

Date: July 7, 2025  
To: Sonya Watson, Chief Administrative Officer  
From: Alison Bucking, Planner and David Welwood, Senior Planner  
Subject: Background and Directions Memorandum – Community Improvement Plan Update for Housing Incentives  
JLR No.: 33282-001

## **1.0 Introduction**

The Municipality has retained J.L. Richards & Associates Limited (JLR) to assist with an update to its Community Improvement Plan (CIP) to include financial incentives to encourage affordable and multi-unit housing projects to address its commitments under the Housing Accelerator Fund agreement with the Federal Government. As part of this agreement the Municipality established a housing growth target of 433 units with additional targets to develop 243 missing middle housing units, 120 other multi-unit housing units and approximately 10 affordable housing units.

### **1.1 What is a CIP?**

The purpose of a CIP is to allow for municipal incentives to stimulate investment in the community. A CIP is a planning tool that establishes a framework for achieving community improvements to rehabilitate and revitalize project areas.

The CIP includes incentives to stimulate or encourage private and public sector investments and may include design guidelines for community improvements. The CIP can provide programs for municipal grants, loans, and rebates for private sector improvements.

The Brockton CIP currently has 6 incentives programs:

1. Façade Improvement Grant
2. Signage Improvement Grant
3. Accessibility Improvement Grant
4. Environmental Stewardship and Energy Efficiency Program
5. Vacant and Underutilized Properties Conversion/Expansion Grant
6. Farm Gate Improvement Grant

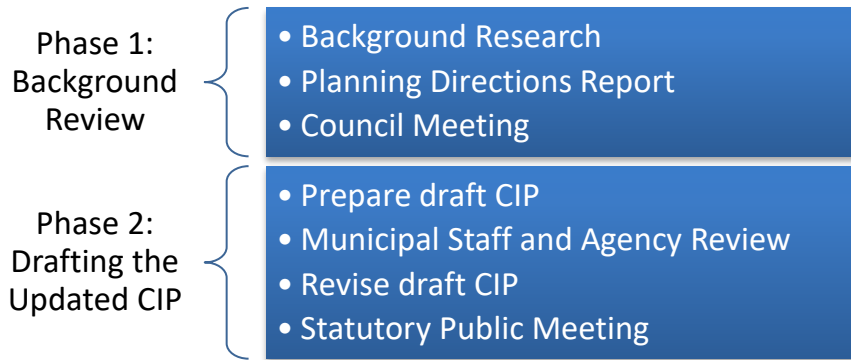
The Brockton CIP is supplemented by programs in the County's Spruce the Bruce Community Development Program.

### **1.2 Where Does the Municipality of Brockton's CIP apply?**

The Community Improvement Project Area (CIPA) applies to Walkerton, Downtown Walkerton and the focus areas of the hamlets of Cargill, Chepstow, Elmwood and Pinkerton. However, properties outside of the focus areas but within the settlement areas may be considered. Currently the Walkerton CIPA does not include all commercially zoned properties in the Downtown Walkerton CIPA and the CIPAs for the hamlets are limited to the roadway with the intent that it would apply to properties fronting that road (**Attachment 1**)

### 1.3 Project Overview and Purpose of this Memo

The CIP update will be conducted in two phases:



This memo is intended to provide a summary of the legislative, policy and community level context for Municipality's CIP update and provides directions for Council's consideration.

## 2.0 Background Review

As part of our background review, we have undertaken a review of various legislative, policy and guideline documents. Key findings from our review are summarized below:

### 2.1. Planning Act

The Planning Act establishes the legislative framework for planning in Ontario that municipalities must adhere to. Section 28 of the Planning Act allows the Municipality to implement a CIP and establishes the legislative requirements to do so.

### 2.2. Provincial Planning Statement 2024

The 2024 Provincial Planning Statement (PPS) is issued under Section 3 of the Planning Act and is intended to guide municipalities in making planning decisions on matters of provincial interest related to land use planning and development. The 2024 Provincial Planning Statement replaced the 2020 Provincial Policy Statement and has a greater focus on developing housing and supporting economic growth.

