



# **Downtown and Connected Districts**

## **Community Improvement Plan**

**Draft June 2026**

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# 1. Introduction

The City of Welland's Downtown and connected districts are the central core of the City, where people live, work and come together. Rooted in rich history, these areas reflect the City's heritage and evolution over the years which is reflected in the design of its buildings and streets. Recognizing the importance of the Downtown and its connected districts in shaping Welland's identity and economic future, the City retained J.L.Richards and Associates Limited and MBPD to prepare an update to the Downtown and Connected Districts Community Improvement Plan (CIP) and Urban Design Guidelines.

The updated 2026 Downtown and Connected Districts CIP reflects what we heard from the community in terms of a vision for the future of Downtown Welland and its districts. It outlines a framework to facilitate the creation of a vibrant and safe community by incentivizing building and façade improvements, multi-unit residential housing, mixed use development and active at-grade commercial uses. By investing in these areas, the City is setting the foundation for a safe, attractive and inclusive downtown experience that benefits the entire community. This is just one step of many that the City is taking to help revitalize its Downtown and surrounding areas.

The purpose of this CIP is to:

- Stimulate private sector investment through municipal incentive-based programs.
- Facilitate and encourage community change in a co-ordinated manner.
- Highlight local priorities and city initiatives.



(c) Anthony Gallaccio

## 1.1 Community Improvement Project Area

The Community Improvement Project Area (CIPA) is illustrated on Figure 1 and is divided into five distinct focus areas:

1. Downtown Bridge District
2. Downtown West District
3. King Street District
4. Health and Wellness District
5. Downtown Gateway District

Each focus area has a distinct built form and public realm which are addressed differently in the accompanying Urban Design Guidelines. These focus areas will be used to phase public realm improvements and may be used by Council should they choose to prioritize CIP funding in specific areas.

In addition to those properties mapped on Figure 1, all properties designated under the Ontario Heritage Act, including designated properties outside of the CIPA, are eligible to receive funding under the Façade Improvement Grant and Building Improvement Grant. Listed heritage properties outside of the CIPA illustrated on Figure 1 are not eligible for funding.

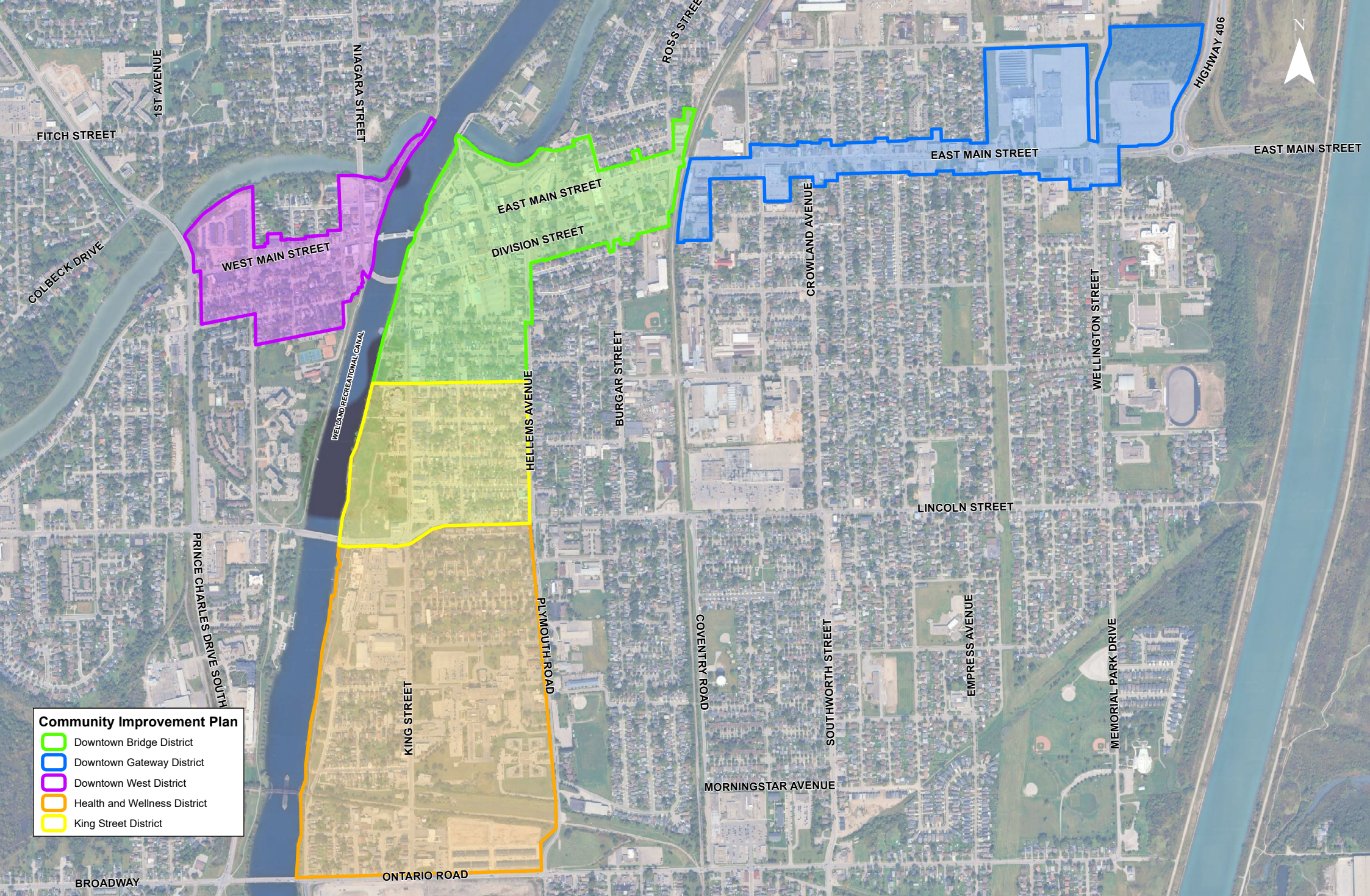


Figure 1 - CIPA

## 1.2 Vision

**Downtown Welland and its Connected Districts will be a vibrant, thriving, and inclusive hub where local businesses, culture, and institutions are supported through great places, strong connections, and renewed investment.**

**The Community Improvement Plan will foster Downtown Welland and its Connected Districts as a lively and connected destination that celebrates history, supports innovation, and offers inviting streets, spaces, and opportunities for residents, workers, and visitors alike.**

## 1.3 Objectives

- a) Be an active, vibrant and beautiful mixed use area showcasing attractive building and business facades including a high level of design and attractive business signage.
- b) Expand and diversify commercial spaces, restaurants, housing options, and services to meet a broad range of community needs.
- c) Encourage diverse retail, cultural and entertainment activities that increase vibrancy throughout the day and evening.
- d) Strengthen and support local businesses, post-secondary institutions, healthcare facilities, and innovative enterprises.
- e) Leverage Welland's unique assets including the recreational canal, farmers market, Meritt Park, institutions, bilingualism and history to drive economic growth.
- f) Support the continued evolution of the Welland Hospital as a key employment and healthcare hub.
- g) Enhance the public realm through improved street lighting, signage, public art, improved building design and encourage temporary uses to reduce the number of building vacancies.
- h) Improve open spaces and infrastructure, ensuring safe and accessible connections for pedestrians and cyclists.
- i) Increase the number of people living and working within the areas by encouraging the development of mixed use buildings, upper level apartments above commercial units and residential infill.
- j) Celebrate and preserve heritage and historic buildings to proudly display the City's history.
- k) Expand, enhance, and better utilize parking and mobility options to support convenient and safe travel for all ages and abilities.
- l) Expand opportunities to link cultural events to downtown businesses to stimulate economic growth and activity.
- m) Build a unique, thriving, and inclusive community that reflects Welland's identity and supports long-term growth.

