed project, including good quality plans, drawing, and studies;
 - Good quality photographs of the existing building condition;
 - Past/historical photographs and/or drawings;
 - Two (2) cost estimates for eligible work provided by licensed contractors. This is a requirement for proposed works to be completed by a licensed contractor and for proposed work to be completed by the applicant;
 - All sources of additional funding/incentives for eligible work;
 - A statement with respect to how the proposed project meets the goals and objectives of the CIP; and
- Any additional requirements as determined by the Committee.

Additional application requirements may be identified for certain financial incentive program application. Requirements should be confirmed during initial discussions with the *CIP Administrator*.

8 MARKETING PLAN

8.1 Overview

Active marketing of the CIP is crucial. The success of the CIP in affecting physical improvements within the *Municipality* requires participation and investment by private landowners. The following is meant to be a guide for the *Municipality* of Thames Centre to market the CIP and promote the programs available during implementation. The marketing initiatives may help the *Municipality* communicate opportunities available by means of the CIP.

8.2 Target Market

The following have been identified as the target markets of the CIP:

- Property owners and operating businesses located within the Thames Centre CIPA, specifically,
 - Owners of agri-business
 - Tourism-related businesses
 - Underutilized properties or properties with expansion/revitalization potential
 - Buildings along key view corridors or viewsheds within the municipality
- Potential investors in the community;
- Local realtors;
- Business associations, which can serve as an information source about the CIP and its programs;
- Middlesex County Economic Development;
- OMAFRA;
- The public; and
- Municipal Council, who may receive annual reports on program take-up and results.

The messages to be conveyed to each of these markets are outlined in the following table.

Table 1 Messages to Convey to each CIP Target Market

Property Owners and Operating Businesses in the CIPA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The CIP can help finance improvement projects to private property; • The CIP can multiply the value of private investment by up to 50%; • There is an efficient CIP application and approvals process; and • The CIP can contribute to personal business development goals by attracting more potential customers into the Municipality’s urban, community, and hamlet areas through a range of physical improvements to the public and private realm.
Potential Investors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The CIP is just one more way in which the Municipality of Thames Centre is actively encouraging local investment and job growth • Thames Centre is investment ready.

Realtors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The CIP enhances the attractiveness of properties in the CIPA; and • Realtors should help spread the word about the opportunities of the CIP to potential property investors.
Business Associations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business associations can help spread the word about the opportunities of the CIP, which may benefit their members.
Middlesex County Economic Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Thames Centre CIP aligns its goals and objectives with the County's Economic Development Strategy.
OMAFRA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Thames Centre CIP actively supports local agriculture community in diversifying farm practices. • Grant programs may be available to agricultural uses for agri-tourism-related farm enhancements.
The Public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Municipality is actively encouraging investment and job growth through the CIP, in alignment with its overall economic development goals and strategies.
Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The extent to which the CIP is achieving the goals and objectives identified in Section 3; • Investment in CIP programs may spur private investment in the community. • The need for changes/revisions to the CIP programs.

8.3 Marketing Materials

The following are communications materials that the *Municipality* may develop to promote the CIP and the related opportunities:

- A section on the *Municipality's* website devoted to the CIP, including information on financial incentives and the application process;
- Regular promotion of the CIP incentives via social media tools;
- An information package that would be sent to both property-owners and tenant businesses in the *Municipality*.
- Inclusion of the *CIP Administrator* at all development pre-consultation meetings to share grant opportunities as part of the pre-consultation process.

- A bi-annual E-newsletter (and/or hard-copy newsletter) highlighting new developments, businesses, and public realm improvements, as well as CIP success stories;
- Call-outs within the local newspaper or classifieds.
- Partner with BIA and related groups to highlight grant opportunities to members through presentations, newsletters, or social media sharing.
- Partner with the County to pool marketing resources and highlight County and local grant opportunities
- Information nights could be held to share information about the CIP programs and incentives;
- Information displays could be provided at local community events, conferences, and at municipal buildings, to broadly promote the CIP;
- Annual progress reports could be prepared to outline the success of the CIP over the period of one year and to serve as case studies for future applicants; and
- Periodic radio-announcements and newspaper articles highlighting available funding programs and success stories.

