

Village of South River

COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN

as adopted by By-law 41-2019

INTRODUCTION

1.1 <u>Community Improvement Plan (CIP)</u>

A Community Improvement Plan (CIP) is a tool that allows a municipality to direct funds and implements planning policy initiatives towards a specifically defined project area. Section 28 of the Planning Act provides the enabling legislation allowing municipalities to include policies in their Official Plan, enabling them to prepare a Community Improvement Plan. The CIP is intended to encourage rehabilitation initiatives and/or stimulate development. Once implemented, the plan allows municipalities to provide tax assistance, grants or loans to assist in the rehabilitation of lands and/or buildings within a CIP area.

1.2 Purpose

The purpose of this Community Improvement Plan is to provide programs that will assist with the strengthening and revitalization of the new and former CBD of the Village of South River. The types of programs could encourage such items as the improvement of facades, signs, lighting, landscaping of the area, introducing tax incentives for new and existing development, redevelopment of brown field sites and the development of new public buildings and attractions.

The CIP will be administered through the Clerk's Department, with Council being the decision maker.

1.3 Rationale

The Village of South River has recently seen a shift in commercial activity from its historic downtown area, Ottawa Avenue aka Central Business District (CBD) to that of Highway Number 124, formerly Highway No. 11. This is as a result of the relocation of the new Highway No. 11 by-pass. There has been a manifest decline in commercial activity along Ottawa Avenue particularly from the Ottawa Avenue/Hunter Street intersection east towards the railway tracks wherein higher density residential seems to be replacing the commercial uses. All this to say, Highway No. 124, formerly Highway No 11 seems to be the focus of commercial activity rather than Ottawa Avenue. As such the CBD has shifted from Ottawa Avenue to Highway No. 124 and a Mixed-Use designation replacing the former CBD along Ottawa Avenue. Potential for future development and success seems evident however incentive is needed to bring into fruition and to maintain the vision and needs of the community for their new CBD while at the same time assisting with the transition of the former CBD.

The main impetus for Council's decision to undertake a Community Improvement Project came as a result of a successful effort to attract funding from the Federal, Provincial, and private sectors working together. This economic development Initiative for Northern Ontario was used to construct and service with municipal water a new 8,500 sq. ft. public building in the new CBD. The primary purpose of this new building is now home to the Highlander Brew Company relocated from the east end of the Village. The move allowed this local business to double its production to meet national and international demand for its products. The building features community storefront areas and a common space available for tourism-related activities. Along with the existing commercial uses this new building is an anchor to maintain and achieve the commercial viability of the CBD.

A healthy vibrant downtown increases the economic health and quality of life in a community. A healthy CBD generates jobs, protects and retains property values and is a great location for new business to locate. A healthy CBD is the economic lifeline of a community. This Community Improvement Plan will allow the municipality to financially participate in the future too.

1.4 Goals and Objectives

The purpose of this Community Improvement Plan is to offer the property owners, tenants and developers within the project area the ability to pursue a wide range of incentives that support the strengthening, rehabilitation, improvement, construction and restoration of the buildings and uses found along Highway No. 124 and Ottawa Avenue. The Community Improvement Plan establishes a framework to implement incentive programs that will promote investment and achieve improvements in the quality of land-use in the Village of South River's new Downtown and Ottawa Avenue area.

The downtown is the place that gives people their first sense of community and leaves a lasting impression. Our downtowns are the face and life blood of a community and reflect the community's values. A community's heritage is celebrated in its downtown through its buildings that tell a story of the past and its values are celebrated in the downtown's present. It is particularly important to identify both the new and former CBD's in South River since both the new and old CBD represents both the Village's present and past community values. Both areas have a story to tell.

With the creation of this plan, South River is able to offer financial assistance to successful candidates that are within the project area and encourage the completion of their projects in accordance with South River's vision and development standards.

The goals of this Community Improvement Plan conform to the goals stated in the Village of South River Official Plan under Section 5.11. They can be summarized as:

 To develop a strong planning framework in order to maintain the Village of South River as a desirable place to live;

- To improve the appearance of the **Project Area**;
- To promote new development in the **Project Area**; and;
- To promote rehabilitation and capital improvement within the **Project Area.**

2.0 CIP PROJECT AREA DESCRIPTION

The Official Plan designates the entire geographical and political entity of the Village boundary as a Community Improvement Plan the Official Plan allows it to be broken down into specific areas.

