



# Downtown St. George

## COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Draft | 2022 Amendment



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**Appendix 1: Downtown St. George Community Improvement Project Area**

**Appendix 2: Downtown St. George Design Guidelines**

DRAFT

# 1 INTRODUCTION

Downtown St. George is a unique, historic destinations within Brant County. The maintenance, enhancement and revitalization of the Downtown area of St. George will be beneficial to all residents of Brant County, and may be facilitated through a Community Improvement Plan.

The Downtown St. George Community Improvement Plan (this Plan) is a long-term revitalization tool aimed at achieving a unique and clear vision for the core area of St. George. This Plan identifies specific goals, objectives and is supported by design principles to guide revitalization in a manner that is appropriate to enhancing the unique attributes of the community. This Plan outlines a series of action-oriented programs intended to achieve the stated vision and supporting goals and objectives.

Programs include financial incentives aimed at private property owners and tenants to improve their property and a suite of other tools aimed at improving the public realm. The programs are supported by policies to support implementation and administration, and to ensure that the programs are contributing to realizing the vision and goals of this Plan.

## 1.1 BACKGROUND

A Community Improvement Plan (CIP) is a common revitalization tool that has been implemented by many municipalities across Ontario. CIPs are statutory documents prepared under Section 28 of the *Planning Act*, and are principally used to stimulate investment in private property. The purpose of a CIP is to encourage the beautification, rehabilitation and other improvements to the

building stock. Additionally, some municipalities undertake municipal projects as part of their CIP, such as streetscape improvements, new infrastructure, new or renovated public buildings or further studies. Accordingly, for many municipalities, a CIP represents a comprehensive revitalization strategy for a targeted area.

To prepare a CIP, the County is required to have Official Plan policies in place to describe the use of CIPs. The County of Brant's Official Plan contains detailed community improvement plan policies. The Plan identifies several goals and objectives to support community improvement. It outlines criteria for selecting Community Improvement Project Areas and the preparation and implementation of CIPs.

In order to adopt a CIP, a Community Improvement Project Area (Appendix 1) must be adopted by a by-law of Council. The Community Improvement Project Area is the designated area to which a Community Improvement Plan applies and is administered separately from this Plan, but is attached as Appendix 1 for convenience purposes.

Under the *Planning Act*, municipalities may acquire, hold, clear, grade or otherwise prepare land (Section 28(3)); construct, repair, rehabilitate or improve buildings on land acquired or improved by the County (Section 28(6)); or, the County may issue grants or loans for eligible costs of the community improvement plan (Section 28(7)).

A Background Report has been jointly prepared for St. George and Burford as the foundation to this Plan. The Background Report includes an analysis of relevant legislation; a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats analysis for each area; a review of other similar Community Improvement Plans and lessons learned; a summary of consultation; and a review of options for programs

and incentives to be considered. While the Background Report is not an operative component of the Community Improvement Plan, it provides a resource from which to obtain more information about the basis and origins of this Plan.

## 1.2 DOWNTOWN ST. GEORGE DESIGN GUIDELINES

The Downtown St. George Design Guidelines also form a critical component of this Plan. The Design Guidelines are a companion document to this Plan, and is explicitly referred to throughout this Plan. The Guidelines are attached as Appendix 2.

The Community Improvement Plan is the most important tool for implementing the Downtown St. George Design Guidelines. Like the previously established Downtown Paris Design Guidelines, the Downtown St. George Guidelines are a component of eligibility for private property improvements as incented by this Plan. As outlined throughout Section 3.0 of this Plan, the Guidelines form the design criteria for financial incentive programs. Applicants to financial incentive programs in Downtown St. George will be required to ensure that their project is designed in accordance with the applicable guidelines.

## 1.3 CONSULTATION

Input into this Plan has been critical. Since the Plan will principally be implemented by property owners and tenants who access the financial incentive programs, it is important that the Plan have buy-in and support from the community.

On March 28, 2018, a public open house and workshop was held in St. George for interested stakeholders and residents. Approximately 40 participants attended the meeting and contributed to a discussion of issues to be addressed by the

Plan; the crafting of a vision for revitalization; and, prioritization of the types of programs that could be implemented through this Plan. A detailed summary of this session can be found in the Background Report.

## 1.4 OVERVIEW OF THIS PLAN

This Plan is comprised of the following sections:

- **Section 1** is this introduction. It does not form an operative component of the Plan, but is intended to orient readers with the Plan.
- **Section 2** sets out the vision for Downtown St. George, for the purposes of implementing this Plan. This section forms an operative component of the Plan under Section 28 of the *Planning Act*, as it establishes the overall purpose of the Plan and forms a component of the general eligibility criteria. Generally, all projects under this Plan should contribute to achieving the vision, goals and objectives. The section also provides useful clarity about the intended outcomes of the Plan.
- **Section 3** outlines the financial incentives, as well as eligibility criteria and administration policies. This Section forms an operative component of the Plan and implements financial incentive tools under Section 28 of the *Planning Act*. The approach of this Plan is to outline an array of financial incentive programs, which could be funded in any given combination by Council in any given year, subject to budget constraints and priorities.
- **Section 4** proposes a parking strategy for Downtown St. George.



- **Section 5** outlines the municipal leadership programs, which complement the other programs of this Plan.
- **Section 6** includes policies for implementing this Plan, making sure it is working and marketing the Plan's programs. This section does not form an operative component of the Plan under the *Planning Act*, but it contains important programs to provide for the successful implementation of this Plan.

## 1.5 HOW TO USE THIS PLAN

This Plan will be read and used by the County, as well as property owners and tenants who are located within the designated Community Improvement Project Area. This Plan contains a high level of detail to ensure that the programs are implemented efficiently, to minimize risk to the County, and to maximize the benefits of the programs. It is intended that the County will assist interested persons in reading and understanding the relevant sections of the Plan. The County may prepare brochures or other marketing materials to better communicate the policies of the Plan to different audiences (see Section 6.5).

The County has a central role in understanding and implementing this Plan on a day-to-day basis and over the long term. Section 3.3 establishes general administration policies, which outlines the need for the County to designate a Plan Administrator and to consider designating a Review Committee. Section 4.7 includes administration policies for implementing the Parking Strategies. The Plan Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy (Section 6.4) and the policies for Marketing the Plan (Section 6.5) will also need to be administered by the County.

Private property owners and tenants who are interested in applying for financial incentives should become familiar with relevant portions of the Plan. Section 3.1 outlines the Financial Incentives that are made available by this Plan, subject to funding. Each of the programs under Section 3.1 is associated with eligibility criteria, including design-related eligibility criteria. The design criteria reference the Downtown St. George Design Guidelines document, which is considered a companion to this Plan (Appendix 2). Readers should be familiar with the Design Guidelines. Section 3.2 includes general eligibility criteria for applying for financial incentives. Readers should also be familiar with Section 3.3, which outlines administration processes for applying for financial incentive programs.

Generally, readers should also be familiar with the vision, goals and objectives (Section 2) and the glossary of terms to assist in interpreting the Plan (Section 6.6).

## 2 VISION, GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

It is important to establish a future vision for the purposes of implementing this Plan. Stating the goals and intended outcomes of the Plan, and monitoring whether the goals and outcomes are being achieved, will make it much more likely that the Plan will be successful in achieving its vision. Since this Plan focuses on a revitalization program for the Downtown area, this section identifies a vision of the future for Downtown St. George.

A vision is a picture of the future. It describes what each community aspires to achieve in the long term. It is intended that the programs contained in this plan will help each community work towards the vision. The sum of the programs intended by this Plan will represent an important step towards realizing this future image of each community.

### 2.1 CONTEXT

St. George is one of Brant County's Primary Urban Settlement Areas as defined in the Official Plan. The downtown core of St. George is situated at the junction of Beverly Street and Main Street. The core area extends along Main Street, with low-rise historic core commercial buildings fronting onto the sidewalk. The maintenance and revitalization of existing prominent historic elements is critical to the improvement of Downtown St. George.

Downtown St. George serves the needs of local residents and is a tourist draw. The small business community offers a wide variety of unique shops and services, while heritage buildings and elements distinguish St. George.

St. George is planned for significant growth over the next 20 years. However, intensification within St. George is constrained by the ongoing Class Environmental Assessment for the waste water plant expansion. The appropriate level of intensification will be contingent on the availability of sanitary servicing capacity. Future growth will represent a critical opportunity to increase the customer and visitor base to the downtown, strengthening the economic vitality of the community.