The *Municipality* may also identify target businesses and properties where improvements would be most desirable and arrange short visits with owners/managers to ensure awareness and encourage take-up. These activities may be undertaken as part of the initial launch of the new CIP program and repeated annually or every few years as “reminders” of the CIP opportunities.



9 MONITORING PLAN

9.1 Purpose

The purpose of the following monitoring strategy is to:

- Track funds provided by the CIP to owners and tenants of land located within the Thames Center CIPA;
- Evaluate whether the programs are achieving the goals and objectives set out by the CIP;
- Determine whether program adjustments are required, including monies or program eligibility; and
- Provide the basis for reporting the results of the CIP, and specifically the uptake and success of Financial Incentive Programs, to Municipal Council.

9.2 Baseline Information and On-going Data Collection

In order to accurately track the progress and success of the CIP, the *Municipality* should begin by establishing baseline conditions, which may include but are not limited to:

- an inventory of *vacant or underutilized* or derelict buildings within the Municipality;
- an inventory of existing businesses in the CIPA.

The *Municipality* of Thames Centre should monitor the following on an on-going basis for applications not approved:

- Number of unsuccessful applications; and
- Reason(s) for the application's refusal.

For each approved financial incentive application, the *Municipality* should also monitor the following on an on-going basis:

- Project details as proposed in application;
- Approved value of grants, in total and by program;
- Total private sector investment/total value of construction, to determine the investments being leverage by the CIP municipal contributions;
- Timing of completion of the project and payment of the grant;
- Property tax assessment after the completion of the project, if relevant;
- Total value of tax incentives, planning application/building permit and/or development charges waived if applicable; and
- Project details of the completed project ("after" photos).

9.3 Measures

Several measures that may be used as the basis for evaluating whether the individual objectives of the CIP are being met are listed below. Each of the measures identified has different implications in terms of what specifically should be collected, how frequently the data should be collected, and how frequently the data should be reported. The measures are as follows; additional measures may be identified during the implementation of the CIP:

- Number of newly rehabilitated housing and commercial properties;
- Amount of funding invested in rehabilitation of housing and commercial properties;
- Amount and effectiveness of informing processes that have been implemented;
- Number of visual improvements implemented;
- Amount of sidewalks, improved street lighting, power lines, curbs, gutters, and resurfaced streets implemented;
- Amount of non-conforming and incompatible land uses that have been relocated;
- Number of residents and ratepayers who have participated in implementation of programs;
- Amount of funding invested in agri-tourism;
- Amount of private investment in improvements based on approved CIP applications;
- Number of businesses implementing Green Building standards; and
- Amount of funding invested in financial incentive programs.

9.4 Reporting

An annual report may be prepared to highlight the successes and achievements of the CIP. The report may be presented to Municipal Council for consideration. The report may recommend adjustments/amendments to the Plan, as discussed below.

9.5 Plan Amendments

As a result of the monitoring and evaluation of the *Municipality* of Thames Centre CIP, amendments to the Plan may be required. The following summarizes when Plan amendments are and are not required:

- a) An amendment to the CIP may not be required to:
 - i. Reduce funding levels for the Financial Incentive Programs; or
 - ii. Discontinue or cancel any of the programs identified.
- b) An amendment may be required to the CIP or implementing By-laws to:
 - i. Extend the implementation period of the CIP;
 - ii. Add any new Financial Incentive Programs;
 - iii. Modify the eligibility criteria related to Financial Incentive Programs offered; and
 - iv. Modify the geographic area (i.e., the CIPA) to which Financial Incentive Programs apply.

Amendments to this CIP may be passed by Municipal Council under the Planning Act. The *Municipality* of Thames Centre may also be required to pre-consult with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Ministry of Housing on any amendments to this CIP.