## 2. Legislative and Policy Overview

The purpose of a Community Improvement Plan (CIP) is to allow municipalities to incentivize private sector investment in the community, and to establish a framework for rehabilitating and revitalizing areas of the community such as downtowns, commercial areas, and to spur the remediation and redevelopment of properties with historic environmental contamination.

### 2.1 Legislative Basis

Under Section 28 of the *Planning Act*, municipalities have the authority to designate a Community Improvement Project Area and prepare and adopt a CIP. Under Section 106(3) of the *Municipal Act*, municipalities may provide financial assistance to private property owners for the purposes of a CIP.

According to Section 28 (1), a ‘community improvement project area’ is defined as “a municipality or an area within a municipality, the community improvement of which in the opinion of the council is desirable because of age, dilapidation, overcrowding, faulty arrangement, unsuitability of buildings or for any other environmental, social or community economic development reason”. There are a variety of reasons that an area may be designated as a community improvement area including physical deterioration, housing development, to stimulate redevelopment, unsuitable buildings and any other social and economic reasons.

Section 28(1) 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, 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”. This allows the City to develop a wide range of incentives to address economic priorities and improvements within the Downtown and Connected Districts Community Improvement Project Area.

### 2.2 Policy Basis

An analysis of the relevant policy framework for the Downtown and Connected Districts CIP was completed as part of the background report presented to Council. Enabling policies to stimulate economic development, revitalization, protect cultural heritage, improve connectivity and direct increased residential densities to the area can be found in both the Niagara Region Official Plan and City of Welland Official Plan.

Section 7.10 of the in-effect City Official Plan contains policies which enable the City to identify Community Improvement Project Areas (CIPA) and provide incentive programs which stimulate the redevelopment of lands as a means to maintain the vitality of the municipality. Policies within this section further identify goals and programs for a Downtown CIP and a Brownfield CIP.

As per Section 7.10.1.1 the goal of the community improvement in the downtown is to “reinforce the importance of the downtown, aid in stimulating private sector redevelopment, and guide private sector development and redevelopment.”

### 3. General Program Requirements

All of the financial incentive programs contained in this CIP are subject to the following general requirements as well as the individual requirements specified under each program. The general and program specific requirements contained in this CIP are not necessarily exhaustive, and the City reserves the right to include other requirements and conditions as deemed necessary on a property specific basis:

- a) Application for any of the incentive programs contained in this Plan can be made only for properties within the designated Community Improvement Project Area, as well as properties designated under the *Ontario Heritage Act* beyond the CIPA;
- b) A complete application for any financial incentive program contained in this CIP must be submitted to the City prior to the commencement of any works to which the financial incentive program will apply;
- c) If the applicant is not the owner of the property, prior to entering into an agreement, the applicant must provide written consent from the owner of the property;
- d) An application for any financial incentive program contained in this CIP must include plans, estimates, contracts, reports, rental rates, sale prices, and other details as required by the City to satisfy the City with respect to costs of the project and conformity of the project with the CIP;
- e) The City may require that an applicant submit professional urban design studies and/or professional architectural/ design drawings that are in conformity with Urban Design Guidelines put in place by the City;
- f) Review and evaluation of an application and supporting materials against program eligibility requirements will be done by City Staff who will then make a recommendation to City Council or Council's designate. The application is subject to approval by City Council or Council's designate;
- g) All applications are subject to approval by Council or Council's designate. Should Council's designate decide not to approve the application, the applicant has the right to appeal that decision to Council;
- h) The City may discontinue any of the programs contained in this CIP at any time, but applicants with approved grants and/or tax assistance will still receive said grant and/or tax assistance, subject to meeting the general and program specific requirements and the requirements of any grant/tax assistance agreement entered into with the City;
- i) As a condition of application approval, the applicant may be required to enter into a grant or loan Agreement with the City. This Agreement will specify the terms, duration and default provisions of the incentive to be provided. This Agreement is also subject to approval by City Council or Council's designate;;
- j) Where other sources of government and/or non-profit organization funding (Federal, Provincial, Municipal, CMHC, Federation of Canadian Municipalities, Build Canada Homes, etc.) that can be applied against the eligible costs are anticipated or have been secured, these must be declared as part of the application. Accordingly, the grant/loan may be reduced on a pro-rated basis;
- k) The City reserves the right to audit the cost of any and all works that have been approved under any of the financial incentive programs at the expense of the applicant;

- l) The City is not responsible for any costs incurred by an applicant in relation to any of the programs, including without limitation, costs incurred in anticipation of a grant and/or loan;
- m) If the applicant is in default of any of the general or program specific requirements, or any other requirements of the City, the City may delay, reduce or cancel the approved grant and require repayment of the approved grant;
- n) If the City has discontinued a program, applicants with approved grants and/or loans will still receive said grant and/or loan, subject to meeting the general and program specific requirements;
- o) All proposed works approved under the financial incentive programs and associated improvements to buildings and/or land must conform to the City's Urban Design Guidelines, and all other City guidelines, by-laws, policies, procedures, and standards;
- p) Applicants must comply with all provincial and local laws and regulations pertaining to licensing, permits, heritage, building code and zoning requirements. The Applicant is responsible for obtaining all building, sign and other required permits and must be in conformance with all applicable health and safety standards.
- q) All works completed must comply with the description of the works as provided in the application form and contained in the program agreement, with any amendments as approved by the City;
- r) Applicants must not be in default of any municipal taxes or local improvement charges at the time of the application and at the time of payment;
- s) City Staff, officials, and/or agents of the City may inspect any property that is the subject of an application for any of the financial incentive programs offered by the City;
- t) Eligible applicants can apply for one, more or all of the incentive programs contained in this CIP, and incentive programs contained in other applicable CIPs, e.g., the Brownfield CIP. However, no two incentive programs may be used to pay for the same eligible cost.
- u) No applicant can submit an application for the same program more than once within a 5 year period. Applicants may reapply for the same program after five years if the application is for a new improvement and not for previously funded work.
- v) When funding is approved for a project, the total amount granted may be adjusted by up to 5 percent to accommodate shifts in construction costs and potential delays;
- w) The total of all grants, loans and tax assistance provided in respect of the particular property for which an applicant is making application under the programs contained in this CIP and any other applicable CIPs shall not exceed the eligible cost of the improvements to that property under all applicable CIPs; and,
- x) Applicants approved for the programs contained in the CIP will be required to complete the approved works within timeframes specified by the City.
- y) Further and more detailed program requirements may be outlined in the corresponding CIP Program Guidelines.
- z) The Region of Niagara may partner in the Downtown and Connected Districts CIP programs. The Region's contribution is contingent upon its participation in the program, approval of its contribution, and compliance with its own eligibility requirements and eligible costs.



## 4. Incentive Programs

To achieve the vision and goals of the Downtown and Connected Districts CIP, the City created eight (8) incentives programs:

1. Urban Design Study Grant Program
2. Facade Improvement Grant Program
3. Building Improvement Grant Program
4. Residential Grant Program
5. Planning and Building Fees Grant
6. Tax Increment Grant Program
7. Development Charge Reduction Program
8. Downtown Reserve Fund

## 4.1 Urban Design Study Grant Program

### Purpose

To help ensure that professional urban design studies and architectural/ design drawings meet the City's Urban Design Guidelines and to help offset the costs of preparing professional urban design studies and architectural/ design drawings.

### How Much Money Can Be Received?

This program will provide a matching grant of 50% of the cost of preparing professional urban design studies and architectural/design drawings required by the City to a maximum grant per property/project of \$2,500. Only one Urban Design Study Grant application per property/project will be allowed.

### What is Eligible?

This grant is eligible to cover the costs associated with the preparation of an Urban Design Study or building exterior architectural design drawings along a public-facing street required by the City to support development or redevelopment of a property.

### How to Qualify?

Applicants are eligible to apply for funding under this program, subject to meeting the general program requirements, the following program requirements, and subject to the availability of funding as approved by Council:

a) **Required Documentation:**

1. All studies/drawings must be submitted to the City in electronic format for the City's review and retention; and
2. All studies/drawings must be to the satisfaction of the City and must meet the City's Urban Design Guidelines and any other City guidelines, by-laws, policies, procedures, and standards.
3. All studies/drawings must describe how they meet the Urban Design Guidelines.