### 2.3. Bruce County Official Plan

The Bruce County Official Plan (BCOP) was approved by the Minister of Municipal Affairs in September 1998 and provides the over-arching policy directions on matters of County and Provincial interests. The County is currently in the process of updating its Official Plan and several amendments have been adopted through this process with the final stage, a new Official Plan document, anticipated for the fall of this year.

Section 6.17 of the BCOP establishes the enabling framework for local municipalities to develop CIPs. These improvements are intended to enhance the social, economic and environmental vitality of the community, including the development of affordable housing. Please note the Community Improvement policies of the BCOP are in-effect, the section numbering is proposed to be modified through the draft BCOP and for ease of reference has been used for this report.

For detailed policies, please refer to **Attachment 2**.

## 2.4. Current Walkerton Official Plan (October 2018 Consolidation)

The Walkerton Official Plan was last comprehensively reviewed in 2017 and provides land use planning direction of how and where the Walkerton Community will grow and what will be protected. Section 4.3 speaks to community improvement and establishes the goals and criteria for a CIP. The existing community improvement goals promote the redevelopment of vacant or underutilized sites but do not promote the development of affordable or attainable housing.

Presently, the Official Plan designates Downtown Walkerton as the Community Improvement Project Area but provides the ability for Council to establish other areas provided, they meet the criteria under Section 4.3.3. However, these criteria do not include the need for affordable, rental or multi-unit housing in an area.

An amendment to the Official Plan is required to include goals and criteria which encourage the development of multi-unit and affordable housing through the Community Improvement Plan. It is recommended that this be addressed as part of the Walkerton Official Plan Review project which is being completed concurrently with the CIP update.

For detailed policies, please refer to **Attachment 3**.

## 2.5. Housing Accelerator Fund Agreement

In November 2024, the Municipality of Brockton received Housing Accelerator Funds from the Federal government to implement the following initiatives:

1. Reduce and eliminate parking standards.
2. Complete a comprehensive review of development charges and fee schedules.
3. Make municipally owned lands available for priority housing development.
4. Develop OP and zoning by-law amendments to eliminate density restrictions and introduce new residential development flexibility.
5. Develop and implement new site plan control policies and promote low-rise infill development.
6. Develop affordable housing community improvement plan and concierge service to introduce new affordable housing-based incentive programming.

Through these initiatives, the Municipality has set to increase its housing supply by 433 permitted housing units. The Community Improvement Plan update ties into incentive 6, which is to develop an affordable housing incentive program within Community Improvement Plan. Initiatives 1, 4 and 5 are being addressed as part of the Walkerton Official Plan and Brockton Zoning By-law Review project which is being completed concurrently with the CIP update.

## 3.0 Existing Community Improvement Plan

The Brockton CIP has 6 incentives program which can be divided into two groups: Building Improvement Grants and Redevelopment Grants.



**Building Improvement Grants:** The Façade Improvement Grant (FIG), Signage Improvement Grant (SIG), Accessibility Improvement Grant (AIG) and Farm Gate Improvement Grant (FGIG) are targeted to commercial business owners to improve building façades, signage and access to their buildings and cover costs related to specific materials and professional fees. The Environmental Stewardship and Energy Efficiency Program (ESEEP) is intended to assist commercial business owners with improving their energy efficiency and conservation measures. All grants are based on a grant up to 50% of the cost. The FIG and ESEEP are based on a maximum grant of \$3,000 or alternatively the Municipality offers a \$10,000 interest-free loan for the FIG. The Municipality has established a maximum grant of \$1,500 for the SIG and FGIG and \$2,000 for the AIG.



**Redevelopment Grants:** The Vacant and Underutilized Properties Conversion/Expansion Grant is intended to provide funding to encourage the conversion and revitalization of vacant and/or underutilized properties. This includes projects which would convert a vacant or underutilized building to provide multiple housing or mixes uses and covers costs related to feasibility studies, professional services or costs related to the conversion of a vacant or underused agricultural building to permit-value added activities. Similar to the Building Improvement Grants, this grant is provided for up to 50% of the cost of the project to a maximum of \$7,500. Like the FIG, there is also the option for an interest free loan up to a maximum of \$10,000.