### 2.2 VISION

For the purposes of this Plan, a vision is established to generally guide future improvements in the Downtown and set the overall intent of this Plan. Upon implementation of this Plan, Downtown St. George will be:

- Quaint, friendly and welcoming;
- Historic and branded to be recognizable;
- A beautiful destination with renowned unique shops, restaurants and shops;
- Encourage active transportation to residents of the village of St. George and a destination for cyclists;
- Safe, accessible, and barrier-free;
- A strong pedestrian experience, with cohesive design, ample green space, and safe crossings;
- Well-maintained, clean and exhibits great community pride.

### 2.3 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The vision statement (Section 2.1 ) represents high-level principles to guide the future of Downtown St. George. To support the implementation of the

vision, specific goals and objectives are established for Downtown St. George, as follows:

**Goal #1: Create a welcoming and quaint destination within Brant County for residents and tourists alike.**

1. Ensure that improvements in Downtown St. George are consistent with Design Guidelines that define and reflect the historic character of the community.
2. Encourage the conservation of historic resources in the community through the application of Design Guidelines and the appropriate scale and form of infill and development.
3. Identify enhancements and wayfinding features to existing gateway features as part of a future streetscape master plan.
4. Address parking supply challenges (as outlined by other goals and objectives of this Plan).
5. Create a recognizable “brand” for Downtown St. George.

**Goal #2: Conserve heritage buildings and set out a high standard for future improvements which contribute positively to the unique character of St. George.**

6. Implement Design Guidelines, specific to St. George, that protect historic character and architectural elements and building materials as a fundamental component of program eligibility in this Plan.
7. Advance a Streetscape Master Plan which further enhances the historic character of the community and complements private property improvements towards a unified historic theme.

8. Ensure that improvements incited by this Plan meet the design criteria, and encourage property owners to exceed the minimum expectations.

**Goal #3: Provide for a suitable amount of parking in the core, as determined through parking supply constraints, and act on the recommendations to improve parking in the Downtown.**

9. Complete a parking study, which specifically identifies vehicular parking supply and demand challenges based on actual observed parking area inventory and usage, and recommends feasible and appropriate approaches to overcome the challenges.
10. Consider a range of different potential parking area improvements, including improved signage, connectivity and other “soft” improvements which can help promote efficiency in the use of existing parking areas.
11. Implement incentives for private parking area improvements to increase off-street parking supply and improve the efficiency and use of private off-street parking.

**Goal #4: Promote a pedestrian-friendly streetscape, which encourages active transportation.**

12. Establish a Streetscape Master Plan that contemplates pedestrian-friendly improvements, such as improved sidewalks, crossings, connectivity to public parking areas, lighting, shade, and establish streetscaping standards that are accessible to the needs of all persons.
13. Promote landscaping improvements to buffer parking areas and create shade.



14. Consider wayfinding and gateway features that encourage visitors to explore the community on foot.

**Goal #5: Facilitate appropriate infill and intensification in Downtown St. George, and bring new residents directly into the core area.**

15. Establish incentives to promote appropriate infill and redevelopment, which is consistent with the historic character of the community.
16. Set out design guidelines that will guide infill and redevelopment and provide for a high standard of design.
17. Ensure that infill and intensification can be serviced.

**Goal #6: Capitalize upon anticipated growth in St. George and further strengthen the Downtown's role as the commercial and cultural focal point of the community.**

18. Provide incentives to facilitate the growth of new commercial space and mixed uses, and enable appropriate conversion of existing space in the core area which will meet the needs of existing and future residents as well as tourists.
19. Address parking issues and improve connectivity to maintain a high degree of accessibility and ease of access to the Downtown, to ensure that future residents can conveniently shop downtown on a regular basis.

**Goal #7: Support tourism in St. George and the growth of unique businesses.**

20. Set out incentives to encourage adaptive reuse of commercial buildings, to promote greater

flexibility and reduce the barriers to entry for new businesses to locate Downtown.

21. Provide incentives to promote and encourage high-quality exterior improvements (façade and signage) as part of new proposed businesses and also to support retention and expansion of existing businesses.

## 3 FINANCIAL INCENTIVE PROGRAMS

The financial incentive programs are intended to encourage investment in private property. To be eligible for financial incentives, this Plan establishes eligibility criteria, including design-related criteria, to set a standard for aesthetics and ensure that the improvements are contributing to achieving the vision, goals and objectives of the unique Downtown area, as set out in Section 2.0 of this Plan. This Plan references the Downtown St. George Design Guidelines to establish design requirements.

### 3.1 PROGRAMS

This Plan establishes a broad series of grant programs to assist in private property improvements. The intent of having a broad set of programs is to enable the County to have access to a comprehensive ‘toolbox’ of programs, which may be required at varying times throughout the life of this Plan. As provided in Section 3.3.2, Council has the discretion to allocate funding to certain programs, based on demand or certain priorities in each year. These decisions should be based on the recommendations of the Administrator through the monitoring and evaluation strategy (Section 6.4).

The programs include:

1. Façade improvement grant;
2. Signage improvement grant;
3. Downtown Housing improvement grant;
4. Property and private parking area improvement grant;
5. Planning and building application fee grant;
6. Tax increment equivalent grant;
7. Adaptive commercial reuse grant;
8. Brownfield study grant; and
9. Brownfield property tax assistance program.

### 3.1.1 Façade Improvement Grant

#### 3.1.1.1 Purpose

The purpose of the façade improvement grant is to encourage improvements to building façade elements, architectural articulation, and encourage restoration of historic attributes and materials. The program will result in greater longevity and viability of buildings in the downtown, restore historic character, and contribute significantly to the beautification of the Downtown area, helping to attract more visitors and businesses.

#### 3.1.1.2 Eligible Properties

All commercial, institutional, mixed-use and multi-unit residential buildings with three or more residential units in the current Community Improvement Project Area are eligible for the façade improvement grant.

Additionally, any other properties that may be designated under Part IV or V of the *Ontario Heritage Act* are eligible.

#### 3.1.1.3 Authority

The authority for administering this grant program is consistent with Section 28(7) of the *Planning Act*, and conforms to the County of Brant's Official Plan CIP policies.

#### 3.1.1.4 Eligible Costs

The potential grant value shall be calculated based on the estimated value of any eligible costs, which may include:

- Repair, replacement or restoration of façade masonry, brickwork, architectural detailing or foundation improvements;
- Repair, replacement or new installation of awnings or canopies;

- Painting, cleaning or similar treatments to improve façade materials or enhance durability over the long-term, provided these improvements are part of a larger improvement project (i.e., are associated with other eligible projects listed herein);
- Window and door replacement, provided it is part of a larger façade improvement project (i.e., associated with other eligible projects listed herein) and provided the improvements represent an improvement in detailing (e.g., lattice), and not merely replacement of glass;
- Improvements which contribute to the accessibility and/or barrier-free access to the building (such as improvements to stairs/entrances or automatic doors), and the improvements are in accordance with accessibility legislation such as the AODA and the design eligibility criteria; and,
- Services of an architect, qualified designer, engineer or heritage professional to advise on the improvements listed above. Professionals are to be licensed accredited and in good standing with their respective governing bodies.

#### 3.1.1.5 Grant Value

The maximum value of a grant shall be:

- For properties located on a corner lot (at an intersection), the maximum value of a grant shall be 50% of eligible costs to a maximum of \$12,500, provided the façade improvement addresses both street-facing façades. Properties that back onto municipal property (i.e. parking lot, alley way) will also be eligible for 50% of eligible costs to a maximum of \$12,500.
- For all other properties, the maximum grant shall be 50% of eligible costs, to a maximum of \$10,000.

Further, the services of an architect, qualified designer, or heritage professional shall be a maximum of 20% of the value of the grant

#### 3.1.1.6 Payment of Grant

The grant shall be paid only upon completion of the project, to the satisfaction of the Plan's Administrator.

#### 3.1.1.7 Program Eligibility Criteria

The policies of Section 3.2 – General Eligibility Criteria apply.