- b) **Tenure Type:** The Applicant must either be the registered owner of the property or a tenant with the written permission of the registered owner of the property.
- c) **Building Type:** Residential buildings with more than 10 dwelling units and all other non-residential buildings.



Figure 2 - Excerpt of sample architectural elevation, courtesy of Giorgio Giovinazzo Architect

## 4.2 Façade Improvement Program

### Purpose

To promote the rehabilitation, restoration and improvement of the front, rear and side façades of commercial, institutional, mixed use buildings, as well as residential buildings designated under the *Ontario Heritage Act*. Eligible improvements may include but not limited to retail storefront display areas and business signage.

### How Much Money Can Be Received?

This program will provide a grant equal to 50% of the cost of eligible front façade and storefront improvement and restoration works to commercial, institutional, mixed use buildings, as well as residential buildings designated under the *Ontario Heritage Act* up to a maximum grant per property/project of \$15,000.

A separate grant equal to 50% of the cost of eligible side and/or rear façade improvement and restoration works to commercial, institutional, mixed use buildings, as well as residential buildings designated under the *Ontario Heritage Act* up to a maximum grant per property/project of \$10,000 may be provided where said rear and/or side façades are highly visible from a public road, alleyway, trail, public parking area or public open space.

The maximum total Façade Improvement Grant can be increased by up to \$7,500 (on a matching 50/50 basis) per property/project for properties/projects that are also designated under the *Ontario Heritage Act* and within the Downtown and Connected Districts CIPA.

### What is Eligible?

The following types of building façade restoration and improvement works on commercial, institutional, mixed use buildings, as well as residential buildings designated under the *Ontario Heritage Act* are considered eligible for a grant under this program:

- a) Repair or replacement of storefront/office front/institutional front/residential heritage front,



including repair replacement of front doors and windows;

- b) Repair or repointing of façade masonry and brickwork;
- c) Repair or replacement of cornices, parapets, eaves, soffits and other architectural details;
- d) Repair or replacement of awnings or canopies;
- e) Façade painting, cleaning, treatments, and refinishing as acceptable to the City. Painting should be minimized to restoring the original colour of the façade and accent pieces that restore features to their original state, including cornices, trims, soffits, eaves, bands, and architectural details. Restoration and cleaning of original brick and stonework is encouraged;
- f) Addition of new lighting/upgrading of existing fixtures on exterior facade and in entrance and storefront display areas;
- g) Installation/improvement of signage (as permitted by the Sign By-law 2005-21, as amended, or its successor);
- h) Permanent landscaping, including plant materials;
- i) Along pedestrian connections, the installation of security cameras, murals and other crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED) measures. This does not fund security cameras inside the building.
- j) Architectural/design/engineering fees required for eligible works (to a maximum of 10% of the grant amount);
- k) Installation of permanent or temporary patios that are visible from public streets; and,
- l) Other similar repairs/improvements as may be approved.

In addition to the eligible costs specified in a) above, the following types of building façade restoration and improvement works on residential, commercial, institutional and mixed use buildings designated under the *Ontario Heritage Act* are also considered eligible for a grant under this program:

- a) Works that conserve or enhance elements specified in the Reasons for Designation accompanying the designating by-law under the *Ontario Heritage Act*;
- b) Original siding and roofing materials including repair and replacement where necessary of wood clapboard or board-and-batten, repair and repointing of masonry buildings, stucco repair, repair or replacement of original roofing materials (slate, wood shingles, tile, etc.);
- c) Removal of modern materials and replacement with documented original materials;
- d) Reconstruction or construction of former and significant architectural features for which the appearance can be clearly determined from documentary sources (photographs,



drawings, etc.);

- e) Cleaning of exterior masonry, if it is necessary for the building's preservation;
- f) All final finishes, such as paint and masonry are eligible for funding subject to approval; and
- g) Works required to maintain or preserve significant architectural features.

Ineligible Costs: Ineligible improvements include building insulation, roof work, and interior work. In-kind contributions are not eligible costs.

## How to Qualify?

Applicants are eligible to apply for funding under this program, subject to meeting the general program requirements, the following program requirements, and subject to the availability of funding as approved by Council:

### a) Required documentation:

- a. For residential, commercial, institutional and mixed use buildings designated under the *Ontario Heritage Act*, the façade restoration and improvement works should be supported by documentation in the form of historic photographs or drawings clearly showing the feature(s) to be restored or reconstructed.
  - b. Submission of drawings and/or plans may be required as part of the submission, including documentation describing conformity to the Urban Design Guidelines.
- b) Tenure:** The Applicant must either be the registered owner of the property or a tenant with the written permission of the registered owner of the property.
- c) Type of Buildings:** Eligible façades include those associated with a non-residential use in an existing building or a façade associated with a designated heritage property.
- d) Number of Grants per property:** A maximum of one grant may be submitted per property where there is a single unit building. For multi-unit buildings one application may be submitted per at-grade unit where highly visible from a public road, alleyway, trail, public parking area, or public open space.





## 4.3 Building Improvement Grant Program

### Purpose

To promote the maintenance and physical improvement of existing commercial, institutional and mixed use buildings and properties, as well as residential buildings and properties designated under the *Ontario Heritage Act*, in order to improve the attractiveness of the Project Area and provide safe and usable commercial, residential and mixed use space.

Additional funding is available to improve safety and activation around vacant commercial uses.

### How Much Money Can Be Received?

There are two streams available under the Building Improvement Grant program:

1. **Standard Building Improvement Grant:** provides a grant equal to 50% of the cost of eligible interior and exterior building and maintenance improvement works to commercial, institutional and mixed use buildings, as well as residential buildings designated under the *Ontario Heritage Act*, up to a maximum grant per property/project of \$15,000.
2. **Vacancy Assistance Program:** Provides a grant equal to 50% of eligible interior and exterior improvements for publicly accessible uses (e.g., restaurant, retail store, etc.) to buildings available for lease to a maximum of \$5,000 for six month leases and \$10,000 for longer leases. This can be used on in conjunction with the Standard Building Improvement Grant.

## What is Eligible?

**a) Standard Building Improvement Grant:** The following types of building maintenance and improvement works on commercial, institutional and mixed use buildings, as well as residential buildings designated under the *Ontario Heritage Act*, are considered eligible costs:

- a. Entrance modifications to provide barrier-free accessibility;
- b. Installation/upgrading of fire protection systems;
- c. Repair/replacement of roof;
- d. Structural repairs to walls, ceilings, floors and foundations;
- e. Water/flood/weatherproofing;
- f. Repair/replacement of windows and doors;
- g. Extension/upgrading of plumbing and electrical services for the creation of retail, office or residential space;
- h. Installation/alteration of required window openings to residential spaces;
- i. Required improvements to heating and ventilation systems; and,
- j. Other similar repairs/improvements related to health and safety issues, as may be approved.

**b) Vacancy Assistance Program**

**Grant:** The following types of building maintenance and improvement works on vacant commercial, institutional and mixed use buildings are considered eligible costs:

- a. Interior drywall, painting and wallpaper;
- b. Interior permanent flooring replacement or refurbishment;
- c. Construction or alteration of stairs, guardrails, and handrails;
- d. Fixed lighting;
- e. Permanent or temporary patios
- f. Other improvements deemed health, safety and accessible issues eligible at the sole discretion of the Administrator.