The lands subject to the Community Improvement Plan are shown on Schedule "A" to the Village Official Plan and attached to this document. The area designated as Central Business District (CBD) and Mixed Use on Schedule "A" are the lands subject to this Community Improvement Plan. The permitted uses and performance standards for the community improvement area are identified in the Village of South River implementing zoning by-law 17-95, as amended.

The lands generally encompass the former downtown business core of the Town of South River bounded by Marie Street to the north, Ottawa Avenue to the south, the CNR to the east and Lincoln Avenue to the west. It also includes the new CBD which are generally bounded by Ottawa Avenue to the north, Machar Township boundary to the south, and lands abutting Highway Number 124 on both the east and west sides.

Although this is the primary focus Council will be willing to review applications from other commercially zoned properties which meet the CIP's criteria.

3.0 PLANNING POLICY

3.1 Planning Act

Section 28 of the Ontario Planning Act allows municipalities in their governing Official Plan to designate a Community Improvement Project Area and prepare a Community Improvement Plan to help improve such area. For the purpose of carrying out a Community Improvement Plan that has come into effect, the municipality may:

- (a) construct, repair, rehabilitate or improve buildings and sell, lease or otherwise dispose of any such buildings and the land appurtenant thereto (Planning Act, S.28,6. a);
- (b) sell, lease or otherwise dispose of any land acquired or held in its ownership (Planning Act, S.28,6. b);
- (c) acquire or hold land within the CIP area and clear, grade or otherwise prepare the land for community improvement (Planning Act, S.28,3);
- (d) provide grants or loans to owners of land or buildings to pay for the whole or part of any eligible cost of improving or rehabilitating such lands or buildings (Planning Act, S.28,7); and
- (e) provide or receive grants or loans between upper and lower-tier municipalities (Planning Act, S.28,7.2).

The aforementioned is allowed provided that all of the above actions are in accordance with the approved Community Improvement Plan.

After a by-law is passed designating an area a "Community Improvement Project Area", Council can adopt a Community Improvement Plan that gives the municipality the legislative basis to offer financial incentives notwithstanding certain statutory limitations in the Municipal Act.

3.2 Provincial Policy Statement (PPS)

In addition to Section 28 of the Planning Act which authorizes community improvement plans, there are other provincial interests related to intensification and redevelopment of properties. The PPS, issued under Section 3 of the Planning Act, provides policy direction on matters of Provincial interest related to land use planning. Section 1 of the PPS deals with "managing and directing land use to achieve efficient and resilient development and land use patterns" Specifically, Section 1.1.2 states the following:

"Sufficient land shall be made available to accommodate an appropriate range

and mix of land uses to meet projected needs for a time horizon of up to 20 years...

Within settlement areas, sufficient land shall be made available through intensification and redevelopment and, if necessary, designated growth areas..."

This CIP encourages and promotes a variety of financial incentives and programs to stimulate the redevelopment of a variety of uses within the "CBD's" and as such is consistent with the PPS.

Also, specifically Section 1.1.3 states:

"Settlement areas shall be the focus of growth and development, and their vitality and regeneration shall be promoted." Since South River is entirely an urban settlement area according to the PPS it is crucial that programs and incentives be established to ensure their vitality and regeneration.

Section 1.3.1 of the PPS further describes specifically how planning bodies shall promote economic development and competitiveness by:

- "a) providing for an appropriate mix and range of employment and institutional uses to meet long-term needs;
- b) providing opportunities for a diversified economic base, including maintaining a range and choice of suitable sites for employment uses which support a wide range of economic activities and ancillary uses, and take into account the needs of existing and future businesses;
- c) encouraging compact, mixed-use development that incorporates compatible employment uses to support liveable and resilient communities; and
- d) ensuring the necessary infrastructure is provided to support current and projected needs."

Promoting and encouraging a variety of land uses to locate and/or redevelop in the "CBD's" that promote the economic well-being through a number of financial incentives that should provide additional employment falls in-line with what the PPS purports.

