



TOWN OF
HALTON HILLS
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REPORT

TO: Mayor Bonnette and Members of Council

FROM: Erin Kaiser, Senior Economic Development Officer

DATE: June 18, 2021

REPORT NO.: ADMIN-2021-0033

SUBJECT: Community Improvement Plan (CIP) Update – Project Status Update and Background Discussion Report

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Report No. ADMIN-2021-0033, dated June 18, 2021, regarding the Community Improvement Plan (CIP) Update – Project Status Update and Background Discussion Report be received;

AND FURTHER THAT Council receive the appended Background Discussion Report.

KEY POINTS:

The following are key points for consideration with respect to this report:

- The Community Improvement Plan (CIP) is one of the Town's key tools for supporting local businesses, and encouraging revitalization and private sector investments.
- A comprehensive review and update of the Town's Community Improvement Plan (CIP) commenced in late 2020 with the hiring of professional consultants Sierra Planning and Management. Council approved the Terms of Reference for this project in August 2020 via report ADMIN-0020-0019.
- Building on past successes, the updated CIP will result in an even more effective, impactful and streamlined program.
- Widespread stakeholder consultation has occurred since project initiation. Input received will help inform the direction and approach for the CIP Update.
- A Background Discussion Report has been completed and is appended to this staff report.

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION:

1. Project Overview

In 2010, the Town's Community Improvement Plan (CIP) was approved by Council. At the time, the Town's CIP was one of the most comprehensive in Ontario and included a variety of financial incentives and municipal leadership programs, tailored to address key community improvement issues in both the urban and rural areas of Halton Hills. Among other things, the CIP programs were designed to encourage brownfield remediation and redevelopment, revitalize downtown Acton and Georgetown, encourage additional landscaping in industrial areas, and support the agricultural sector.

A comprehensive review and update of the CIP was approved by Council. The update builds on the existing program's strengths and successes, while exploring potential additional tools and incentives to encourage impactful community improvement, and to continue to maximize the CIP's benefits.

The updated CIP will be aligned with and, where applicable, leverage key Town plans, strategies, programs and initiatives, including the new five-year Economic Development and Tourism Strategy. The update will help ensure that the CIP programs continue to be effective, impactful, flexible and more streamlined. Where feasible, it will also allow for the potential inclusion of new and/or 'non-traditional' CIP (and/or related) programs.

Taking into account the Town's economic development goals and strategic priorities, as well as other key priority areas, main areas for consideration as part of the CIP Update include:

- affordable housing;
- brownfield redevelopment;
- storefront/main street revitalization;
- agriculture/agri-business;
- heritage;
- arts and culture;
- climate change; and
- accessibility.

In addition, the potential development and implementation of an Economic Assistance Program as part of the CIP Update, will focus on such areas as strengthening business resiliency and adaptation to changing economic conditions; growing e-commerce capacity; assisting with COVID-19 impacts; and responding to future unexpected economic hardships. Incorporating consideration of this Program into the CIP Update builds on existing processes, supplements business supports already provided by the Town, and leverages community awareness of the CIP.

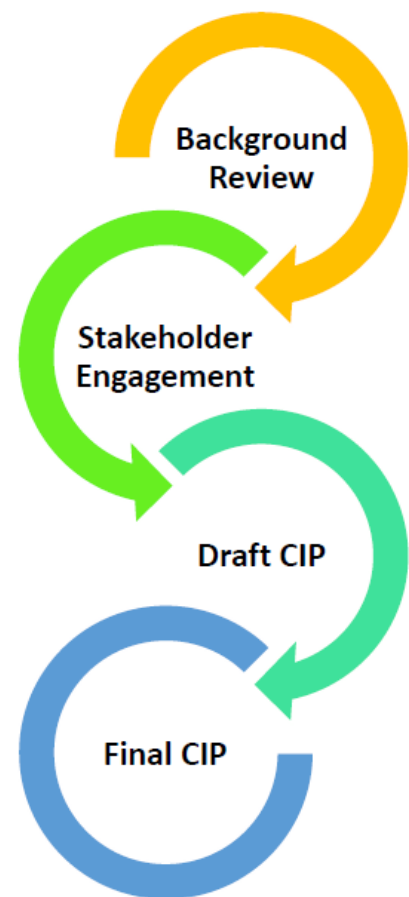
The CIP Update commenced in late 2020 with the hiring of professional consultants Sierra Planning and Management. Council approved the Terms of Reference for this project in August 2020 through report ADMIN-0020-0019. The update is anticipated to