## How to Qualify?

Applicants are eligible to apply for funding under this program, subject to meeting the general program requirements, the following program requirements, and subject to the availability of funding as approved by Council:

**a) Required documentation:**

- a. For buildings designated under the *Ontario Heritage Act*, restoration



and improvement works should be supported by documentation in the form of historic photographs or drawings clearly showing the feature(s) to be restored or reconstructed.

b. Submission of drawings and/or plans may be required as part of the submission

- b) Tenure:** The Applicant must either be the registered owner of the property or a tenant with the written permission of the registered owner of the property.
- c) Type of Buildings:** For the standard building improvement grant, eligible properties are mixed use, commercial and institutional buildings, as well as residential buildings designated under the *Ontario Heritage Act*. For the Vacancy Assistance Program, eligible buildings must facilitate a publicly accessible use such as a restaurant, retail store, etc. An office use is not considered a publicly accessible use.
- d) Number of Grants per property:** A maximum of one grant may be submitted per property where there is a single unit building. For multi-unit buildings one application may be submitted per unit.
- e) Vacancy:** To be eligible for the vacancy assistance grant, the unit must be registered or assessed as vacant per the City's Vacant Building By-law, as amended, or its successor.

## 4.4 Residential Grant Program

### Purpose

To promote the renovation of existing residential units and the construction of new residential units through;

- a) Renovations to existing residential units in mixed use buildings or residential buildings to bring these units into compliance with the Building Code, Property Standards By-law and the Fire Code;
- b) Conversion of excess commercial and/or vacant space in commercial and mixed use buildings (where permitted by By-law) to two or more net residential units; and
- c) Any infilling projects where four or more net residential units are created.

### How Much Money Can Be Received?

The Residential Grant Program will provide a grant equal to the cost of rehabilitating existing residential units and/or constructing new residential units on the basis of \$15 per square foot of habitable floor space rehabilitated or constructed, to a maximum grant of \$15,000 per unit, and a total maximum grant of \$90,000 per property/project.

### What is Eligible?

The following types of projects are considered eligible for a grant/loan under this program:

- a) Renovations to existing residential units in a mixed use building to bring these units into compliance with the Building Code, Property Standards By-law and the Fire Code;



- b) Conversion of excess commercial and/or vacant space on upper storeys of commercial and mixed use building to one or more net residential units; and
- c) Any infilling project where four or more net residential units are created.

### How to Qualify?

Applicants are eligible to apply for funding under this program, subject to meeting the general program requirements, the following program requirements, and subject to the availability of funding as approved by Council:

#### a) Required documentation:

- a. For buildings designated under the *Ontario Heritage Act*, restoration and improvement works should be supported by documentation in the form of historic photographs or drawings clearly showing the feature(s) to be restored or reconstructed.
- b. The City may require the applicant to submit for approval impact studies such as traffic studies.
- c. Submission of other drawings and/or plans may be required as part of the submission, including documentation describing the project's conformity with the Urban Design Guidelines.

#### b) Tenure: The Applicant must be the registered owner of the property.

#### c) Type of Buildings: Residential, commercial, institutional and mixed use buildings. Industrial buildings or vacant industrial/commercial land which is to be converted to a residential or mixed use building are eligible, provided the necessary studies and documentation are submitted.

The Residential Grant Program can be used for rental or ownership units. If used for ownership units, the grant may apply to buildings that fall under the Condominium Act.



## 4.5 Tax Increment Grant Program

### Purpose

To encourage and support rehabilitation, redevelopment, infill and intensification projects in the Project Area by providing a financial incentive that reduces the property tax increase that can result from these various types of development. This incentive is also designed to assist in securing project financing.

### How Much Money Can Be Received?

This program will provide a tax increment based grant equivalent to 80% of the municipal property tax increase for up to 10 years following completion of an eligible project where that project creates an increase in assessment, and therefore an increase in property taxes.

The grant will be paid annually once:

- a) The eligible project is complete;
- b) Final building inspections have taken place;
- c) An occupancy permit has been issued (as applicable);
- d) All deficiencies have been addressed;
- e) The property has been reassessed by the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC); and
- f) The new property taxes have been paid in full for the year.

Pre-project Municipal taxes will be determined before commencement of the project at the time the application is approved. For purposes of the grant calculation, the increase in municipal taxes will be calculated as the difference between pre-project municipal taxes and post-project municipal taxes that are levied as a result of re-valuation of the property by the MPAC following project completion. The annual amount of the grant will not change following the initial TIG payment (i.e., the TIG payment will be fixed based on the first payment resulting from the tax

increase in the first year of the TIG period). Grant payments will cease when the total grant along with all other grants and loans provided equals the cost of rehabilitating the lands and buildings, or after 10 years, whichever comes first.

## What is Eligible?

The following types of projects are considered eligible for this program:

- a) Existing commercial, residential and mixed use buildings, vacant properties and parking lots where the redevelopment or rehabilitation project results in an increase in the assessed value and taxes on the property.

The program does not apply to any residential construction project that creates less than six (6) new residential units.

## How to Qualify?

Applicants are eligible to apply for funding under this program, subject to meeting the general program requirements, the following program requirements, and subject to the availability of funding as approved by Council:

### a) Required documentation:

- a. The City may require the applicant to submit a Business Plan, with said plan to the municipality's satisfaction;
- b. The City may require the applicant to submit for approval impact studies such as traffic studies and studies of microclimatic conditions (sun, shadow, wind);
- c. For projects on brownfield sites:
  - i. The application must be accompanied by a Phase II ESA, Remedial Work Plan or Risk Assessment Plan prepared by a qualified person that contains a work plan and an estimate of the cost of actions that will be required to reduce the concentration of contaminants on, in or under the property to permit a record of site condition (RSC) to be filed in the Environmental Site Registry under Section



168.4 of the *Environmental Protection Act*;

Please note that projects on brownfield sites may be eligible to receive additional funding under the City's Brownfield Community Improvement Plan.

- d. Submission of other drawings and/or plans may be required as part of the submission, including documentation which describes the project's conformity with the Urban Design Guidelines.

**b) Tenure:** The Applicant must be the registered owner of the property.

**c) Other:**

- a. If during the grant period, a building receiving a Tax Increment Grant is demolished, all grant payments shall cease and the City reserves the right to require repayment of the grant payments.
- b. If during the grant period, a building/property designated under the Ontario Heritage Act receiving a Tax Increment Grant is demolished or any of the heritage features are altered in any way that would compromise the reasons for designation, all grant payments shall cease and the City reserves the right to require repayment of the grant payments.

## 4.6 Planning and Building Fees Grant Program

### Purpose

To facilitate and spur adaptive re-use, infill, intensification, and redevelopment through the provision of an additional financial incentive to offset application fees that will complement and augment the other incentive programs within the CIP.

### How Much Money Can Be Received?

This program will provide a grant equal to 100% of the fees paid on planning and development applications, building permits and sign permits to a maximum total grant of \$25,000 per property/project. The Planning and Building Fees Grant will be paid after all construction is complete and the City has conducted all final building inspections.

### What is Eligible?

The following types of planning and development applications and building permits are considered eligible for this program:

- i) Official Plan amendment;
- ii) Zoning By-law amendment;
- iii) Minor Variance;
- iv) Consent to Sever;
- v) Site Plan Control and Development Agreements;
- vi) Plan of Subdivision/Condominium;

- vii) Rental Housing Protection Act;
- ix) Sign Permit;
- x) Sidewalk Café Permit;
- xi) Encroachment Agreement;
- xii) Demolition Permit; and
- iii) Building Permit.

Other permits issued by the City that are not listed above, but which advance the purpose of this program, may be considered. This program does not apply to security deposits or cash-in-lieu payments.

### How to Qualify

Applicants are eligible to apply for funding under this program, subject to meeting the general program requirements and subject to the availability of funding as approved by Council:

- a) **Tenure:** The Applicant must either be the registered owner of the property or a tenant with the written permission of the registered owner of the property.
- b) **Other:** The Planning and Building Fees Grant is only available to applicants who have received funding under another incentive program of the Downtown and Connected Districts CIP.



## 4.7 Development Charge Reduction Program

This program is enabled through the City's Development Charges By-law and therefore no formal application is required to receive a development charge reduction. A 75% reduction will automatically apply to residential, commercial, mixed use and non-exempt institutional development and redevelopment projects within the Community Improvement Project Area.