Section 1.7.1 of the PPS further states that long-term economic prosperity should be supported by:

"a) promoting opportunities for economic development and community investmentreadiness;

- b) optimizing the long-term availability and use of land, resources, infrastructure, electricity generation facilities and transmission and distribution systems, and public service facilities;
- c) maintaining and, where possible, enhancing the vitality and viability of downtowns and main streets;
- d) encouraging a sense of place, by promoting well-designed built form and cultural planning, and by conserving features that help define character, including built heritage resources and cultural heritage landscapes;
- e) promoting the redevelopment of brownfield sites;
- f) providing for an efficient, cost-effective, reliable multimodal transportation system that is integrated with adjacent systems and those of other jurisdictions, and is appropriate to address projected needs to support the movement of goods and people;
- g) providing opportunities for sustainable tourism development;..."

Preparing a CIP for South River to promote, stimulate, encourage the redevelopment, revitalization and construction of the downtown and main street through financial incentives attracting and promoting economic activities in a tourism-oriented community reflects the vision and direction of the PPS.

3.3 <u>Village of South River Official Plan</u>

3.3.1 Basis and Goals of Official Plan

Section B (Basis) and C (Goals) of the Village Official Plan states the community vision regarding the social and economic welfare of South River. The following excerpts from Section B.4 and C.6 which state the following:

Section B.4

- 4. The Village economy is diversifying from resource-oriented industries to service and tourism. In order to improve the Village's position in the competition for development, the following economic measures will be stressed in the planning policies:
 - a) Taking maximum advantage of government funding programs;
 - b) Ensuring the provision of well situated and serviced industrial land;
 - c) Promoting the Village as an economically viable area to locate business or industry in.

6. To encourage and strengthen the municipal economy and the growth of local employment opportunities through the attraction of industry suitable for the Village

Since the area of the CIP covers the "CBD's" the aforementioned goals are specifically reinforced and strengthened in Section 1.6.1 which states:

1.6.1 The business functions of the core area of the Village of South River will be encouraged by promoting the expansion of retail, office, and public uses and by encouraging community improvements.

The Village Official Plan considers the economic well-being of their community to be a top priority. The preparation and implementation of a CIP will assist in the expansion and strengthening of the local economy through financial incentives all of which reflect the direction of the Official Plan.

3.3.2 Community Improvement Policies

Section 5.11 of the Village of South River Official Plan is the enabling policy for this CIP. It states:

"In seeking to promote attractive, orderly and economic pattern of development, a number of opportunities are available to the Municipality. It is the intent of this Plan to encourage community improvements in the Municipality such that the needs of the population are satisfied. In this regard, Council recognizes the need for a comprehensive community improvement program for the Village of South River."

Section 5.11.2 further states:

"Community improvement encompasses all those activities, both public and private, which maintain, rehabilitate and redevelop the existing physical environment to accommodate social and economic priorities within a community. There are many opportunities available to the Municipality to assist in an attractive, orderly, and viable economic pattern. The undertaking of community improvement programs is a priority of Council.

The Council of the Village of South River has designated a Community Improvement Area shown on Schedule "C". The Community Improvement policies found in this section are intended to complement policies found elsewhere in the Plan which pertain to community improvement."

It is crystal clear South River makes the preparation and implementation of a CIP a priority to foster economic development. While it has designated the entire geographical and political entity of the Village boundary as a CIP the Official Plan allows it to be broken down into specific areas as can be noted in the aforementioned wherein it states in paragraph 1 in Section 5.11.2 "community improvement programs" NOT program but programs. Further, Section 5.11.2.8 states "In the implementation of a community improvement within a selected Community Improvement Area, it is the policy of Council:

- a) To designate a community improvement area under Section 28 of the Planning Act, 1983;
- b) To prepare and adopt a community improvement plan under Section 28 (4) of the Planning Act, 1983;
- c) To use public funds acquired through appropriate municipal, provincial and federal programs to assist in implementing the community improvement policies of this Plan;

It is clear from this policy that smaller more manageable and specific community improvement areas and programs are anticipated within the community improvement area already identified on Schedule "C". If additional CIP's were not contemplated there would be no need to incorporate this policy since the Community Improvement Area was already identified on Schedule "C". Also, in Section 5.11.2.7 of the Village Official Plan it identifies the fact that community improvement projects can be phased. In other words, the Village can identify areas of priority as to which area requires attention first. Again, reiterating the point that while the area identified on Schedule "C" to the Official Plan (the entire Village) is identified as a CIP it is intended to be dealt with in smaller projects.