be completed prior to the end of 2021. The project is being guided by two committees – the Technical Advisory Committee (consisting of Town staff from multiple departments) and a CIP Consultation Group. The latter consists of Council representation through Councillor Albano and external key stakeholders including, representatives from the Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce, Acton and Georgetown Business Improvement Areas, Halton Federation of Agriculture, and Halton Region.

The CIP Update is being completed in four phases (Figure 1). This consists of the Background Review; Stakeholder Consultation; Draft CIP; and Final CIP. Several deliverables are incorporated throughout the project:

- Phase 1: Background Review
 - Review of critical needs, opportunities, and areas of consideration
 - Evaluating existing and potential municipal approaches that can be used to address critical needs
- Phase 2: Stakeholder Consultation
 - Engaging with a wide range of stakeholders to inform the direction and approach of the CIP Update, with engagements to include surveys, focus groups, committee consultations and interviews
- Phase 3: Draft CIP
 - Developing a preliminary suite of CIP programs along with the formation of an Economic Assistance Program
 - Preparing a Draft CIP based on work completed in the background review and informed by stakeholders
 - Consulting with the community on the Draft CIP and associated Official Plan Amendments
- Phase 4: Final CIP
 - Addressing applicable feedback into a consolidated Final CIP and bringing this document to Council for approval
 - Preparing administration documents to support implementation of each new CIP program.

Figure 1: Four Phases of the CIP Update



2. Accomplishments To Date

The CIP Update is well underway with Phases 1 and 2 nearing completion. Phase 3 has started. To date, the following has been accomplished:

2.1 Background Review Phase

The Background Discussion Report has been completed and is appended to this report. It is the first of several deliverables and marks the completion of the Background Review phase (Phase 1). Information and analysis contained in the Background Discussion Report will help inform key decisions required for the CIP Update, including the development of an appropriate suite of programs to support the Town's economic development priorities, program administration and monitoring protocols.

Contents of the Background Discussion Report include:

- Identification of the relevant legislative and local policy framework;
- Analysis of the Town's current CIP programs, historic take-up, evaluation process and overall success;
- Character assessment of existing CIP sub-areas and other key areas throughout Halton Hills for consideration as part of the CIP Update; and
- Case study review of CIP best practices from municipalities across the Greater Golden Horseshoe, including observations related to:
 - General versus target-driven programs
 - Regional participation in local CIP programs
 - Suite of programs offered by other municipalities
 - CIP application intake process and evaluation methods
 - Funding approaches

The appended Background Discussion Report provides more detail.

2.2 Stakeholder Consultation Phase

Stakeholder consultation has taken place in tandem with the Background Review phase. The bulk of planned engagement is now completed. This includes:

- Formation of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)
- Formation of the CIP Consultation Group (CIPCG)
- Establishment of dedicated project webpages
- Targeted online survey
- Inclusion of prior feedback gathered from earlier Town engagements/surveys
- Engagement of Subject Matter Experts
- Focus Groups

The TAC and CIP Consultation Group help guide the project by reviewing key deliverables (e.g. Background Discussion Report) and providing input throughout the project. To date, two TAC and CIP Consultation Group meetings have been held.

Two project webpages were developed for the public and stakeholders to engage with and learn more about the CIP Update. These project webpages can be accessed via the Let's Talk Halton Hills and Invest Halton Hills websites. To date, about 650 individuals visited the Let's Talk Halton Hills project webpage. The project has also been promoted via the Town's economic development e-newsletter.

