



REPORT

TO: Mayor Lawlor and Members of Council

FROM: Erin Kaiser, Manager of Economic Development and Innovation

DATE: July 31, 2024

REPORT NO.: CSE-2024-006

SUBJECT: Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) between the Town of Halton Hills and Downtown Acton Business Improvement Area, and Georgetown Central Business Improvement Area

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Report No. CSE-2024-006, dated July 31, 2014 regarding Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) between the Town of Halton Hills and the Downtown Acton Business Improvement Area and the Downtown Georgetown Central Business Improvement Area (BIAs), be received;

AND FURTHER THAT Council authorize the execution of the Memorandums of Understanding between the Town of Halton Hills and the Downtown Acton Business Improvement Area, and between the Town of Halton Hills and the Georgetown Central Business Improvement Area;

AND FURTHER THAT Town staff be authorized to amend both MOUs, as applicable, pending Budget Committee's and Council's consideration to adjust the Town's budget by \$15,000 to accommodate the removal of the annual charges to the BIAs for the snow plowing of municipal parking lots (totaling \$9,500) and the maintenance of the street furniture within the BIAs as part of the 2025 Budget process;

AND FURTHER THAT, to ensure continuous improvement and facilitate effective, efficient and prompt response to unanticipated and/or changing conditions, Council authorize Town staff to make minor edits to the MOUs at any time, where no material changes nor new budget impacts are caused, and with the agreement of the subject Business Improvement Area - without requiring prior Council approval;

AND FURTHER THAT Council authorize a waiver of fees towards the delivery of Special Events for the BIAs that have been historically applied for as detailed within the

MOUs, to a maximum of \$2500.00 annually per BIA, from the existing annual Community Grant Program funds.

KEY POINTS:

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

- The Downtown Acton Business Improvement Area and the Georgetown Central Business Improvement Area are integral to the Town's economic prosperity, enhancing downtown vibrancy, community activity, and capturing resident and visitor spending - supporting the Thriving Economic pillar of the [Strategic Plan](#).
- A Business Improvement Area (BIA) is a designated area where local businesses and property owners collaborate to improve economic vitality, funded through a levy on applicable commercial properties.
- Based on long-standing collaboration with the BIAs, MOUs were recommended to the BIAs by the Town in order to support and enhance the Town's ability to review and support BIA priorities by streamlining BIA requests, optimizing the allocation of the Town's limited resources, ensuring alignment with Town priorities, leveraging synergies between various initiatives, facilitating coordinated discussions with the BIA Boards and managers, and integrating decisions into the Town's annual budget process - among other improvements.
- The MOUs establish a framework for collaboration between the Town and BIAs, outlining shared goals, roles and responsibilities, and resource allocation, while formalizing annual meetings in April to review potential BIA requests and requiring an annual submission of potential projects to the Town's Economic Development staff. The MOUs also enable the Town to consider BIA requests outside the annual review process if they align with the Town's priorities and limited resource capabilities.
- Matters related to budget impacts or changes are highlighted, including the removal of BIA charges for snow plowing and formalized responsibility for street furniture maintenance which are proposed to be included in the Town's 2025 budget (subject to Budget Committee and Council consideration), as well as the fee waivers for Special Events within the Community Grant Program funds.

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION:

1. Role of the BIA's and the Town

Established by the Town through the Municipal Act, the Downtown Acton Business Improvement Area (Acton BIA) and the Georgetown Central Business Improvement Area (Georgetown BIA) are integral components of the Town's economic landscape, representing vibrant downtown commercial hubs in the community. The Acton BIA and Georgetown BIA operate as associations of local businesses and property owners working collaboratively to enhance their respective downtowns. Funded by levies on property/businesses owners within the BIA boundaries, the BIAs are responsible for the

improvement, beautification and maintenance of municipally-owned land, buildings and structures in the area beyond that provided at the expense of the municipality, as well as the promotion of the area. As such, the BIAs play a crucial role in promoting economic development, beautification, and community engagement initiatives tailored to their unique areas.

Downtown vibrancy is a key economic development priority for the Town of Halton Hills. The Town has acted on this priority through the implementation of numerous plans, strategies and initiatives. This includes the [Economic Development and Tourism Strategy](#), [Community Improvement Plan \(CIP\)](#), [Public Art Master Plan](#) and [Official Plan](#). By aligning these plans and initiatives with the unique needs and aspirations of the BIAs, the Town aims to cultivate vibrant and prosperous downtown areas that respond to the interests of residents, visitors and businesses alike. In turn, these initiatives fuel a thriving local economy that advances the Thriving Economy priority of Council's [Strategic Plan](#).

With a rich history of collaborative partnership, over the years, the Town and the BIAs have leveraged numerous synergies and implemented numerous projects.