#### 3.1.1.8 Design Eligibility Criteria

To be considered eligible, projects shall comply with the following design requirements, as may be applicable, as referenced from the Design Guidelines:

- **Façade articulation/composition** is to be in accordance with Sections 3.4 (Façade Articulation) and 3.5 (Façade Composition). As much as possible, concealed elements are to be reintroduced. Original materials and architectural elements are to be restored.
- **Building materials** shall be in accordance with Section 3.8 – Materials. In no case will synthetic siding, mirrored/tinted glass panels, unadorned concrete block, textured stucco or decorative marble/granite tiles except as an accent. In no case shall a project involve the removal of historic building materials unless they are beyond repair.
- **Cleaning and other treatments** are to utilize techniques that will not damage the building materials, in accordance with Section 3.4 – Façade Articulation.
- **Painting and colour schemes** should utilize a heritage palette of paint colours.
- **Windows and doors** shall be in

accordance with Section 3.6 – Windows and Doors. Additionally, Section 3.4 – Façade Articulation contains applicable guidelines for windows.

- **Awnings** shall be in accordance with Section 3.10 – Awnings. Proponents are encouraged to incorporate awnings into their project design where it is considered appropriate.

## 3.1.2 Signage Improvement Grant

### 3.1.2.1 Purpose

The purpose of the signage improvement grant is to encourage improvements to building signage, in a manner that is aesthetically appealing, pedestrian-scaled, and not designed for motor vehicle traffic.

### 3.1.2.2 Eligible Properties

All commercial uses in the currently designated Community Improvement Project Area are eligible for the signage improvement grant.

### 3.1.2.3 Authority

The authority for administering this grant program is consistent with Section 28(7) of the *Planning Act*, and conforms to the County of Brant's Official Plan CIP policies.

### 3.1.2.4 Eligible Costs

The potential grant value shall be calculated based on the estimated value of any eligible costs, which may include:

- Repair, restoration or improvement to existing historic signage;
- Installation of new signage or replacement of signage;
- Costs associated with the removal of signage which does not comply with the Design Criteria of this Plan, provided there is a new sign installed in accordance with this Plan; and
- Costs for professional design/architectural services to design the sign.

### 3.1.2.5 Grant Value

The maximum value of a grant shall be 50% of eligible costs to a maximum of \$3,000.

The services of a professional design/architectural firm to design signage shall be a maximum of 20% of the value of the grant.

### 3.1.2.6 Payment of Grant

The grant shall be paid only upon completion of the project, to the satisfaction of the Administrator.

### 3.1.2.7 Program Eligibility Criteria

The policies of Section 3.2 – General Eligibility Criteria apply.

### 3.1.2.8 Design Eligibility Criteria

To be considered eligible, projects shall be in compliance with the following design requirements, as may be applicable, in the Design Guidelines:

- **Relationship to Sign By-law:** In accordance with By-law 36-18, applicants for incentives under this Plan are not required to comply with the Sign By-law, but will be subject to the sign-related guidelines identified below.
- **Signage is to be in accordance with Section 4.0 – General Signage Guidelines**, as applicable to the proposal. At a minimum, signage is to be limited to within the sign band and may be applied to an awning as a permanent element (Section 4.3). **Design and materials** are to be in accordance with Section 4.4. **Discouraged sign types** are outlined in Section 4.6. **Overhanging signs** may also be appropriate, subject to required permits.



For those applicants who do not apply through the CIP program, the County's Sign By-law still applies.

- **Signage shall also be consistent with the principles of accessible and age-friendly design.** Lettering should utilize large fonts which are appropriate for the size of the sign. Colours should be highly contrasting, with dark lettering on light backgrounds or light lettering on darker backgrounds. Complementary colours and analogous colours for both the background and the lettering should be avoided. Raised lettering is encouraged. If highly graphical or stylized signage is used in the principal sign, there should be a secondary sign with plain, clear lettering (such as lettering on the window or door).
- **Signage lighting shall be in accordance with Section 4.5 and Section 3.9.** In no case will backlit or neon signs be eligible. Proponents will be encouraged to incorporate external lighting to their signage, although ambient lighting may be sufficient for some signage types.
- **Secondary signs** may be used in accordance with Section 4.3. Window signs may be included, provided they are limited to 25% of the window size and do not block views into the store. Portable signs may be used provided they are of a traditional quality construction and not plastic marker board.

### 3.1.3 Downtown Housing Improvement Grant

#### 3.1.3.1 Purpose

The purpose of the Downtown Housing improvement grant is to encourage the improvement of residential units in mixed use buildings. This program is intended to create a mix of housing options in the Downtown area and increase the supply of residential units in the County of Brant. This program is subject to the availability of suitable services on-site to permit the improvement or development of residential units.

#### 3.1.3.2 Eligible Properties

Only buildings in the Community Improvement Project Area shall be eligible for this grant. Further, the ground floor of the building must be used for non-residential uses (commercial in accordance with the County's Zoning By-Law).

#### 3.1.3.3 Authority

The authority for administering this grant program is consistent with Section 28(7) of the *Planning Act*, and conforms to the County of Brant's Official Plan CIP policies..

#### 3.1.3.4 Eligible Costs

The potential grant value shall be calculated based on the estimated value of any eligible costs, which may include:

- Any works in existing residential unit(s) which bring the unit(s) into compliance with the Ontario BuildingCode; and
- Costs for the services of a professional engineer or architect as may be required in association with the improvements noted above.

#### **3.1.3.5 Grant Value**

The maximum value of a grant shall be 50% of eligible costs to a maximum of \$10,000 per residential unit, whichever is less. A maximum of three (3) units shall be eligible per property, leading to a maximum potential total grant of up to \$30,000 per property.

#### **3.1.3.6 Payment of Grant**

The grant shall be paid only upon completion of the project, to the satisfaction of the Administrator.

#### **3.1.3.7 Program Eligibility Criteria**

The policies of Section 3.2 – General Eligibility Criteria apply.

#### **3.1.3.8 Design Eligibility Criteria**

The Downtown Housing Improvement Grant principally relates to the interior use of the building, so design eligibility criteria are not specified for this grant program. Applicants will be encouraged to make façade improvements as part of their project, and may be eligible for an additional grant under the façade improvement grant program, provided the project complies with all eligibility requirements and design eligibility criteria outlined for that grant program.

### **3.1.4 Property and Private Parking Area Improvement Grant**

#### **3.1.4.1 Purpose**

The purpose of the property and private parking area improvement grant is to encourage landscaping and promote the use of private parking areas in the Downtown area as a source of parking, and reduce the strain on municipal parking lots. The grant also encourages sidewalk cafés to bring activity to the street.

#### **3.1.4.2 Eligible Properties**

All commercial, institutional and mixed-use properties in the currently designated community improvement project area are eligible.

#### **3.1.4.3 Authority**

The authority for administering this grant program is consistent with Section 28(7) of the *Planning Act*, and conforms to the County of Brant's Official Plan CIP policies.

#### **3.1.4.4 Eligible Costs**

The potential grant value shall be calculated based on the estimated value of any eligible costs, which may include:

- Landscaping improvements associated with any side yard or rear yard parking lot, to buffer the sidewalk from the parking area;
- Installation or improvements to permanent outdoor seating areas and sidewalk cafés, including fencing and landscaping, Non-permanent and moveable

elements of an outdoor café area will not be considered an eligible cost;

- Improvements to existing parking surfaces, including paving with an improved material, curbing, repainting, lighting, and signage. For clarity, repaving of a parking area with the same material and recycled asphalt shall not be an eligible cost. Eligible works must represent an improvement over existing conditions and not merely a life cycle replacement. Further, only side and rear yard parking areas shall be eligible;
- Improvements to active transportation improvements such as pedestrian connections, walkways and designated bicycle parking areas; and
- Costs for the services of a professional engineer, planner or landscape architect as may be required in association with the improvements noted above.

#### 3.1.4.5 Grant Value

The maximum value of a grant shall be a maximum of 50% of eligible costs to a maximum of \$5,000.

#### 3.1.4.6 Payment of Grant

The grant shall be paid only upon completion of the project, to the satisfaction of the Administrator.

#### 3.1.4.7 Program Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible for grants related to parking area improvements, the parking area must be made available by the property owner for public parking during evenings and weekends or all hours, as indicated through signage installed and maintained on the site.

The policies of Section 3.2 – General Eligibility Criteria apply.

