

STAFF REPORT:ADMINISTRATION



REPORT TO: Council
MEETING DATE: March 28, 2011
REPORT NO.: SPS.11.2
SUBJECT: Community Improvement Plan
PREPARED BY: Peter Tollefsen, Director of Special Projects (Sustainability)

A. Recommendations

THAT Council receive the Staff Report SPS.11.2 "Community Improvement Plan", and;

THAT Council approve the Community Improvement Plan, as revised, and;

THAT Council direct staff to prepare a By-Law to designate Community Improvement Project Areas, and;

THAT Council direct Staff to prepare a By-Law to adopt a Community Improvement Plan for Thornbury, Clarksburg and Craigeleith.

B. Background

What is a Community Improvement Plan (CIP)?

Section 28 of the *Planning Act* allows municipalities, with provisions in their official plans relating to community improvement, to designate by by-law a "community improvement project area" and prepare and adopt a community improvement plan for the community improvement project area.

Community Improvement Plans (CIPs) are a strategy to improve areas and provide a framework in the event that municipalities choose to offer loans and/or grants directly to businesses and individuals within a specified Community Improvement Project area.

What is a Community Improvement Project Area?

Section 28(1) of the *Planning Act* defines a "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".

This definition anticipates municipalities proceeding with community improvement issues, e.g., downtown revitalization.

How the CIP relates to the Town's Official Plan

One of the goals of the Town's Official Plan is to expand employment opportunities and the assessment base of the Municipality through the encouragement of economic development in all sectors of the local economy. Section 10 of the Official Plan (OP) states that "Community Improvement within the Town is intended to provide for the maintenance, rehabilitation, redevelopment and revitalization of the existing built environment to improve the safety and quality of land and buildings, structures and facilities, maximize the efficient use of existing services and facilities, create attractive and safe pedestrian-oriented streetscapes and public spaces, and improve infrastructure where deficiencies or deteriorating conditions exist."

The OP states that Community Improvement Plans may be prepared and adopted by the Town to "Encourage the renovation, repair, rehabilitation, redevelopment or other improvement of lands and/or buildings, including 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."

Timeline Background

The Town's Community Improvement Plan initiative commenced in 2007. Below is a timeline of the process to date:

- May 2007 - A report was presented to Council outlining the merits of downtown revitalization through a Community Improvement Plan (CIP) for Thornbury, Clarksburg and Craigleith. Council authorized Town staff to proceed with a CIP. The Town was able to secure funding through the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, Green Municipal fund and the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, Rural Economic Development program. This funding also included support for the completion of a Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability (PUDS) Strategy¹, to serve as a complementing strategy to the CIP. Firm selection took place and RCI Consulting, GSP Group and Enermodal Engineering was chosen to complete the work, in concert with Staff and the Community.

- January 2009 - The project commenced. The CIP work program was divided into 5 Phases:
 - Background and Policy Review.
 - Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) Analysis and Visioning.
 - Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability Study
 - Creation of proposed Public Realm Improvements and Incentive Programs,
 - Preparation of the CIP.

- June 2009 - A visioning Public Workshop was held for the Community Improvement Plan. Approximately 40 individuals and business representatives participated.

- October 2009 - A visioning Public Workshop on Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability was held. Approximately 35 individuals and business representatives participated.

- May 2009 - Staff and Consultants briefed Council by, providing a summary of the public realm improvement chart. This included a summary of proposed streetscape improvements for Craighleith, Thornbury and Clarksburg.

- June 2010 - A third Public Workshop was held to present and obtain input from the Community on the priorities of the public realm improvement actions contained in the municipal leadership strategy and the proposed incentive programs.

- June 2010 - Council met with Staff to obtain some input regarding the priorities of the public realm Improvements and the ranking of the preliminary incentive programs.

- August 2010 - A draft of the CIP was prepared by the Consultant for Town Staff and the Steering Committee. The draft was released to Council and the community for review.

- August 2010 - A report was presented to Council for information purposes, which summarized the work completed to date, including the Background Report, Interim Report and the Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability Strategy. While these reports serve as reference documents for the final CIP. The CIP report is a separate document and plan.

- August 2010 - Council authorized Staff to proceed to a Public Meeting for the CIP. An Open House and Public Meeting were held February 14, 2011.

- February 14, 2011 - Council received Report SPS.11.1 and recommended that Staff be authorized to report back with a final Community Improvement Plan based on the comments received to date, which is the purpose of this report.

What is a Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability (PUDS) Strategy

A PUDS Strategy is a compilation of Town-wide strategies for such things as streetscape infrastructure, open space and public art. The purpose of a PUDS Strategy is to offer more specific design guidance for both public and private spaces,

As noted in the timeline contained within this report, this strategy was completed as a complement to the CIP project, for which the Town received funding. The PUDS Strategy will be brought to Council, at a later date for further discussion. The Design Guidelines section of PUDS has now evolved into a Draft Urban Design Guideline Document that will be brought to Council at a later date for discussion.

It should be noted that while some PUDS concepts were considered in the drafting of the CIP, the PUDS shall be considered separate from the CIP. Council's approval of the CIP will not serve to endorse the PUDS Strategy.

Community Comments Regarding the CIP

Comments received through the Public Meeting process with respect to the CIP are attached. A review of the comments by Staff with recommended revisions are also attached (Attachment 7).

In Conclusion

Significant work has been completed over the past two years through public meetings and workshops to draft a strong Community Improvement Plan for Thornbury, Clarksburg and Craigleith. Staff is of the opinion that the CIP represents good planning and recommend that Council approve the CIP.

C. The Blue Mountains' Strategic Plan

By doing a Community Improvement Plan the Town will encourage downtown revitalization that will help with Goal 5: *"Ensure long-term financial sustainability"*.

And Goal 3: *"Preserving and enhancing natural and environmental features, and cultural heritage of the community"*.

D. Environmental Impacts

The CIP will have a positive environmental impact as it will create an action plan for downtown revitalization, including the remediation of brownfield sites.

E. Financial Impact

There is no direct budget impact with respect to the endorsement of the CIP.

Endorsement of the CIP does not tie the Municipality to any expenditures. Funding of CIP initiatives will be considered individually and separately through the annual Town Budget Process.

F. Attached

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| Attachment 1 | From P. Tollefsen, dated Feb 8, 2011. Comments from members of Council. |
| Attachment 2 | Minutes from the Public Meeting with excerpts from Feb 14, 2011 Council meeting. |
| Attachment 3 | Comments from Mr. Victor Labreche, dated Feb 14, 2011 |
| Attachment 4 | Comments from Ms. Barb Selkirk, dated Feb 14, 2011 |
| Attachment 5 | Comments from Mr. Colin Travis, dated February 16, 2011 |
| Attachment 6 | Comments from Steven Bowie, dated February 17, 2011 |
| Attachment 7 | Staff review of the Comments with recommended revisions. |
| Attachment 8 | Community Improvement Plan, version showing proposed revisions. |

Respectfully submitted,

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