## 4.8 Downtown Reserve Fund

### Purpose

Council may choose to dedicate funds to a Downtown Reserve fund which could be used to fund strategic placemaking initiatives or land acquisitions and could be funded through land sales.

A placemaking project which wishes to receive funding under this program must submit their request to City staff. The request will be presented to Council who will issue the final decision on whether a project receives funding. Examples of placemaking projects could include:

- **Storefront activation and animation:** creative window displays, seasonal storefront decor programs, interactive window installations, pop-up retail events hosted by property owners
- **Privately owned public spaces:** courtyards, micro-plazas, seating nooks, public art integrated into building forecourts, landscaped setbacks with seating and shade
- **Laneway or alley improvements:** murals commissioned by building owners, decorative lighting or string lights, outdoor patios or micro-retail kiosks, waste management consolidation to free up space
- **Public art:** murals on building walls, sculptures in courtyards or plazas, light-based art on façades artist-designed bike racks or benches
- **Outdoor patios, parklets, and curb-lane activations:** sidewalk cafes with high-quality furniture, branded planters, umbrellas or shade structures
- **Cultural or community programming:** live music nights hosted by local businesses, art walks or gallery nights, outdoor fitness classes, night markets or themed retail pop-up events
- **Green infrastructure:** green walls or living façades rooftop gardens accessible to the public during events, stormwater-friendly landscaping at building edges
- **Wayfinding and branding:** branded banners, flags, or seasonal decor, directional signage



### How Much Money Can Be Received?

To be determined on a case-by-case basis.

### How is the Program Funded?

This will be determined on a site by site basis based on the availability of funds. At no time will an applicant be permitted to receive more than 80% of the total reserve funds.



## 5. Public Realm Improvement Plan

The Public Realm Improvement Plan is intended to provide strategic guidance for capital projects into the future. By implementing the Public Realm Improvement Plan, the City will be able ensure that financial incentives in this CIP will be supported by public sector investments in physical improvements in the Project Area. This is particularly important as properly designed public realm improvements help define the overall perception and sense of place within a community improvement project area. They also send a clear signal to the development and business community that the municipality is serious and committed to community revitalization and improvement in the Project Area.

### 5.1 Water and Waste Water

The Downtown and Connected Districts CIPA is projected to experience significant growth over the next 20-30 years. Servicing allocation is provided on a first-come, first served basis and any costing at this stage would highly speculative. The timing and infrastructure needs for this area will depend on when development applications move forward.

It is understood that the Region is currently in the process of updating its Master Servicing Plan. It is recommended that the City ensure that the Region is using the latest growth projections for this area to ensure that future infrastructure requirements be identified.

## 5.2 Transportation

Streetscape improvements are proposed to 10 road segments within the CIPA as shown on Figure 2.. Each segment will feature a cross section identifying the intended and envisioned streetscape improvements to reflect the future scale and massing of downtown Welland.

**Appendix A** illustrates the proposed cross sections for each of these segments.

It is important to note that the majority of these segments are Regional roads and will require coordination and regional approval to realize the vision for these road segments. The Niagara Region Complete Streets Design Guidelines, 2017 was referenced when preparing recommended upgrades to Regional Road Segments.

**Appendix B** outlines the order of magnitude costing which was prepared to estimate the cost to implement the proposed improvements. In the case of upgrades to Regional roads, costing was prepared where changes to the 2017 Complete Street Guidelines were proposed in order to determine whether there would be an additional cost to fund these proposed improvements beyond what was anticipated.

These figures are not final but serve as a planning tool to help the City evaluate options and maintain fiscal sustainability as the vision moves forward.

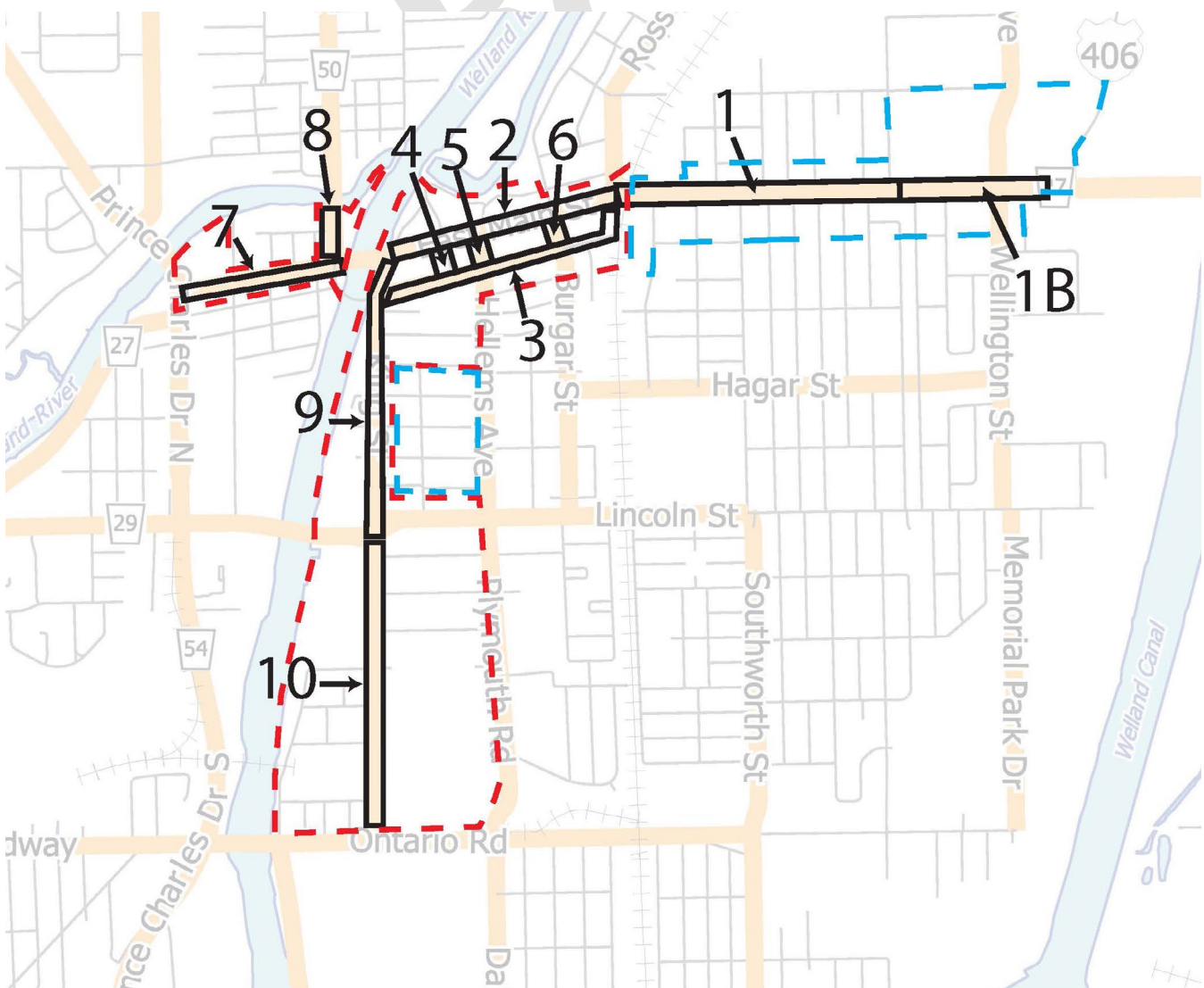


Figure 3 - Proposed Upgraded Roadways



## 6. Urban Design

Urban design plays a particularly important part of any CIP because it's a central feature in improving the physical environment within a downtown/commercial area. As part of the CIP, the City has approved the Downtown and Connected Districts CIPA Urban Design Guidelines (**Appendix A**) to provide direction for improvements to the physical environment.

The Urban Design Guidelines provide guidance on a wide range of design elements that impact both the public and private realm in the City including access, built form, landscaping and streetscape design. As it relates to the incentive programs, it provides guidance for urban design treatments that can assist in the achievement of the City's vision for growth in the Downtown and Connected Districts CIPA.