10 CONCLUSION

The CIP is a Municipal-wide planning document that is focused on implementing physical improvements to achieve a broad range of community and economic development goals. Through implementation of this Plan, the *Municipality* is demonstrating that it is highly committed to encouraging local investment, revitalization and beautification, and working with property owners and tenants to support existing businesses, promote the establishment of new businesses, and to attract more residents and visitors to the downtown core.

Property owners or tenants interested in any of the financial incentive programs identified within this CIPA are encouraged to contact the Economic Development/Planning Staff at the *Municipality* for more information.



11 GLOSSARY

The interpretation of this Plan rests solely with the *Municipality* of Thames Centre. To assist in interpretation, the following definitions shall apply.

Adaptive reuse: means the recycling of a building and/or structure usually for a new function, such as the use of a former industrial building for residential purposes.

Arterial Roads: are existing roads of 2 to 4 traffic lanes that are under the authority of the County. The function of the arterial roads is to facilitate the inter-municipal and intra- municipal movement of high volumes of traffic to and from major traffic generating sectors in the Municipality.

Built Heritage Resources: are any human-made standing structure that provides information on a person, place, or event from the past or may have intrinsic value due to some element of its design or construction. Examples of *built heritage resources* include: residential structures, farm buildings, mills, industrial, commercial, institutional buildings, bridges, water systems, dams, canals, locks, cairns, statues, monuments, fountains, retaining walls, boundary or claim marker, or ruins.

CIP Administrator: means a staff member appointed by Municipal Council who is responsible for managing the day-to-day responsibilities of the CIP, including undertaking pre-consultation meetings with potential applicants for financial incentives and coordinating application submission process.

CIP Implementation Staff: means Council or the designated members of municipal staff appointed to review applications for financial incentives and make decisions on financial incentives in accordance with the policies of this Plan.

Eligible costs: means costs related to 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.

Gateway: typically entrance features or landmarks which act as markers to indicate an entrance to, or exit from, the *Municipality* as a whole, and important neighbourhoods, districts, or other unique locations. This may take the form of unique buildings, signs, markers, or public art.

Infill: refers to a form of development which makes use of underutilized, vacant, or undeveloped lands that are surrounded or partially surrounded by existing development.

Mixed-use: means any combination of commercial uses (retail, personal services, restaurants, etc.), offices, institutional uses and/or residential uses, provided that there are commercial uses at grade.

Municipality: means the *Municipality* of Thames Centre.

Project: means the planning or replanning, design or redesign, resubdivision, clearance, development or redevelopment, construction, reconstruction and rehabilitation, or improvement of energy efficiency to the *property* of the applicant.

Property: means a building, buildings, or land of such residential, commercial, industrial, public, recreational, institutional, religious, charitable, or other uses of the applicant.

Redevelopment: means the creation of new units, uses or lots on previously developed land in existing communities, including *brownfield* sites, as defined in the County Official Plan.

Rental housing units: means any living accommodation used or intended for use as rented residential premises, and “rental unit” includes:

- i. a site for a mobile home or site on which there is a land lease home used or intended for use as rented residential premises; and
- ii. a room in a boarding house, rooming house or lodging house and a unit in a care home.

Tax Increment: means an increase in taxes, which is calculated by subtracting the Municipal portion of property taxes before assessment from the Municipal portion of the property taxes after reassessment. The *Tax Increment* does not include any increase/decrease in Municipal taxes due to a general tax increase/decrease or a change in assessment for any other reason.

Vacant or underutilized (land and/or buildings): means developable land within a district that would otherwise qualify as substantially developed land, but which contains land, buildings, and/or structures that are not being used to their full potential and may potentially be developed, recycled, or converted into a better, more compatible use, such as a residential or *Mixed-use* development. Part or all of a parcel of land shall be considered vacant and/or underutilized if it is no longer necessary to support the current use, based on factors including but not limited to current and projected employment levels, vacancy rates, and parking demand.