#### 3.1.4.8 Design Eligibility Criteria

Improvements made under this Grant program shall be in accordance with the following requirements:

- **Sidewalk cafés/outdoor patios** should generally be enclosed by a decorative iron fence. The use of landscaping, hanging planters and other features is encouraged to further buffer and define the sidewalk café/outdoor patio.
- **Parking area improvements and landscaping will be in accordance with Section 3.3 of the Design Guidelines.** Planning and Building Application Fee Grants

### 3.1.5 Planning and Building Application Fee Grants

#### 3.1.5.1 Purpose

Planning application and building permit fees may pose a barrier to private property investment where these applications are required.

#### 3.1.5.2 Eligible Properties

Any property in the community improvement project area is eligible for this grant. However, the grant must be in relation to an existing or proposed commercial, institutional, mixed-use or multi-unit residential (at least four units) project.

#### 3.1.5.3 Authority

The authority for administering this grant program is consistent with Section 28(7) of the *Planning Act*, and conforms to the County of Brant's Official Plan CIP policies.

#### 3.1.5.4 Eligible Costs

The potential grant value shall be calculated based on the estimated value of any eligible costs, which may include:

- Any application which meets the goals and objectives of the Downtown St. George CIP and requires a building permit, site plan application, planning act application, site alteration permit, or encroachment agreement.
- Professional services by an engineer, architect, qualified designer and/or planner. As well any costs associated with the creation and registering of an encroachment agreement including legal expenses.

#### 3.1.5.5 Grant Value

The maximum value of the grant shall be \$10,000 or 100% of the value of the County's required building permit, Development Charges engineering, and/or planning application fees which are specifically related to the proposed improvements (Official Plan Amendment, Zoning By-law Amendment, Minor Variance, Encroachment Fees, Public Works Permit, Site Alteration Permit or Site Plan), whichever is less.

For Professional services the maximum grant shall be 50% of eligible costs, to a maximum of \$10,000.

#### 3.1.5.6 Payment of Grant

The grant shall be paid only upon completion of the project, to the satisfaction of the Administrator. The applicant will be responsible for paying the full value of any planning and building application fees. The grant is issued as a rebate for the fees.

#### 3.1.5.7 Program Eligibility Criteria

The policies of Section 3.2 – General Eligibility Criteria apply.

#### 3.1.5.8 Design Eligibility Criteria

This grant program could relate to a broad range of different improvements, including infill (new development), redevelopment, building additions, property conversions or site planning (e.g., reconfiguration of parking areas). Accordingly, depending on the proposed improvements, the following design guidelines will be applicable:

- **Building setbacks and setbacks** will be in accordance with Section 3.2 – Setbacks and setbacks.
- **Building height** shall be in accordance with Section 3.1. In no case will 1 storey buildings be eligible. This Plan encourages the development of 2-3 storey buildings.
- **Façades** will be in accordance with Section 3.4 – Façade Articulation and Section 3.5 – Façade Composition, as applicable to new buildings. **Windows and doors** will be in accordance with Section 3.6, as applicable to new buildings.
- **Roofs** for new buildings will be in accordance with Section 3.7 – Roofs.
- **Building materials and colours** will be in accordance with Section 3.8 – Materials as applicable for new buildings.

- **Awnings**, where proposed, will be in accordance with Section 3.10 - Awnings.
- **Signage** as part of new buildings will be in accordance with Section 4.0 – Signage Guidelines.
- Parking area improvements and landscaping will be in accordance with the design requirements for **parking area improvements** and **landscape buffers** in Section 3.3.

### 3.1.6 Adaptive Commercial Reuse Grant

#### 3.1.6.1 Purpose

The adaptive commercial reuse grant is intended to help assist in the conversion of non-commercial buildings for commercial purposes, and the conversion of existing commercial space to other commercial uses. This grant can help promote the use of vacant spaces which are limited by structural or other Ontario Building Code compliance issues and the beautification of properties which are being converted. This grant is intended to cover required improvements to meet the Ontario Building Code, where an owner/tenant proposes to convert from a commercial or non-commercial use to a different commercial use. The intent of the program is to provide flexibility and encourage the continued use of commercial spaces in the downtown area. Eligibility for this program will be subject to the ability to provide suitable water and sewage services.

#### 3.1.6.2 Eligible Properties

Any property in the community improvement project area is eligible for this grant. However, this program is only applicable to existing commercial uses (which are proposed for conversion to another commercial use) or other non-commercial uses which are proposed for conversion to a commercial use. Major additions to a commercial or mixed-use property, involving an increase of at least 25% of the gross floor area of the building may also be considered eligible.

#### 3.1.6.3 Authority

The authority for administering this grant program is consistent with Section 28(7) of the *Planning Act*, and conforms to the County of Brant's Official Plan CIP policies.



#### 3.1.6.4 Eligible Costs

The potential grant value shall be calculated based on the estimated value of any eligible costs, which may include:

- Upgrades to plumbing to comply with the Ontario Building Code;
- Upgrades for insulation, doors, windows, and walls to comply with fire protection standards;
- Installation of upgraded fire protection system elements (e.g., required signage, alarms/detectors, sprinkler systems);
- Installation of upgraded or new permanent ventilation systems as may be required for certain uses (e.g., restaurants)
- Interior improvements related to restoration of Heritage designated or identified properties.
- Upgrades to electrical systems and wiring to comply with the Ontario Building Code;
- Repair of roof leaks or plumbing system leaks and measures to prevent future leaks; and,
- Construction or improvement of stairs or railings to meet Ontario Building Code.
- Major additions to a commercial or mixed-use property, involving an increase of at least 25% of the gross floor area of the building may also be considered eligible.

For clarity, the eligible costs will not include:

- Non-permanent or moveable fixtures used by the business, such as appliances, furnishings, interior signage, and lighting fixtures;
- Decorative and finishing elements and materials, such as painting, finished flooring,

drywall, shelving,

counters/bars, and similar elements;

- Replacement or repair of roof shingles;
- Lifecycle replacements of aged building components – the proposed improvements must represent an upgrade to meet a higher standard of the Ontario Building Code; and,
- Replacement of any elements that already meet the Ontario Building Code.

#### 3.1.6.5 Grant Value

The maximum value of the grant shall be \$15,000 or 50% of eligible costs, whichever is less.

#### 3.1.6.6 Payment of Grant

The grant will be paid as a single payment upon completion of the improvements, to the satisfaction of the Administrator.

#### 3.1.6.7 Program Eligibility Criteria

The policies of Section 3.2 – General Eligibility Criteria apply.

#### 3.1.6.8 Design Eligibility Criteria

There are no applicable design eligibility criteria, since this grant program focuses on Building Code-related improvements. However, applicants shall be encouraged to make façade and signage improvements (as may be applicable) in conjunction with the proposed improvements, and there may be opportunity to obtain a separate grant in association with those exterior enhancements.

### 3.1.7 Tax Increment Equivalent Grant

#### 3.1.7.1 Purpose

A tax increment equivalent grant is intended to encourage the development and redevelopment of properties where there will be a significant increase in property taxes as a result of the development or redevelopment project. The program helps to reduce tax increases as a barrier to property investment and help make development and redevelopment in the core as attractive as a greenfield development opportunity. Eligibility for this program will be subject to the ability to provide suitable water and sewage services.

#### 3.1.7.2 Eligible Properties

Any property in the community improvement project area is eligible for this grant. However, the grant must be in relation to a proposed commercial, institutional, mixed-use or multi-unit residential (at least four units) project.

#### 3.1.7.3 Authority

The authority for administering this grant program is consistent with Section 28(7) of the *Planning Act*, and conforms to the County of Brant's Official Plan CIP policies.

#### 3.1.7.4 Eligible Costs

The potential grant value shall be calculated based on the estimated value of any eligible costs, which may include:

- Development of a vacant property (infill) for commercial, office, mixed-uses, institutional uses or multi-residential uses (at least three units);
- Redevelopment of a property for commercial, office, mixed-uses, institutional uses or multi-residential uses (at least three units);
- Major additions to a commercial or mixed use property, involving an increase of at least 25% of the gross floor area of the building;

- Infrastructure work including the improvement or reconstruction of existing on-site public infrastructure (water services, sanitary and storm sewers);
- Structural rehabilitation works;
- Major improvements to parking areas, such as the re-planning or reconfiguration of parking areas which requires a site plan, minor variance, rezoning and/or building permit; and
- Professional services by an engineer, architect, and/or planner.