The Urban Design Guidelines promote general urban design expectations for development while offering flexibility in order to directly respond to contextual opportunities and constraints.

A dedicated Urban Design Guidelines checklist is provided to ensure that all projects supported by the CIP contribute positively to the character, functionality, and long-term quality of the community. Applicants are strongly encouraged to review and complete the checklist as part of their CIP submission, demonstrating how their proposed improvements align with the City's established design objectives. The checklist translates the broader urban design principles of the guidelines, such as built form, site organization, streetscape integration, accessibility, and sustainability, into clear, reviewable criteria that support consistent evaluation, ensuring public investment through the CIP results in high quality, context-sensitive development that advances the City's vision for the Downtown and Connected Districts CIPA.

## 7. Implementation

A Community Improvement Plan (CIP) exists to give municipalities a structured, legally supported way to target reinvestment, address local challenges, and stimulate private-sector activity. It works by designating a specific area for improvement, identifying the issues or opportunities within it, and then deploying coordinated public actions and financial incentives to encourage private development.

Once an area is designated, the CIP becomes the framework that guides municipal intervention. It outlines the goals for the area, the types of improvements needed, and the tools the municipality will use to achieve them. These tools can include acquiring or preparing land, upgrading infrastructure, or offering grants, loans, and tax-based incentives to private landowners. The intent is to create conditions that make private investment more feasible and attractive by reducing risk, improving market confidence, and aligning public and private objectives.

From an implementation standpoint, a CIP works by coordinating public investment with targeted incentives. Municipalities commit to improvements in the public realm, such as streetscapes, utilities, transportation access, or community amenities, while simultaneously offering financial programs that offset private development costs. This two-pronged approach signals long-term municipal commitment, encourages property owners to reinvest, and helps catalyze broader revitalization. The plan also establishes administrative processes, eligibility criteria, monitoring requirements, and timelines to ensure that incentives are delivered consistently and transparently.

In practice, a CIP becomes a roadmap for implementation, translating high-level policy objectives into actionable programs. Once adopted, it provides a predictable structure for both municipal staff and private stakeholders, ensuring that investment decisions are guided by clear goals, defined incentives, and a shared vision for community improvement.

### 7.1 Basis

Sections 28(3), 28(6) and 28(7) of the *Planning Act* identify that once a Community Improvement Project Area has been designated and a CIP is approved, a municipality may undertake a number of different actions, including:

- a) Acquire, hold, clear, grade or otherwise prepare land for community improvement;
- b) Construct, repair, rehabilitate or improve buildings on land acquired or held by it in conformity with the community improvement plan;
- c) Sell, lease, or otherwise dispose of any land and buildings acquired or held by it in conformity with the community improvement plan; and
- d) Making grants or loans to registered owners, assessed owners and tenants of lands and buildings within the community improvement project area.

Once this CIP is adopted and approved, the City may engage in any of these activities and use its powers under the *Municipal Act, 2001* to undertake all of the recommendations in this CIP, including the public realm improvements and the financial incentive programs.



## **7.2 Decision Making**

The Director of Planning and Development Services or their delegate is the decision making authority for all incentive programs except for the Downtown Reserve Fund. Welland City Council will have the decision making authority for the Downtown Reserve Fund.

## **7.3 Administration**

Program guides will be available for all programs and will be updated on a regular basis to reflect applicant feedback and changes in the market.

## **7.4 Program Adjustment**

The individual incentive programs contained in this CIP can be activated, deactivated or discontinued by Council or its designate without amendment to this Plan. The City may periodically review and adjust the terms and requirements of any of the programs contained in this Plan, or discontinue/reduce any of the programs contained in this Plan, without amendment to the Plan. Such minor changes or discontinuation of programs will be provided to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the Regional Municipality of Niagara for information purposes only. Increases in funding provided by the financial incentives contained in this CIP, the addition of any new programs to this CIP, or an expansion of the Community Improvement Project Area will require a formal amendment to the CIP in accordance with Section 28 of the Planning Act. It is the City's intention that this Brownfield CIP will be formally reviewed and updated on a periodic basis, with comprehensive review occurring no less frequently than every five (5) years. The purpose of this comprehensive review will be to assess program uptake and effectiveness, market conditions, and stakeholder feedback with the goal of improving the incentive programs offered under this CIP. Regular comprehensive review will enable proactive adjustments to ensure the CIP programs remain relevant and responsive to Welland's redevelopment needs.

## 7.5 Monitoring Program

The Monitoring Program set out in this section has several purposes. It is designed to monitor:

- a) Funds dispersed through the CIP incentive programs so as to determine which programs are being most utilized, and use this information to adjust the programs as required;
- b) Feedback from applicants to the incentive programs so that adjustments can be made to the incentive programs as required; and
- c) The economic impact associated with projects taking advantage of the CIP incentives programs.

This CIP is not intended to be a static planning document. It is intended to be a proactive plan for economic and community revitalization in the Project Area. Therefore, information obtained through the Monitoring Program should be used by the City to periodically adjust the incentive programs to make them even more relevant and user friendly. Information collected through the Monitoring Program should be utilized to provide regular reports to Council on the amount of private sector investment being leveraged by the municipal incentive programs and the economic benefits associated with these private sector projects.

Table 1 presents a list of the variables that should be monitored on an individual project and aggregate basis for the incentive programs contained in this CIP. In addition to these quantitative economic measures, the City should also attempt to monitor the qualitative results of the CIP in terms of its social and community benefits. This could include the impact of public realm improvement projects on existing businesses and community pride. Regular qualitative observations should be conducted by City Staff of the individual and cumulative impact of both public and private CIP projects on the Project Area. This could include comments received by staff from business owners, property owners and residents. These qualitative measures should be regularly monitored and reported to Council along with the quantitative measures specified in Table 1



Table 1 Monitoring Metrics

| Program                           | Monitoring Variable                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Urban Design Study Grant</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of applications</li> <li>• Value (\$) of grant</li> <li>• Total cost of urban design study or required drawings</li> <li>• Number of Urban Design Study Grants leading to façade/ construction projects</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Tax Increment Grant</b>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number and \$ amount of program defaults.</li> <li>• Number of applications by type (conversion, intensification, infill)</li> <li>• Value (\$) of grant vs value (\$) of construction;</li> <li>• Number of residential units by type and square footage of residential space converted, rehabilitated or constructed;</li> <li>• Square footage of commercial and institutional space rehabilitated or constructed;</li> <li>• Number of new businesses successfully occupying space (1 year post completion);</li> <li>• Jobs created/maintained;</li> <li>• Increase in assessed value of participating property;</li> <li>• Increase in municipal (City and Region) and education property taxes of participating property;</li> </ul> |
| <b>Façade Improvement Grant</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number and \$ amount of program defaults.</li> <li>• Number of applications by type of facade improvement (front/side);</li> <li>• Value (\$) of grant vs value (\$) of construction;</li> <li>• Increase in assessed value of participating property;</li> <li>• Increase in municipal (City and Region) and education property taxes of participating property;</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Building Improvement Grant</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of applications by type ( interior and/or exterior building improvement)</li> <li>• Value (\$) of grant vs value (\$) of construction;</li> <li>• Number of residential units by type and square footage of residential space converted, rehabilitated or constructed;</li> <li>• Square footage of commercial and institutional space rehabilitated and/or added;</li> <li>• Number of new businesses successfully occupying the space (1 year post project completion);</li> <li>• Increase in assessed value of participating properties;</li> <li>• Increase in municipal (City and Region) and education property taxes of participating properties;</li> </ul>                                                                 |

|                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Residential Grant</b>                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of applications by type (conversion, intensification, infill)</li> <li>• Value (\$) of grant vs value (\$) of construction;</li> <li>• Number of residential units created by type (rental/ownership, 1 bedroom, 2 bedroom, 2+ bedroom) and square footage of residential space rehabilitated, converted or added;</li> <li>• Increase in assessed value of participating property;</li> <li>• Increase in municipal (City and Region) and education property taxes of participating property;</li> </ul> |
| <b>Planning and Building Fees Grant</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number, type and \$ amount of planning application fees grant;</li> <li>• Number and \$ value of parkland dedication fee grant;</li> <li>• Number and \$ value of demolition and building permit fees grant;</li> <li>• Square footage of habitable floor space created;</li> <li>• Square footage of commercial space rehabilitated or constructed;</li> <li>• Total \$ value of construction;</li> <li>• \$ value of fees paid; and</li> <li>• \$ value of building permits issued.</li> </ul>                 |



## 8. Municipal Land Acquisition Strategy

### 8.1 Purpose

To acquire land in strategic locations for parks and open space, and economic development initiatives and to enable the City to proactively pursue property that becomes available and meets the City's criteria.