The CIP Goals found in Section 5.11.2.1 in the Village Official Plan and summarized in 1.4 of this report, are as follows:

- "a) Encourage community improvement by developing a strong planning framework to guide community improvement activities in order to maintain the Village of South River as a desirable place to live"
- b) Improve the physical environment presently provided in the community in order to ensure its continued viability; and;"

In addition to these Goals the following objectives are stated in Section 5.11.2.2 regarding Community Improvement in South River:

"The objective of Council is to improve municipal, social and recreational facilities and services in the Village of South River."

4.0 COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN

4.1 Area of Applicability

The provisions and details of this Community Improvement Plan apply to the Village of South River as identified by South River as shown in Schedule "A" of this Plan.

4.2 <u>Plan Parameters</u>

As stated in the goals above and as summarized in Section 1.4, this Community Improvement Plan will assist in retaining South River as a desirable place to live by improving the appearance of the Project Area by rehabilitating existing facades on buildings and structures, by promoting new land uses and development within the Project Area consistent with the appearance of the rehabilitated facades on the existing buildings and promote the rehabilitation and capital improvement within the Project Area.

To achieve these goals, the Community Improvement Plan encourages:

- a) improvements and upgrades to buildings within the Project Area;
- b) opening new businesses within the Project Area;
- c) construction of new buildings within the Project Area;
- d) the enhancement of the Project Area through the addition of new municipally owned buildings and attractions;
- e) the intensification and infilling of the Project Area with mixed-uses to create more efficient land uses.

Based on the above, the following program types that implement the Goals and Objectives of this Plan may be implemented by the Village of South River:

- 1) By following the Design Guidelines that suggest improvements to building facades, the design of new buildings, lighting within the Project Area, building materials, signage, streetscape landscaping, contained herein;
- 2) Provide for tax incentives, applications and permits for new businesses;
- 3) Provide for tax incentives, applications for improvements to existing building stock and private properties; and;
- 4) Provide for tax incentives, applications for new building construction.

This Community Improvement Plan is consistent with Provincial policy, guidelines and legislation, and implements the Village's Official Plan and Zoning By-law Standards.

4.3 General Eligibility Requirements

Assistance granted under any of the financial assistance programs to a particular property is not transferable to any other property and is only granted after the works involved with the project have been carried out and completed to the satisfaction of the Village of South River.

Assistance is available to an owner or tenant occupying an assessed building in the Community Improvement Area upon satisfactory completion of the project. Incentives and reductions will only be granted on assessment increases to commercial and industrial properties. All other property tax classes are excluded from the incentives.

The following types of businesses are generally not eligible to obtain financial assistance: liquor store and post office.

Properties and buildings should not have any tax arrears, outstanding utility charges, or any other legal claim, lien or order that may affect the title of the land. Furthermore, all applicable taxes for the subject lands would need to be paid in full, prior to release of municipal funds.

The total of grants made in respect of particular lands under the Community Improvement Plan and tax assistance as defined in Section 365.1 of the Municipal Act, 2001 that is provided in respect of the lands and building in this Community Improvement Plan shall not exceed the cost of rehabilitating the lands and building.

Prior to approving an application under this Community Improvement Plan, the Village reserves the right to request an independent audit of the applicant's accounts, at the expense of the applicant, and to ensure that all other work orders or requests to comply from other departments or agencies have be satisfactorily addressed.

4.4 <u>Three Year Gradual Property Tax Increment Program for New or Expanding</u> Businesses

It is recognized that to maintain a healthy vibrant community, both new and existing commercial development is imperative.

To encourage investment for new businesses in the Community Improvement Plan Areas, the Village will implement a tax rebate program that would phase in any increased assessment in the Village's portion of the property tax for new businesses.

The grant phases in the increase in taxes as a result of the new construction (a building permit would be required) that would facilitate a new business gradually over three years at a rate of 80% tax savings in the first year, 40% in the second year, 20% in the third year.

The tax incentive program is available to an owner or tenant occupying an assessed building in the Community Improvement Area and to those who are responsible for payment of municipal taxes; typically, those who control the unit. In the case of a commercial building the tenant is responsible, so they would be eligible for the tax incentive.