#### 3.1.7.5 Grant Value

The grant value shall be a percentage of the municipal tax increase which results from the improvements to the property (i.e., the tax increment). The grant will be paid to the owner each year for a maximum of 10 years or less, at the discretion of the Review Committee. In year one, the value of the grant may equal up to 100% of the tax increment. In subsequent years, the value of the grant shall decrease until it reaches 0% of the tax increment. In no case shall the total value of all grants issued over the grant period exceed 50% of the eligible costs of the project. A payment period of 10 years shall be the maximum with the grants being progressively reduced over the grant period.

#### 3.1.7.6 Payment of Grant

The grant shall be paid only upon completion of the project, to the satisfaction of the Administrator. The applicant will be responsible for paying the full value of property taxes in any given year. The grants shall be issued annually upon full payment of property taxes.

#### 3.1.7.7 Program Eligibility Criteria

The policies of Section 3.2 – General Eligibility Criteria apply, in addition to the following specific criteria:

- This program anticipates various forms of development, which will be subject to permissions under the Official Plan, Zoning By-law, and potentially a permit from the Conservation Authority. This program is not intended to indicate that uses or structures not permitted under policy and zoning is permitted.
- To be eligible, the proposed development or redevelopment project must result in a

significant increase in the municipal property taxes. Applicants may be required to submit a business plan and an estimate of the potential amount of the tax increment, based on current assessment values and the anticipated value of the investment.

- This grant program shall not be combined with any other grant program outlined in this Plan. However, applicants may rescind their application for the Tax Increment Equivalent Grant and re-apply for other grants under this Plan, as may be applicable.
- If an eligible applicant is approved for the Tax Increment Equivalent Grant, and if the subject property is sold, in whole or in part, before the original grant period lapses, the original owner may not be entitled to receive the remaining grant payments, in accordance with the terms of the program agreement. The payments are also non-transferrable to the new owner unless specifically stipulated as part of the Financial Incentives Program Agreement executed between the owner at the time the agreement was entered into with the Corporation of the County of Brant.

#### 3.1.7.8 Design Eligibility Criteria

This grant program could relate to a broad range of different improvements, including infill (new development), redevelopment, building additions, property conversions or site planning (e.g., reconfiguration of parking areas). Accordingly, depending on the proposed improvements, the following design guidelines will be applicable:

- **Building setbacks and setbacks** will be in accordance with Section 3.2 – Setbacks and setbacks.
- **Building height** shall be in accordance with Section 3.1. In no case will 1 storey buildings be eligible. This Plan encourages the development of 2-3 storey buildings.
- **Façades** will be in accordance with Section 3.4 – Façade Articulation and Section 3.5 – Façade Composition, as applicable to new buildings. **Windows and doors** will be in accordance with Section 3.6, as applicable to new buildings.

- **Roofs** for new buildings will be in accordance with Section 3.7 – Roofs.
- **Building materials and colours** will be in accordance with Section 3.8 – Materials as applicable for new buildings.
- **Awnings**, where proposed, will be in accordance with Section 3.10 - Awnings.
- **Signage** as part of new buildings will be in accordance with Section 4.0 – Signage Guidelines.
- Parking area improvements and landscaping will be in accordance with the design requirements for **parking area improvements and landscape buffers** in Section 3.3.

### 3.1.8 Brownfield Study Grant

#### 3.1.8.1 Purpose

The risks and costs associated with brownfield rehabilitation are often key barriers to the rehabilitation and redevelopment of brownfield properties. Additionally, the lack of information on specific properties, and the reluctance of property owners to undertake and fund environmental studies, could be a barrier to investment due to uncertain level of risk. The Brownfield Feasibility Grant Program will promote the completion of studies with respect to environmental conditions of properties by owners that otherwise may not occur due to cost premiums associated with these assessments.

#### 3.1.8.2 Eligible Properties

Any property in the community improvement project area is eligible for this grant, provided there is a rationale or basis for suspecting the site is a potential brownfield property (i.e., based on the results of a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment).

#### 3.1.8.3 Authority

The authority for administering this grant program is consistent with Section 28(7) of the *Planning Act*, and conforms to the County of Brant's Official Plan CIP policies.

#### **3.1.8.4 Eligible Costs**

The potential grant value shall be calculated based on the estimated value of any eligible costs, which may include:

- Preparation of a Phase II Environmental Site Assessment;
- Preparation of a Phase III Environmental Site Assessment (i.e., detailed remediation plans as an outcome or extension of the Phase II Environmental Site Assessment);
- Preparation of a work plan for remediation of the site; and
- Preparation of a risk assessment plan.

#### **3.1.8.5 Grant Value**

The maximum value of the grant shall be 50% of eligible costs to a maximum of \$15,000.

#### **3.1.8.6 Payment of Grant**

The grant shall be paid only upon submission and the Review Committee's acceptance of the applicable study/report.

#### **3.1.8.7 Program Eligibility Criteria**

The policies of Section 3.2 – General Eligibility Criteria apply.

To be eligible, a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment must be completed and indicate that contamination is likely.

All environmental studies must be completed by a qualified person as defined in Section 168.1 of the *Environmental Protection Act*, Ontario Regulation 153/04, as amended.

#### **3.1.8.8 Design Eligibility Criteria**

An understanding of the proposed development or design may not be known at the time of application for the brownfield study grant. Accordingly, there are no design eligibility criteria for this grant program.

### **3.1.9 Brownfield Property Tax Assistance Program**

#### **3.1.9.1 Purpose**

The provision of tax assistance to brownfield property owners may encourage the remediation and redevelopment of these properties. Remediation of sites and their subsequent development may result in an increase in the assessed value of a property. The Brownfield Property Tax Assistance Program allows the County to cancel or defer all or a portion of municipal taxes during a set period. The Province offers a program in which the education portion of taxes may be cancelled or deferred, subject to approval by the Ministry of Finance.

#### **3.1.9.2 Eligible Properties**

Any property in the community improvement project area is eligible for this grant, provided remediation is required for development or redevelopment in accordance with the results of a Phase II or Phase III Environmental Site Assessment. Additionally, the development/redevelopment must be for commercial, mixed-use, institutional, or a multi-residential development with at least three units.

#### **3.1.9.3 Authority**

In accordance with Section 365.1 of the *Municipal Act*, the County may defer or cancel all or a portion of municipal taxes during the period in which the brownfield site is being cleaned up or redeveloped (the rehabilitation period and development period, as defined in the *Municipal Act*). The County may also apply to the Minister of Finance, on behalf of the property owner, to have the education portion of the property taxes deferred or cancelled.

#### **3.1.9.4 Eligible Costs**

The potential tax assistance shall be calculated based on the estimated value of any eligible costs, which may include:

- Preparation of a Phase III Environmental Site Assessment (i.e., detailed remediation plans as an outcome or extension of the Phase II Environmental Site Assessment), a work plan for remediation of the site and/or preparation of a risk assessment plan, unless such cost was included as an eligible cost under the Brownfield Study Grant program previously issued for the property;
- Environmental consultant fees or property insurance during the remediation period; and
- The costs of environmental remediation, including costs for preparing the Record of Site Condition; costs for demolition, costs for removing and disposing of contaminated soil and materials; costs for placing clean fill and grading; installing, maintaining, monitoring or operating environmental or engineering works as required in accordance with the Phase III Environmental Site Assessment or Risk Assessment Plan.

#### **3.1.9.5 Value of Tax Assistance**

The County may pass by-laws to provide a deferral or cancellation of all or a part of the municipal portion of taxes on a brownfield site during the Rehabilitation Period and Development Period, as defined in Section 365.1(1) of the *Municipal Act*. The total value of the tax assistance will not exceed the total eligible costs, which are defined in the eligibility requirements above. The property tax



assistance may cover up to 100% of the municipal property taxes.

The value and duration of the tax assistance will be considered on a case-by-case basis and in accordance with the *Municipal Act*, and outlined in the implementing By-law.

Prior to passing the by-law approving the tax assistance, County staff will be required to notify the Ministry of Finance. Within 30 days of passing the by-law, County staff will also be required to notify the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the Minister of Finance.