### 8.2 Objectives

1. Acquire land that supports Council-approved plans and long-term city-building objectives, including downtown revitalization, growth management, and placemaking.
2. Use land acquisition to enable redevelopment, adaptive reuse, and the creation of high-quality public spaces that enhance the Downtown's role as a civic, cultural, and economic hub.
3. Acquire lands or interests that improve safe, accessible, and visible connections between the Downtown, parks, trails, waterfronts, and green spaces.
4. Acquire land to support community gathering, recreation, and cultural spaces, and to enable housing and economic development in strategic locations, including affordable housing and mixed-use projects that contribute to downtown revitalization.
5. Make acquisition decisions that are transparent, fiscally responsible, partnership-driven where possible, and offer clear long-term public benefit.

### 8.3 Acquisition Options and Funding

The City can acquire land through multiple avenues including but not limited to dedication, easements, direct purchase, parkland dedication, bequest, land exchanges and public private partnerships.

To support strategic acquisitions, it is recommended that Council develop a dedicated Acquisition Reserve Fund. It is recommended that Council add a portion of the value of municipal land sales to this fund to help acquire properties where there is no approved capital budget and it is determined that the property is strategically important to the Downtown and Connected Districts area. The City can also choose to fund this fund through other means such as through its capital budget.

### 8.4 Decision Making Criteria

City staff will evaluate the strategic importance of potential acquisitions based on the criteria outlined in the table on the next page.

Table 2 Land Acquisition Decision Making Criteria

| Criterion                                                          | Key Questions to Consider                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>1. Strategic Alignment with City Plans and Priorities</b>       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the acquisition advance Council-approved plans (Official Plan, CIP, Strategic Plan, Parks &amp; Recreation Master Plan, active transportation)?</li> <li>• Does it clearly support one or more Land Acquisition Strategy objectives?</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>2. Locational Value and Strategic Positioning</b>               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the site located within or adjacent to the Downtown, canal corridor, rail corridor, or other City-identified priority areas?</li> <li>• Does the location improve access or connectivity (e.g., Downtown to parks or waterfront)?</li> <li>• Does the site relate to City-owned lands, gateways, visibility, or symbolic/cultural importance that enhances its strategic value?</li> </ul> |
| <b>3. Downtown Revitalization, Access, and Placemaking</b>         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the acquisition strengthen Downtown Welland as a civic, cultural, or economic hub?</li> <li>• Does it enable public realm improvements such as plazas, improved walkability, active transportation, or enhanced access to parks and open spaces?</li> <li>• Does it contribute to inclusive placemaking and accessibility?</li> </ul>                                                    |
| <b>4. Housing, Economic Development, and Partnership Potential</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the acquisition enable housing outcomes (including affordable or mixed-income housing)?</li> <li>• Does it support mixed-use or employment-generating development?</li> <li>• Does it create opportunities for strategic partnerships with other governments, non-profits, or the private sector?</li> </ul>                                                                             |
| <b>5. Financial Feasibility and Long-Term Value</b>                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the purchase price reasonable?</li> <li>• Are carrying and lifecycle costs understood and manageable?</li> <li>• Does the acquisition avoid higher future costs, reduce risk, or deliver long-term municipal or community value?</li> <li>• Are environmental conditions (e.g., contamination) manageable relative to anticipated public benefit?</li> </ul>                               |
| <b>Total</b>                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |

## 8.5 Approval Process

### Step 1: Identify a Potential Acquisition Opportunity

A potential acquisition may arise through:

- Council direction or capital planning
- Implementation of a Council-approved plan or strategy
- An unsolicited offer from a landowner
- A time-sensitive market opening or opportunity
- A partnership proposal (e.g., affordable housing, civic or recreation use)

At this stage, staff confirm that the opportunity is eligible for evaluation under the Land Acquisition Strategy (i.e., it is strategic in nature and not a routine transactional acquisition).

### Step 2: Preliminary Screening

Staff conduct a high-level review to confirm that:

- The opportunity aligns with the intent of the Land Acquisition Strategy
- The site has a plausible public purpose or long-term City interest
- There are no immediately prohibitive constraints (e.g., clear incompatibility with City plans)

Opportunities that do not meet this basic threshold are not advanced further.

### Step 3: Evaluate Using the Land Acquisition Evaluation Criteria

Eligible opportunities are evaluated using the City's Land Acquisition Decision Criteria (Table 2).

- Staff evaluate each criterion based on available information.
- The criteria assesses:
  - Strategic alignment with City plans
  - Locational value and strategic positioning
  - Downtown revitalization and placemaking outcomes
  - Community benefit, housing, and economic development potential
  - Financial feasibility and long-term value

The criteria is used to compare and prioritize opportunities, not to prescribe outcomes rigidly.

- High compatibility indicates strong overall alignment with City objectives.
- Moderate compatibility may still warrant further exploration if one or more criteria score particularly high (e.g., exceptional locational value or partnership potential).
- Low compatibility typically indicates the opportunity does not advance current priorities unless exceptional circumstances exist.

Not all criteria must score highly for an acquisition to proceed; however, opportunities should demonstrate clear multi-objective benefit and long-term public value. Staff apply professional judgment, taking into account timing, market conditions, risk, and opportunity cost.

### Step 4: Advance to Due Diligence (Where Supported)

Where an opportunity is supported in principle, staff may proceed with appropriate due diligence, which may include:

- Appraisal and market assessment
- Environmental screening and preliminary site condition review

- Financial feasibility analysis
- Partnership discussions or concept development
- Legal or title review, as appropriate

As more information becomes available, the evaluation criteria may be updated or refined to reflect improved understanding of the opportunity without an amendment to this CIP.

### **Step 5: Reporting and Authorization**

To support expedited acquisitions Council may choose to delegate authority to certain staff positions where the purchase price is under a specific threshold and certain criteria are met. Any projects above said threshold would be referred to City Council for a decision.

Depending on the Council's process, staff prepare:

- A report under delegated authority, where permitted; or
- A Council report seeking authorization to proceed

Reports to Council will:

- Reference the evaluation criteria results
- Explain how the acquisition aligns with Council-approved plans and objectives
- Clearly articulate public benefit, financial implications, and risks

The evaluation criteria supports transparency and consistency but does not replace Council discretion.



## 9. Municipal Partnership Strategy

### 9.1 Purpose

The purpose of this Municipal Partnership Strategy is to provide the City of Welland with a simple, flexible framework to guide strategic partnerships that help advance the objectives of the Downtown and Connected Districts CIP.

Downtown revitalization is complex and cannot be achieved by municipal action alone. Strategic partnerships allow the City to:

- Unlock redevelopment opportunities
- Reduce project risk and financial exposure
- Leverage external expertise, capital, and land
- Accelerate catalytic projects aligned with public goals

This strategy is not a formal procurement policy or real estate strategy. Rather, it is an enabling strategy that supports pilot initiatives, relationship-building, and deal-by-deal decision-making while a more comprehensive framework may be developed in the future.