A Tax Increment Equivalent Fund (TIEF) program is currently available through the County CIP and outlined in the Municipality of Brockton CIP. To facilitate continued collaboration, align TIEF program opportunities and facilitate stacking of grants with the County, the Brockton CIP should be updated to reflect the TIEF program guidelines and eligibility criteria. The Brockton CIP should also indicate any local considerations or similar incentives that are available through the municipality.

The existing CIP offers grants to facilitate multi-unit housing, which helps to create smaller and more affordable units and different tenure opportunities. However, the existing CIP does not offer specific grants for affordable housing or application fee assistance programs. These are programs which will be considered and were committed to as part of the Housing Accelerator Fund agreement.

#### **4.0 Directions**

It is recommended that the Municipality update its CIP to:

- 1. Add an Affordable Housing or Additional Residential Unit Grant**

This would be a grant which provides financial assistance related to the improvement, conversion or construction of new affordable housing or attainable housing. Similar grants are provided in the Municipality of Kincardine, Township of Georgian Bluffs, Town of Saugeen Shores and Norfolk County.

Based on a scan of these comparable CIP programs, grants typically are offered for up to 50% of the cost to a maximum amount specific by the Municipality. If this grant is pursued, Council would need to establish a maximum grant value based on available funding. Additional eligibility criteria, such as establishing a duration for which an applicant cannot apply for a new incentive after receiving funding under the CIP should also be considered.

- 2. Add a Priority Housing Planning Application and Development Charges Fee Reduction Program**

This would be a grant which exempts certain priority housing projects from planning applications fees such as affordable housing and multi-unit rental housing projects. It would also provide the Municipality the ability to exempt or provide a grant of up to 100% of the Municipal Development Charges provided specific criteria is met. The intent would be that affordable housing projects would receive the greatest relief. Similar programs are provided in the Municipality of Kincardine, Town of Saugeen Shores and City of Barrie. To implement this grant, the Municipality may need to update its Fee and Development Charges By-laws to exempt certain development types through the CIP.

- 3. Expand the TIEF as a specific program to further enable the Municipality to participate in the County Program and establish a local TIEF program framework within the CIP that reflective of current guidelines**

The TIEF would be identified as a specific program where applicants would be eligible if they were approved for another grant program under the CIP and where the assessed property value has increased by at least 25%.

- 4. Update the CIPA maps**

It is recommended that the CIPA maps be updated for clarity and include all commercially zoned properties in Downtown Walkerton and all applicable properties along the focus area roadway in the Hamlets.

## 5. Address Housekeeping Items

It is recommended that any housekeeping items identified by staff be addressed through this process such as amendments to eligibility criteria and technical refinements to text.

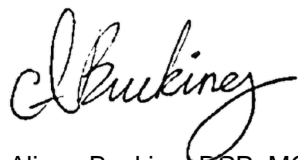
To implement the CIP amendments, it is recommended that through the Walkerton Official Plan and Brockton Zoning By-law Review project, that the Municipality amend policies within the Walkerton Official Plan to allow CIPs to include incentives for affordable or multi-unit housing.

### 5.0 Next Steps

Following direction from Council, JLR will prepare the draft CIP update which will be circulated to staff and relevant agencies for review. Once feedback has been received, JLR will revise the document and present it to Council and the public at a Statutory Public Meeting. There is also the opportunity to include additional community consultation by carrying out consultation alongside the Walkerton Official Plan and Brockton Zoning By-law Review and presenting the draft document at a planned public information session or open house.

J.L. RICHARDS & ASSOCIATES LIMITED

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### **Attachments:**

**Attachment 1** – Existing Brockton CIPA Maps

**Attachment 2** – Relevant Bruce County Official Plan Policies

**Attachment 3** – Relevant Walkerton Official Plan Policies