To remain eligible for this exemption, the new business must remain operating for a period of 3 years after the third year or repayment of the previous 3-year tax savings is required.

The tax incentive program will be based on the increase assessed value as calculated by MPAC in the first year after the new business has opened. For example, if the new business opened in 2019. The tax rebate for the first year would not commence until 2020 after MPAC supplies the Village with their updated assessments.

The tax incentive is only offered for the new business on the difference of the assessed MPAC value and not on the existing assessed value for the entire space or building for which the new business operates.

Example:

- Existing business and the space it occupies = MPAC assessed value \$80,000
- New business opens and the space it occupies = MPAC assessed value = \$100,000
- The tax incentive is based on the difference between the two assessed MPAC values = \$20,000
- The tax incentive program over the 3 years is based on the benchmark of \$20,000

Council will review applications for tax incentive under this program. To obtain a commitment for tax incentive, the property owner must submit a detailed proposal for consideration by Council, prior to commencement of the works.

Generally, no improvements are to be carried out prior to the approval of the application for funding.

Tax incentives will be made available to a property owner or tenant(s) should there be multiple tenants in one building.

Should a grant be secured through a Public authority for any of the construction works the tax incentive for each of the incremental estimated construction values will be reduced by 50% of its tax incentive for each year.

Construction that most succinctly achieves the goals and objectives of the Plan will be favoured.

The property owner and tenant, where applicable, who receives a tax incentive is required to execute a Letter of Undertaking which includes terms and conditions of the tax incentive.

The tax incentive recipient is required to indemnify the Village against any claims, actions, demands and expenses that are made or brought about against the recipient because of the recipient's failure to exercise reasonable care, skill or diligence in the performance of the improvement.

The Village will offer the tax incentive following receipt of a notice of completion of the works, and inspection by the Chief Building Official or a designate by Council.

4.4 **General Requirements**

The following is a list of conceptual requirements that at the discretion of Council may or may not be applied for proposals under the tax incentive program.

4.4.1 **Building Facades**

Designs should reflect the following guidelines to be eligible for the tax incentive.

4.4.2 General Front Design

- Façade elements, such as entrances, windows and signage should provide clarity and lend interest.
- o Individual building fronts should be clearly defined by architectural characteristics such as cornices, sign boards, pillars, or separation of glass and base panels.
- A horizontal band at the top of each storefront can serve as an appropriate location for business signage. Back lit signs are discouraged.
- Windows should be consistent in height and design with doors to create a cohesive appearance.
- Building fronts should incorporate such typical architectural features as recessed entries, display windows, and base panels, in keeping with the original design of the building.
- Building fronts in the same building should have a consistent design and relate to the entire building as a whole.

4.4.4 **Buildings**

New buildings and alterations should be in keeping with the massing and scale of neighbouring buildings. They should, where possible, be in line, having similar setbacks as neighbouring buildings.

4.4.5 **Building Fronts**

- keep/restore the original width of historic front openings which have been filled in or covered over;
- keep/restore the original height and display window area in historic buildings;
- Try not to change the building's overall pattern and spacing of piers/columns and storefront openings in historic buildings;
- Try to create storefronts in newer buildings that reflect the sizing and spacing of the historic buildings in the community;
- Try to repair or replace original building materials with matching materials in historic buildings. Do use materials that compliment adjacent buildings in newer buildings.
- Original wall materials such as brick and stone should be repaired and maintained;
- Where possible remove non-original siding materials, false fronts and mansard roofs or canopies in historic buildings;
- Try to use quality materials in new buildings and design consistent with historic buildings in the area;
- As a rule do not use materials otherwise not found on the historic building;
- Try to use materials that were used historically in the community such as brick or wood siding.

4.4.6 Lighting

In buildings where applicable, the use of gooseneck lighting fixtures over awnings and signage is recommended and all fixtures must have "full cut off" for dark sky friendly compliance. Accent lighting to illuminate building façades is also encouraged and may be done with projecting (gooseneck) or concealed fixtures. Such fixtures should be compatible with the building's design. In general, the entire façade should not be washed in bright light, but lighting should be used to accentuate individual building features.