### 9.2 Principles

1. **Alignment with CIP Objectives:** Partnerships should demonstrably support one or more CIP goals, including:
  - Downtown intensification and reinvestment
  - Housing delivery (including affordable and mixed-use housing)
  - Economic development and job creation
  - Placemaking, cultural vitality, and downtown animation
  - Strategic reuse of underutilized spaces and buildings
2. **Public Value and City Leadership:** Partnerships should deliver clear public benefits, long-term community value and outcomes that would likely not occur without municipal involvement.
3. **Strategic Use of Municipal Assets:** Municipal assets, including land, buildings, parking, infrastructure investment, incentives, and regulatory tools, should be used strategically, not transactionally, to achieve broader CIP objectives.
4. **Flexibility and Scalability:** Not all partnerships will be the same. This strategy allows for: small-scale pilots and one-off arrangements, larger, multi-phase projects and evolution over time
5. **Transparency and Accountability:** Partnerships should be guided by clear decision making rationale, defined roles and responsibilities and measurable outcomes.

## 9.3 Strategic Partnership Types

The City may pursue a range of partnership models to advance the CIP objectives. These below list is illustrative, not exhaustive.

### 1. Public–Private Development Partnerships

Partnerships with private developers to enable redevelopment on key downtown sites. This could include the joint redevelopment of City-owned lands, phased redevelopment of underutilized properties or mixed use projects incorporating housing, public and private parking, commercial space and community uses.

In these type of partnerships, municipal contributions could include:

- Land or long-term leases
- CIP incentives
- Planning and approvals coordination
- Infrastructure upgrades

### 2. Institutional and Anchor Partnerships

Partnerships with the Welland Hospital, universities, colleges and other public institutions and anchor organizations whose long-term presence can catalyze downtown investment. Outcomes of these types of partnerships could include Downtown Campuses or satellite facilities, adaptive reuse of heritage or institutional buildings and increased foot traffic and employment with the CIPA.

### 3. Non-Profit and Community Housing Partnerships

Collaborations with non-profit organizations to advance inclusive downtown revitalization. This could include:affordable or supportive housing projects, mixed-income developments and community-serving uses integrated into private developments. The City can assist with coordination with upper levels of government and long-term stewardship arrangements

### 4. Programmatic and Place-Based Partnerships

Not all partnerships involve land or buildings. Examples include:

- Downtown programming and activation with BIAs or cultural groups
- Public realm improvements coordinated with private development
- Pilot projects and demonstrations aligned with CIP goals.

## 9.4 Roles and Responsibility

### 1. Role of the City of Welland

The City's core role in municipal partnerships is to:

- Set clear priorities and expectations
- Identify and protect public interest outcomes
- Leverage municipal tools and assets strategically
- Coordinate internal departments and approvals
- Maintain transparency and accountability to Council and the community

The City may act as:

- A landowner
- A landlord
- A developer

- A funding partner
- A convener or facilitator
- A regulator with flexibility aligned to public objectives

## **2. Role of Partners**

Partners are expected to:

- Align proposals with CIP objectives
- Bring financial capacity, expertise, or unique assets
- Participate in good-faith negotiations
- Clearly define responsibilities, risks, and timelines
- Commit to agreed-upon performance outcomes

## **9.5 Partnership Identification and Evaluation**

The City may choose to apply a high-level screening approach to determine partnership opportunities it would like to pursue:

### **1. Initial Screening Questions**

- Does the proposal support one or more CIP objectives?
- Does it deliver clear public and community benefits?
- Is municipal involvement necessary to achieve the outcome?
- Are risks proportionate to anticipated benefits?

### **2. Strategic Considerations**

- Location and catalytic potential within the CIPA
- Alignment with infrastructure and public investment
- Long-term financial and operational implications
- Reputational and delivery risks

### **3. Decision-Making**

- Staff evaluate and refine proposals
- Council approval sought where required (e.g., land transactions, incentives, major commitments)
- Agreements tailored to the scale and complexity of the partnership

## 9.6 Implementation

This Municipal Partnership Strategy is intended to support practical, opportunity-driven implementation of the Downtown Community Improvement Plan using existing City processes and governance structures. Partnerships may be advanced incrementally in response to identified needs, partner-initiated proposals, or City-led initiatives related to downtown redevelopment, municipal assets, or capital planning.

Partnership opportunities may arise through CIP implementation priorities, municipal land or asset considerations, private development proposals, external inquiries, or Council-identified initiatives. Opportunities are not required to follow a prescribed intake or solicitation process and may be considered at different stages of project development.

To evaluate opportunities under a municipal acquisition strategy, the City should create an internal working group with senior staff from key departments (i.e. Planning, Economic Development, Legal). Where a potential partnership is identified, the working group may complete an initial review to assess alignment with CIP objectives, anticipated public benefit, the role of municipal involvement, and the scale and complexity of the proposed initiative. Opportunities that demonstrate alignment and feasibility may proceed to further discussion or refinement.

As part of advancing a partnership, the nature and extent of the City's role will be clarified early, recognizing that municipal involvement may range from coordination and facilitation to financial, asset-based, or regulatory participation. Roles and responsibilities will be defined in a manner that supports transparency, accountability, and informed decision-making.

All municipal partnerships will proceed through existing approval processes and authorities. Council approval will be obtained where required, including for land transactions, financial commitments, or incentive approvals, and any formal partnerships will be supported through appropriate legal agreements. This Strategy does not replace or override existing policies or approval requirements. This will include the development of an agreement which includes conflict of interest and risk management provisions.

Where eligible, partnership initiatives may leverage CIP tools and incentives in accordance with approved program requirements. The City may monitor partnership outcomes through regular project reporting and refine practices over time based on experience. As partnership activity evolves, the City may consider whether more formal guidelines or tools are warranted in the future.

## 10. Other Implementation Tools

The following additional initiatives are recommended to support invest and the implementation of the Downtown vision:

1. **Land and Business Inventory:** Building on the GIS priority plan, the City should maintain an inventory of properties and businesses within the CIPA. Maintaining a comprehensive land and business directory better enables the City to make data-driven decisions about land use and economic development. It supports accurate property assessment and helps monitor vacancies or underutilized sites.

This inventory can serve as an accessible and regularly updated tool that allows users to easily navigate real estate opportunities and understand the property landscape. It should include key details such as ownership and contact information, brokerage and leasing data, tenancy and occupancy status, business type, employment numbers, building square footage, and overall marketability. By maintaining current and accurate information, the directory will strengthen the City's ability to engage with investors, support local businesses, and make informed, proactive land management decisions.

2. **Cash-in-Lieu of Parking:** Implement a cash-in-lieu of parking strategy that allows property owners to contribute funds to the City instead of providing on-site parking where adequate on-street or municipal parking is available. This approach would reduce barriers to redevelopment and reinvestment in Downtown Welland while generating dedicated funding to support the expansion and improvement of municipal parking lots or structures over time.





## 11. Marketing Incentive Programs

Staff have been successful in personally marketing the program through individualized site visits to businesses within the downtown and surrounding area. The 'MadeinWelland' website is a user-friendly and impactful marketing tool which reduces technical jargon and uses visuals to explain specific programs. Staff have implemented program guides, brochures and have dedicated staff administering the program, in accordance with the original marketing strategy.

To build off its program success the City should develop a marketing strategy which:

1. Celebrates local business and regularly advertises local program success stories on its website and social media
2. Encourages user generated content by incorporating a specific hashtag or tags.
3. Advertises the program in local businesses through the use of branded stickers and decals displayed in storefronts or interiors.
4. Includes short-informational videos on its website which explains the CIP application process and highlights its benefits. This allows potential applicants to explore the program offering and process on their own time.
5. Promotes the CIP at City booths at local events.

Additionally, the City should maintain a land inventory of vacant properties within the Downtown and Connected Districts CIPA which will allow prospective business owners and investors to review potential investment opportunities.

## 12. Conclusion

This CIP is intended to stimulate both private and public sector investments and improvements with the Downtown and Connected CIP. It focuses on the City's unique strengths and assets to develop programs which address local realities and support businesses. A coordinated effort is required to continue to improve upon the Downtown and make it a unique, thriving and inclusive community for all.



(c) Anthony Gallaccio