County staff may apply for Provincial Tax Assistance, on behalf of the owner, to cancel or freeze all or a portion of the education portion of property taxes (i.e., the Ontario Brownfields Financial Tax Incentive Program). The application will need to be approved by the Minister of Finance, and may be subject to a different timeline than the approved municipal tax assistance. The County must be offering municipal tax assistance in order for the owner to be eligible for Provincial tax assistance. An application to the Ministry of Finance to offer educational tax assistance must be made and approved prior to passing the tax assistance by-law. The matching Provincial tax assistance will generally be similar to the municipal tax assistance (e.g., if only 50% of the municipal taxes are cancelled, then likely only 50% of the education portion will be cancelled).

#### 3.1.9.6 Payment

The terms and timing of tax assistance shall be as outlined in the by-law, prepared in accordance with the *Municipal Act*. The program is only a cancellation or deferral of taxes, and is not paid as a grant.

#### 3.1.9.7 Program Eligibility Criteria

In no case shall the total amount of tax assistance exceed 50% of the total calculated eligible costs. The Province may stipulate different eligible costs for the educational portion if pursued by the County.

#### 3.1.9.8 Design Eligibility Criteria

This program could relate to a broad range of different improvements, including new development), redevelopment, building additions, property conversions or site planning (e.g., reconfiguration of parking areas). Accordingly, depending on the proposed improvements, the following design guidelines will be applicable and may be incorporated into the implementing tax assistance by-law as conditions:

- **Building setbacks and stepbacks** will be in accordance with Section 3.2 – Setbacks and stepbacks.
- **Building height** shall be in accordance with Section 3.1. In no case will 1 storey buildings be eligible. This Plan encourages the development of 2-3 storey buildings.
- **Façades** will be in accordance with Section 3.4 – Façade Articulation and Section 3.5 – Façade Composition, as applicable to new buildings. **Windows and doors** will be in accordance with Section 3.6, as applicable to new buildings.
- **Roofs** for new buildings will be in accordance with Section 3.7 – Roofs.
- **Building materials and colours** will be in accordance with Section 3.8 – Materials as applicable for new buildings.
- **Awnings**, where proposed, will be in accordance with Section 3.10 - Awnings.

- **Signage** as part of new buildings will be in accordance with Section 4.0 – Signage Guidelines.
- Parking area improvements and landscaping will be in accordance with the design requirements for **parking area improvements** and **landscape buffers** in Section 3.3.

## 3.2 GENERAL ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

To be eligible, all applications for financial incentives shall comply with the following general eligibility criteria:

1. The subject property shall not have outstanding tax arrears.
2. In no case will a completed project or a project underway be considered for a grant. Construction may only begin after application approval and the execution of the financial incentive program agreement, in accordance with the application process (Section 3.3.4).
3. The subject property shall be located within the currently designated Community Improvement Project Area (refer to Section 6.2).
4. Where an applicant is a tenant, the authorization and consent of the owner shall be required as part of the application form.
5. Where a subject property is designated under the *Ontario Heritage Act*, any planned improvements shall be consistent with the reasons for designation as set out in the by-law designating the property.
6. Projects shall be considered in the opinion of the Administrator and Review Committee to represent an improvement in quality, aesthetics, durability and/or restoration to historical authenticity, and not merely a life cycle replacement of what is existing.
7. At its sole discretion, the Review Committee may decline an application where the total calculated grant would be less than \$500.00.
8. The application shall conform to the Official Plan, Zoning By-law, and all other by-laws of

the County, any permit from the Grand River Conservation Authority, and all laws and regulations of the Province of Ontario, and the Government of Canada, as may be applicable to the project.

9. Applicants may be able to apply for more than one grant. All grant programs may be combined, except that the tax increment equivalent grant shall not be combined with any other program.
10. Applicants shall disclose other funding and incentives being received for the project as part of the application for financial incentives. At its sole discretion, the Review Committee may deduct any other grants or incentives from the eligible grant amount.
11. It is recognized that other approvals may be required in relation to a community improvement project. Applicants may apply for financial incentives prior to receiving other required approvals (e.g., zoning, site plan, permit from the Conservation Authority, etc.). However, applicants will need to be aware of the risk that not receiving other approvals may mean that a grant may not be paid. Where approvals are required, the receipt of required approvals may be added by the Administrator as conditions for grant payment in the financial incentive program agreement.
12. All development will be subject to meeting the requirements of the Official Plan, the Zoning By-law, and a permit from the Conservation Authority as may be required. This Plan does not exempt any applicant from receiving other required approvals. This Plan shall not be construed as to indicate land use or development permissions.
13. In no case will the value of all grants exceed 50% of the total eligible costs.

### 3.3 ADMINISTRATION OF THE FINANCIAL INCENTIVE PROGRAMS

#### 3.3.1 Designation of the Administrator and Review Committee

1. Upon implementation of this Plan, Council shall appoint an **Administrator** to manage the day-to-day responsibilities of this Plan. The responsibilities of the Administrator shall be as outlined in this Plan, including: meeting with potential applicants for financial incentives; coordinating applications with the Review Committee and/or Council; and fulfilling the responsibilities of the Plan Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy (Section 6.4) and Marketing the Plan (Section 6.5). Generally, the Administrator should be a full-time staff member at the County of Brant to ensure consistent customer service and the maintenance of strong relationships with the business community. This Administrator role will be fulfilled by the Director of Economic Development and Tourism, or designate.
2. By default, Council is the authority who will make decisions on financial incentive applications. However, Council may appoint a **Review Committee** to make decisions on applications for financial incentives, as outlined in Section 3.3.3. The Review Committee may consist of any committee selected by Council upon the recommendation of the Administrator and County staff. Appointment of the Review Committee should consider their ability to expediently make decisions on applications and ensuring that they have suitable expertise. Members of the Review Committee should be impartial and be able to

interpret and implement this Plan and the Downtown St. George Design Guidelines. Members of the Review Committee could include, but are not limited to:

- a) Representation from County staff (Economic Development and Tourism Development Services including Planning and Building, PublicWorks, as well as representation from Finance); and/or
- b) A committee appointed by Council consisting of local residents, business owners, and/or individuals with expertise in the fields of architecture, urban design, urban planning, economic development, and/or community revitalization.

### 3.3.2 Financial Incentives Program Budget

1. The County shall be responsible for funding the financial incentive programs.
2. Council shall establish an annual budget for financial incentive programs as part of its annual budgeting process. This Plan does not specify the amount of the budget, as it may be subject to availability of funding and other priorities of Council.
3. Any unused portion of the budget may be carried forward to the following year.
4. At its sole discretion, and in consideration of recommendations by the Administrator through the Plan Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy (Section 6.4), Council may allocate portions of the budget to individual financial incentive programs. Further, Council may choose to allocate no funding to certain programs.

### 3.3.3 Application Intake

1. By default, the process for accepting applications is considered to be an **open, year-round process**. When there is funding available for financial incentives, the Administrator will accept applications at any time during the year, and the Administrator and Review Committee will process and make decisions on applications in accordance with the process outlined in Section 3.3.4. Under this process, funding becomes available on a “first-come, first-served” basis.
2. Council, in consideration of a recommendation by the Administrator, may opt to implement an **application intake window process**. Under this application process, the Administrator will only accept financial incentive applications during one or more specified timeframe(s) during the year, with a hard deadline for accepting applications. Council and/or the Review Committee will hear applications all at once. Should there be more approved applications than there is funding available, there will be a need to prioritize applications. The prioritization of applications will be at the sole discretion of Council and/or the Review Committee, in consideration of the following prioritization criteria:
  - a) Applications related to designated heritage buildings under the *Ontario Heritage Act* may be considered as the first priority.
  - b) Buildings listed on the municipal heritage register may be considered the second priority.
  - c) Applications related to corner lot properties may be considered as the third priority.
  - d) Finally, the order in which the applications were received during the intake window

period may be considered as a fourth priority.