A targeted online survey was posted for property owners, tenant businesses and developers between February 2 and March 10, 2021. Nearly 60 individuals completed the survey. Results identified construction costs, zoning and servicing as major constraints preventing moving forward with improvements, and expansion or development of the respondent's building/property. Almost half of the respondents indicated that they are planning to invest in their building/property within the next two years. About a third plan to invest over \$100,000 over the next five years. Common investment needs included interior building upgrades, signage, façade improvements, and building expansion.

In addition to the survey, the CIP Update is drawing on the extensive business community consultation that was completed earlier for the Economic Development and Tourism Strategy, as well as the two COVID-19 Business Surveys completed in 2020. The latter received a total of nearly 300 responses.

Given the numerous areas of consideration to explore as part of the CIP Update, engaging with subject matter experts (SMEs) in the respective areas is important. SME engagement has included consultation with various Town Committees, including:

- Heritage Halton Hills
- Accessibility Committee
- Cultural Services Committee
- Tourism Advisory Committee
- Affordable Housing Working Group

External SME's were also consulted, including, both the Acton and Georgetown BIA Boards, and the Halton Federation of Agriculture Board.

In addition, four stakeholder focus group sessions were held in April 2021. Nearly 30 individuals participated. The stakeholder focus group sessions were generally organized by stakeholder type, specifically: small and medium businesses; large employers; developers/landowners; and agricultural/rural area stakeholders.

Those who were engaged through any of the above-mentioned methods were also invited to participate in one-on-one interviews with the consultant should they wish to continue the conversation or provide additional feedback outside of the group discussions.

3. Next Steps

With the Background Review phase and the bulk of stakeholder consultation completed, the next steps for the CIP Update will focus on identifying the new suite of incentive programs, along with the formation of a potential Economic Assistance Program.

The next major deliverable for the CIP Update project is a Planning Justification and Recommended Strategy Report. The latter will contain a summary of engagement outcomes, an updated CIP rationale and objectives, an outline of the proposed suite of incentives, and a framework for the potential Economic Assistance Program.

Council and the two project committees will continue to be engaged and updated as major CIP Update project milestones are reached.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

This report aligns to the Town's Strategic plan recognizing the value to foster a prosperous economy, maintain and enhance the economic vitality of the town through the provision of a wide range of opportunities for economic development. In addition, the report also provides a responsive, effective municipal government and strong leadership in the effective and efficient delivery of municipal services.

This report also identifies shaping growth as one of the Town's Strategic priorities.

RELATIONSHIP TO CLIMATE CHANGE:

This report impacts and/or helps address climate change and the Town's Net Zero target through climate mitigation.

By including climate change as one of its focus areas for consideration, the CIP Update will, where possible and appropriate, help advance Council's climate change priorities.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:

Public Engagement has been conducted as follows: Online Survey, Project Committees, Stakeholder Workshops, Subject Matter Expert Engagement, Establishment of Project Webpages; and Promotion via e-newsletter and stakeholder meetings (e.g. BIA and Chamber update meetings).

INTERNAL CONSULTATION:

Town staff from Finance, Recreation and Parks, Planning and Development, and Climate Change (members of the Technical Advisory Committee) were consulted on the Background Discussion Report. The Town's Senior Management Team (SMT) was also engaged.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

This report will be funded through an existing approved budget source.

The existing Community Improvement Plan (CIP) Update includes the required funds to complete the project and to support the initial implementation. Upon completion of the CIP Update, additional/modified financial requests may be brought forward for Council's consideration.

Reviewed and approved by,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Damian Szybalski". The script is cursive and somewhat stylized.

Damian Szybalski, Director of Economic Development, Innovation & Culture

A handwritten signature in black ink that appears to read "C. Mills". The signature is very stylized and abstract, with a large horizontal stroke.

Chris Mills, Acting Chief Administrative Officer