2. Establishing Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs)

Halton Hills is a growing community that prides itself on maintaining vibrant and economically dynamic downtown areas. As the community grows, so too does the complexity of initiatives, partnerships, and the need for greater coordination to support local businesses and to enhance overall community well-being. Central to this effort are the Business Improvement Associations (BIAs).

The Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) serve as an agreement between the Town and the two BIAs. Building on past and ongoing successes, the MOUs:

- Establish roles, responsibilities and processes for each party, and set out a consistent framework for cooperation and communication, to ensure that the downtown business community and the Town continue to work together effectively;
- Outline processes for the consideration of any requests made by the BIA to the Town, facilitating the review of any applicable resource and financial impacts, and potential integration into Town and/or BIA budgets, as appropriate;
- Identify appropriate points of contact for both parties to ensure streamlined communications, efficiency and responsiveness; and
- Establish an infrastructure inventory list to clarify ownership over infrastructure located within BIA boundaries.

The MOUs are the result of a collaborative process between the Town and the BIAs. During this process, three matters were identified for consideration as part of this staff report and the Town's 2025 budget.

- **Charges to BIAs for snow plowing of municipal lots:**
 - Historically, both BIAs have been invoiced annually by the Town for the snow plowing of the municipal lots as part of a past agreement with the Town related to the removal of metered parking. It is recommended that this annual fee (totaling \$9,500) be terminated and be integrated into the Town's budget, as part of the 2025 budget process.

- **Street Furniture Ownership and Maintenance**
 - There has been ongoing confusion on responsibility for the purchase, installation, and maintenance of street furniture and permanent chattels. As part of the MOUs, it has been determined that the Town should take ownership of permanent fixtures (as identified within the MOUs), once such fixtures are installed. Formalized ongoing maintenance responsibility by the Town requires additional funds which are recommended to be addressed through the 2025 Budget. As in the past, the installation of new assets would continue to be funded by the BIA, often taking advantage of grant opportunities and in consultation with the Town, or through specific capital budget requests.

- **Community Grant Program Streamlining**
 - To enhance support for community initiatives within the downtowns, Town staff identified an opportunity to streamline the grant process for Special Events held by the BIAs and which are applied for annually through the Community Grant Program. If the recommendations of this report are approved, the BIAs will be provided with a \$2500 annual allowance from the grant fund, as outlined in Section 3 of the Memorandums of Understanding (MOU). This allowance would cover waivers of fees related to the delivery of Special Events, including park, facility, or road occupancy permits, as well as equipment loans.

Additionally, discussions are ongoing regarding laneway maintenance matters within BIA boundaries. It is undetermined at this point if any changes with the current processes will be required.

3. Agreement and Next Steps

Both BIAs have in principle endorsed the attached Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs). Pending approval by Town Council, the MOUs will be executed.

Staff recommend that the MOUs include provisions allowing for amendments or updates with non-material changes as needed, without requiring prior Council approval. This flexibility will assist in streamlining MOU implementation and will help ensure responsiveness to evolving needs and circumstances within the downtown areas of Acton and Georgetown – while also recognizing that these are the first MOUs between the Town and BIAs.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

This report identifies a thriving economy as one of the Town's Strategic priorities.

Downtown vibrancy, both for the residents and visitors, as well as for the many small businesses located within the BIAs, is a key element that contributes to Halton Hills' thriving economy.

RELATIONSHIP TO CLIMATE CHANGE:

This report is administrative in nature and does not directly impact or address climate change and the Town's Net Zero target.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:

Public Engagement was not needed as this report is administrative. However, external engagement, including multiple meetings and discussions, occurred between the Town and the BIAs throughout the preparation of the MOUs.

INTERNAL CONSULTATION:

Internal consultation included staff from Community Development, Transportation and Public Works, Building and Engineering, Clerks, and Cultural Services. The two Town Councillors (Councillor Albano and Councillor Norris) appointed to the BIA Boards were also consulted throughout the process.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

This report has the potential to require funding in a future budget year and therefore needs to be referred to budget committee for tracking purposes.

Implementation of the MOUs will require a modest fund of \$15,000 in the Town's budget related to the \$9,500 shortfall from the removal of annual snow plowing charges and the added responsibility of street furniture maintenance. This funding will be presented for Budget Committee's and Council's consideration through the budget process.

The \$2500 to each BIA from the Community Grant Program will be funded through an existing approved budget source.

Reallocating some of the financial responsibilities to the Town from the BIAs (e.g. snow plowing) does technically reduce the BIAs pre-MOU budget. As is standard practice, the BIAs would be making an annual budget request to the Town for approval.

Reviewed and approved by,

Damian Szybalski, Commissioner of Community Services

Chris Mills, Chief Administrative Officer