### 3.3.4 Application Process

1. Generally, applicants shall be required to meet with the Administrator to discuss their potential improvement project before an application will be accepted. The Administrator will confirm application requirements, eligibility, process and timing and will recommend design considerations.
2. An applicant will submit a completed application form along with any materials required by the Administrator in consultation with the Review Committee. The types of required supporting materials will depend on the proposed project and the grant(s) being applied for. Supporting materials may include:
  - a) Drawings/elevations/plans/sketches of the proposed improvements;
  - b) Current photos of the property;
  - c) A minimum of two quotes to complete the work, except where the work is highly specialized in nature, is of a low value (i.e., under \$1,000), or there is another acceptable reason for not having at least two quotes, at the discretion of the Administrator;
  - d) Proof that the project complies with zoning/Official Plan and/or any other Provincial, Conservation Authority or Federal requirements as may be applicable;
  - e) Historical photos or other historical information about the property, as may be available (may be supplemented by the Administrator in consultation with other County staff);
  - f) A completed Phase I or Phase II Environmental Site assessment (as may be required for the Brownfield Study Grant or the Brownfield Property Tax Assistance Program);
  - g) A project feasibility plan/pro forma as may be required in relation to a tax increment equivalent grant or the Brownfield Property Tax Assistance Program; and/or
  - h) A brownfield remediation work plan including description of remediation proposed and timelines for undertaking remediation and development is required for the Brownfield Property Tax Assistance Program.
3. The Administrator will review the application for completeness and eligibility, and inform the applicant that the application is considered “complete”. If the application is incomplete, the Administrator will inform the applicant of how to complete the application.
4. If the application is deemed complete, the Administrator will circulate the application to Council/Review Committee for review.
5. Council/Review Committee will meet to discuss and make a decision on the application. If the application is refused, it will be returned to the applicant with the reasons for refusal. The Applicant will be able to resubmit their application once they have addressed the reasons for refusal. Where the Review Committee is not Council, the Applicant will have the alternative option of appealing the Review Committee’s decision to Council for reconsideration.
6. If the application is approved, the Administrator will prepare and execute a financial incentive program agreement, which requires signature by the County and the applicant. The financial incentive program agreement will outline the terms and payment



of the grant. The agreement also represents an important tool to ensure that the applicant is carrying out their project in accordance with their approved application.

7. The applicant may begin construction. Once complete, the applicant must inform the Administrator.
8. The Administrator may inspect the project to ensure compliance with the financial incentive program agreement. Alternatively, the Administrator may request photos. If the completed project does not comply with the Agreement, the Review Committee, at its sole discretion, may choose to not make payment.
9. If the Administrator is satisfied the Applicant has completed the project in accordance with the financial incentive program agreement, payment of the grant will be made in accordance with the terms and/or schedule outlined in the financial incentive program agreement.

## 4 DOWNTOWN ST. GEORGE PARKING STRATEGY

integrate some of the parking recommendations in the Streetscape Master Plan.

Residents, business owners, and stakeholders have suggested that parking supply may be constrained in the core area of Downtown St. George. An improvement program aimed at conducting a parking study was ranked highest amongst those in attendance at the workshop held on March 28, 2018, and was a commonly raised concern throughout the workshop.

Based on this, and observations by WSP staff, it is recommended that a parking study be conducted for Downtown St. George. The supply issue may have impacts on the ability for residents and tourists to park, while limiting the potential for anticipated new growth in the core area. Growth in St. George and across Brant County could create new demand for business and commercial services in the core, and there is a need to ensure there is an appropriate long-term parking strategy in place which will meet the needs of current and future business owners.

The purpose of this study would be to explore opportunities to better utilize the existing supply of parking spaces, while identifying opportunities for parking expansion or better utilization within the core area. It will be important that this study consider both real and perceived parking supply issues. Should there be a future need to acquire land for additional parking areas, this Plan enables land acquisition and improvement in accordance with Section 28 of the *Planning Act*. The Study may be conducted prior to or concurrently with the Streetscape Master Plan recommended in Section 5 of this Plan, as there would be opportunities to

## 5 MUNICIPAL LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

The County's primary function in this Plan is to fund and administer the financial incentive programs. However, these programs are limited to improvements on private property. To complement these programs and encourage revitalization, the County may lead projects and programs Burford to:

- Improve the public realm, including streetscapes and other public property elements;
- Acquire and improve land and buildings to advance the visions for the Downtown area; and
- Conduct additional supporting studies to achieve the visions.

Based upon consultation held in March 2018, the community has expressed strong support for needed streetscape and other public realm improvements. Further, based on the SWOT analysis (as included in the Background Report developed through the Community Improvement Plan Study for Burford and St. George), there are many potential opportunities for public realm improvements which will contribute to the overall revitalization of the community. This Plan therefore recommends and supports the completion of a Streetscape Master Plan for Downtown St. George. It is envisioned that the development of a Streetscape Master Plan will be conducted as a separate process, inclusive of consultation with residents, business owners as well as visitors, to build upon the consultation already conducted in association with the

development of this Community Improvement Plan.

The following objectives of the future Streetscape Master Plan are recommended:

1. Identify a well-coordinated plan for future streetscape improvements which complements the historic character of the community;
2. Where possible, improvements should be coordinated with any planned municipal-led infrastructure improvements, such as water, wastewater and transportation improvements, to ensure construction is completed in a coordinated fashion and minimizes impacts and disruption to the community;
3. Consider appropriate treatments and updates to sidewalks, lighting, programming, and pedestrian crossings;
4. Integrate pedestrian amenities, such as seating, planters and shade;
5. Consider the interface between the streetscape and operating businesses, with appropriate consideration given to facilitate temporary goods display as well as sidewalk café areas;
6. Identify and implement recommended public parking improvements, including improvements to existing parking areas, pedestrian connectivity and way-finding improvements;
7. Consider and implement improved pedestrian linkages, to ensure that new communities and existing neighbourhoods are well-connected to the Downtown;
8. Introduce bicycle parking and accessibility as appropriate;

9. Implement the principles of age-friendly community design;
10. Consider sustainable and energy, and water efficient solutions to lighting and landscape design;
11. Enhance and create new opportunities for public space and community gathering during events;
12. Enhance gateway areas, to create a clear sense of arrival into the Downtown and improve wayfinding for visitors;
13. Estimate costing and phasing for improvements; and
14. Address other issues and opportunities as may be identified.

## 6 IMPLEMENTATION

### 6.1 GENERAL

1. This Plan is intended to be implemented over a 10-year period. However, nothing shall prevent the implementation of this Plan beyond 10 years.
2. Once Council is satisfied that this Plan has been carried out, Council may dissolve the Community Improvement Project Area via by-law, rendering the Plan inoperative.
3. Nothing in this Plan shall exclude anyone from complying with any other policies, by-laws, laws or regulations by the County, the Province, the Government of Canada or any agency.

### 6.2 COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT PROJECT AREA

1. The Community Improvement Project Area is the area to which this Community Improvement Plan applies. No property is eligible for financial incentives if it is located outside the currently designated Community Improvement Project Area.
2. The Community Improvement Project Area is designated by a by-law of Council and is maintained separately from this Plan. In the event that Council wishes to modify the Community Improvement Project Area, Council would do so by passing a new Community Improvement Project Area By-law and replacing the current Community Improvement Project Area By-law.
3. For convenience purposes only, the Community Improvement Project Area, as

adopted at the time of completing this Plan, is attached to this Plan as Appendix 1. However, readers should consult with the County to ensure they are reviewing the latest Community Improvement Project Area, as designated under the most recent by-law.

4. This Plan is intended to focus on the revitalization and improvement of Downtown St. George. It is recognized that the precise geography of what constitutes “Downtown” may need to be redefined over time. Consideration to modify the Community Improvement Project Area should be made upon a review and evaluation of this Plan in accordance with the Plan Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy (Section 6.4). Modifications to the Community Improvement Project Area could occur due to the following circumstances:
  - a) The core area designation for St. George in the County’s Official Plan is expanded or contracted as a result of a review of the Official Plan;
  - b) There is a desire by Council to focus the Community Improvement Plan on a smaller area, to concentrate the benefits of the Plan and better utilize limited implementation resources; or
  - c) There is a desire by Council to expand the Community Improvement Plan’s impact on a larger area and encourage greater program uptake. However, in this circumstance, the applicability of the programs to areas outside the Downtown area will need to be examined. The programs herein are intended to be applicable to address the critical needs of Downtown St. George and may not be appropriately applied to other areas of the community.