4.4.7 Signs

The major purpose of a commercial sign is to identify a business and its merchandise and services. Signs should not be large and overbearing or cluttered with excessive information. They should be simple and coordinate with other neighbouring signs. Randomly located signs, signs containing too much information, too many signs, and signs that are too large for individual shops are often hard to read and easily missed by pedestrian shoppers and drivers. Such signs can give local shopping areas a cluttered, confusing and unattractive image. Simple signs with a consistent size and location from one storefront to the next make locating businesses easier. Moveable, flashing signs should also be avoided.

Signs on the same building should have a consistent location, size and overall pattern and be compatible with one another.

Signs may be illuminated using external lighting fixtures such as gooseneck lamps, dark sky compliant but the fixture should be simple, unobtrusive and not obscure the graphics of the sign.

Signs for prior businesses, illegal signs, roof signs, billboards and unused structural sign supports should all be removed. Portable signs and large signs on upper façades should be avoided. Rooftop signs on or above the parapet or cornice of buildings, billboards and other outdoor advertising signs painted or mounted on structures should be avoided.

Temporary signs should advertise short-term sale promotions only, and paper signs should generally be avoided. Temporary signs should not be placed on any part of the building except in display windows and should not occupy more than 25% of a window area. It is easier for shoppers to read a few simple, well-placed sale sign than to try to read a display window cluttered with many signs.

5.0 PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

5.1 Administration and Timing

The CIP will be implemented by the Council of the Village of South River under the administration of the Clerk's Department. The tax incentive programs outlined in this CIP will be specifically administered by Council through the Town Treasurer or by such staff member as designated by Resolution of Council.

Council shall establish an annual budget for incentives under the Community Improvement Incentive Program. Such budget should set maximum annual funding available to the program and estimated funding available to each individual program.

The tax incentive programs produced in response to this CIP will be made available on a finite time-horizon to property owners or tenants or assignees. Council may extend any such dates by Bylaw without the need for amendment to the subject Program. However, any increase in program financing permitted under Section 28 of the Planning Act will require an amendment to this Plan.

The Village shall establish appropriate application forms, processes and by-laws to effectively administer the requirements of Community Improvement Incentive Program.

It is recommended that any of the following changes to existing Planning tools or any development of new tools will be undertaken in concert with any large-scale planning or development effort in the Project Area by the Village, now or in the future.

5.2 Monitoring and Amendments

The municipality in designing programs will consider the manner in which implementation will be reviewed and evaluated. Council will conduct annual reviews of the CIP programs in order to determine their effectiveness. To achieve the goals and objectives, modification of the plan may be undertaken by Council at any time.

The Village may discontinue or amend any element of the Community Improvement Incentive Program at any time. However participants in the program prior to its closing or changing will continue to receive the approved grants and/or loans as determined through a Community Improvement Incentive Agreement.

Should a property fall just outside the Project Area and marginally deviate from the parameters of this Community Improvement Plan an amendment to this Plan should not be required.

5.3 Other Tools

Beyond the scope of a Community Improvement Plan, the following Tools are available to the Village of South River to utilize in order to further direct development in accordance with this plan.

5.3.1 Site Plan Control

The enabling legislation is Section 40 of the Planning Act provided there are policies in the Official Plan. Section 6.6 of The Village of South River Official Plan designates the entire community subject to site plan control for commercial, industrial and institutional uses. It is suggested that the Village consider passing a Site Plan Control By-law and Guidelines to reflect an adopted CIP.

Under the Community Improvement Policies, should Council decide to impose Site Plan Control they will be able to regulate external features as building character, scale, and appearance, and sustainable streetscape design. Sustainable design elements that support compact and more intensified forms of development may include street level awnings for shade, wide sidewalks and street furniture for pedestrian comfort, mobility-friendly curb cuts, bicycle parking, light-coloured paving surfaces, energy efficient lighting to increase safety, and green roofs for reduced storm-water runoff and improved energy efficiency.

In order to assist in the implementation of the proposed Community Architectural Design Guidelines, Site Plan Control tools could also permit the Village to require plan, elevation, and cross-section views for all development under Site Plan Control in the Project Area.

5.3.2 Sign By-Law

In addition to the requirements identified herein pertaining to signs it is suggested that the Village consider passing a Sign By-law for compatibility with the CIP defined standards. The Sign By-law may be an effective tool for the enforcement of key elements of the CIP with respect to the aesthetic character of signs.