## 6.3 IMPLEMENTATION OF DOWNTOWN ST. GEORGE DESIGN GUIDELINES

A key function of this Plan is that it is the principal vehicle for implementing the Downtown St. George Design Guidelines document. For clarity, the following policies shall apply:

1. The Downtown St. George Design Guidelines are referenced this Plan as eligibility criteria for the financial incentives. The applicable design guidelines are referenced as Design Eligibility Requirements for each of the financial incentive programs, under Section 3.1.
2. The Downtown St. George Design Guidelines shall form an integral component of this Plan and shall be implemented and maintained through the life of this Plan. The Administrator shall be responsible for maintaining a copy of the Downtown St. George Design Guidelines and providing it to applicants for financial incentive programs for reference.
3. The application and interpretation of the guidelines contained in the Downtown St. George Design Guidelines shall rest with the Review Committee to interpret the Plan and its applicability to each application for financial incentives, on a case-by-case basis. It is recognized that not all the guidelines may apply, depending on the nature of the application. Further, the Review Committee will have discretion to deem certain guidelines to be unreasonable for the applicant to implement, depending on the specific circumstances of the application.
4. Applicants are responsible for understanding the applicability of the Downtown St. George Design Guidelines to their specific proposed project. Failure to implement the guidelines may result in the refusal of an application, at the discretion of the Review Committee in accordance with Section 6.2.3 above.
5. The Downtown St. George Design Guidelines also speak to principles for improving the public realm, such as streetscapes. These guidelines are implemented through Section 5.1, which gives consideration to implementing the Downtown St. George Design Guidelines as part of the development of a Streetscape Plan. It is the responsibility of the Administrator and Review Committee to ensure the Downtown St. George Design Guidelines are considered through the development and implementation of a Streetscape Plan.
6. Through implementation of the Downtown St. George Design Guidelines, the Review Committee may identify the need to make minor changes to the wording of certain guidelines contained in the Downtown St. George Design Guidelines. Accordingly, a review of the Design Guidelines may be initiated upon recommendation of the Administrator through the Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy (Section 6.4). The underlying principles and vision of the Guidelines document is not intended to change over the 10-year life of this Plan. A Review of the document should be limited to wording tweaks to improve the clarity and administration of the Guidelines.
7. For convenience purposes, the Downtown St. George Design Guidelines document is attached to this Plan as Appendix 2.

## 6.4 IMPLEMENTATION OF PARKING AND MUNICIPAL LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES

This Plan identifies strategies for improving vehicular parking (Section 4.0) as well as streetscape and public realm improvements (Section 5.0) in the Downtown Area. The following applies to the implementation of these programs:

1. The role of this Plan is to identify parking and public realm improvement needs which would benefit the revitalization of Downtown St. George. The implementation, timing and specific scope of these programs shall be at the discretion of Council and shall be subject to budget considerations.
2. This Plan enables the acquisition, clearance, preparation, improvement or disposition of land, buildings and structures in accordance with Sections 28(3) and 28(6) of the *Planning Act*, for the purposes of implementing these programs, as may be required.

## 6.5 PLAN MONITORING AND EVALUATION STRATEGY

The success of this Plan will depend on the implementation of a monitoring and evaluation strategy to ensure the programs are being utilized and that they are achieving their intended outcomes. The Administrator, in consultation with the Review Committee, will conduct an annual monitoring and review process as follows:

1. Upon implementation of this Plan, the Administrator shall establish a database for monitoring and reviewing applications. For each application, the Administrator should collect:
  - a) The type of project and the type of grant(s) being sought;
  - b) Value of the grant(s) being sought as well as the total value of construction;
  - c) Address, property, applicant and ownership information;
  - d) The names of contractor(s) and supplier(s), which can be used for future reference to interested applicants;
  - e) The type and quantity of improvements being made, as specific to the application (e.g., length of façade, number of signs, area of landscaping, number of parking spaces created/improved, number of trees planted, length of walkways created/improved, number of bicycle parking spaces created/improved, etc.);
  - f) Number of new residential units created or amount of non-residential floor area affected; and

g) Subjective information about the reasons for the application (i.e., is the Plan responsible for encouraging the project?).

adjustments to the Plan or the Community Improvement Project Area as an outcome of the review process. Table 6.1 summarizes which types of changes will require an amendment to this Plan.

2. Upon receipt of each application for a financial incentive, the Administrator will enter information about the application into the database. Further, the Administrator should endeavor to collect “before” photos of each subject property. Upon approval of each application, the Administrator should collect “after” photos of each project.

3. On a quarterly basis, the Administrator will report to Council on the successes and issues of the Plan, noting:

- a) The total value of grants issued and the total private investment made;
- b) The amount of private investment leveraged by the Plan;
- c) The total number of applications received and the total number of successful applications (total and for each program);
- d) Before and after photos of successful applications;
- e) Any unintended outcomes of the programs, and measures for preventing unintended outcomes in the future;
- f) Any recommended adjustments to the Community Improvement Plan or the Community Improvement Project Area as may be required;
- g) Progress on implementation of the Parking Strategy (Section 4.0) and the Municipal Leadership Strategy (section 5.0);
- h) Any recommended improvements to Plan administration or application processing; and
- i) Recommendations for funding grant programs, including whether additional funding could be required and which programs should be funded.

4. As noted, there may be a need to make

**Table 6.1 – Types of Modifications that Require an Amendment**

Type of Plan Modification	Requires an Amendment to this Plan?
Delete or add eligible costs to a financial incentive program	Yes
Modify, delete or add to the “eligible properties” or any other eligibility criteria within each incentive program, the general eligibility policies (Section 3.2) or other criteria	Yes
Permanently delete a financial incentive program	Yes
Add a new financial incentive program	Yes
Modify, delete or add to the vision, goals or objectives	Yes
Modify the Community Improvement Project Area	No (requires a new Community Improvement Project Area by-law)
Discontinue funding to any program, or discontinue funding to all programs in any given year	No
Allocate funding to certain programs in any given year	No
Delegate Council’s default authority for approving financial incentives to a committee or an individual	No

## 6.6 MARKETING THE PLAN

To be successful, the County will need to engage in on-going marketing of the Plan’s programs and encourage uptake. At a minimum, it is recommended that the Administrator lead the following activities:

1. A Community Improvement Plan brochure be prepared and made available for distribution (this may be integrated with educational programs for parking and property maintenance, as recommended by this Plan);
2. Public inquiries into the Plan are considered to be an important marketing opportunity. The Administrator should be responsive and informative when inquiries are made.
3. A dedicated webpage be established to provide information about the Plan, its implementation, contact information and availability of application forms; and
4. On an annual basis, the Administrator should communicate that the Plan’s budget has been refreshed through a distribution of flyers, a brochure, or a meeting with other stakeholders.

## 6.7 GLOSSARY OF TERMS

To assist in the interpretation of this Plan, the following terms are defined:

**Administrator** means the individual or individuals tasked with the responsibility to implement this Plan on a day-to-day basis. An administrator may participate as a member of the Review Committee or may be responsible for coordinating with the Review Committee.

**Applicant** means a property owner or tenant that has submitted an application for one or more financial incentives outlined in this Plan.

**Application** means the form required to be completed by an applicant for a financial incentive and may include supporting materials as required by the Administrator in consultation with the Review Committee.

**Community Improvement Project Area** means the area to which the Community Improvement Plan applies, designated by a by-law of Council and administered separately from this Plan. The reader should consult the County to confirm the current Community Improvement Project Area. For convenience purposes, the Community Improvement Project Area is included as Appendix 1 to this Plan.

**Council** means the Council of the Corporation of the County of Brant.

**County** means the Corporation of the County of Brant.

**Downtown St. George Design Guidelines** means the Downtown St. George Design Guidelines document, and referred to by Council for implementation in the Community Improvement Plan. The Downtown St. George Design Guidelines

are a companion document of this Plan, and this Plan makes frequent references to the document. For convenience purposes, the Downtown St. George Design Guidelines are included as Appendix 2 to this Plan.

**Financial Incentive Program Agreement** means an agreement executed between the County and a successful applicant for one or more financial incentive programs. The Agreement outlines the conditions for payment of the grant, as well as timeframes and the responsibilities of the County and the applicant.

**Mixed Use Building or Property** means the use of land or property for a combination of commercial, and residential uses. For the purposes of this Plan, this shall refer to a building with at least two storeys in which the ground floor is used for commercial uses and the upper storey(s) are used for commercial uses, offices or residential uses.

**Review Committee** means the group of persons delegated with the authority to review and make decisions on applications for incentives, and other responsibilities as indicated by this Plan. By default, Council makes decisions on financial incentives unless Council delegates the authority to a specified Review Committee.

**This Plan** means the Downtown St. George Community Improvement Plan.