

City of Belleville

**COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN
FOR BELLEVILLE'S DOWNTOWN**



Engineering & Development Services Department

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COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN FOR BELLEVILLE'S DOWNTOWN

1. Purpose

This *Community Improvement Plan for Belleville's Downtown* establishes a framework for the establishment and implementation of various programs to achieve, promote and encourage improvements in the downtown area of the City of Belleville.

2. Location

The lands subject to this Plan constitute those lands designated as a Community Improvement Project Area pursuant to By-Law 2001-180 as illustrated on Schedule 'A' hereto. These lands are designated City Centre in the City of Belleville Official Plan.

The Belleville Downtown Improvement Area is located within this area, also shown on Schedule 'A'.

3. Background

The downtown area of Belleville has had difficulty maintaining its place as a key focal point in the community and is beginning to exhibit many characteristics not conducive to prosperity and vitality. City Council, recognizing the importance of the downtown and in keeping with the policies of the Official Plan, has undertaken a number of actions in support of the downtown.

The City of Belleville Official Plan promotes the City Centre as defined therein (which includes what is commonly referred to as the 'downtown') a major focus of economic activity, having a key role in the creation of civic identity and pride.

The Official Plan identifies the City Centre as a community improvement policy area. Within community improvement policy areas, the Official Plan indicates that initiatives for improvement may include:

- upgrading and provision of improved municipal hard services (i.e. sewers, water systems, roads, hydro, sidewalks, etc.);
- upgrading of municipal soft services (i.e. parks, playgrounds, community centres) and improvement to the amenity of public lands;
- acquisition of lands to protect natural heritage areas;
- upgrading and provision of transit and traffic control systems;
- rehabilitation of existing buildings and structures; and

- replacement of inappropriate uses which have a serious negative impact upon the area with alternative uses and/or more appropriate buildings.

The Official Plan provides a number of techniques that can be employed to achieve desired improvements, including the giving of grants, loans or other financial incentives to finance improvements to privately owned buildings and properties.

4. Goals and Objectives

The principal goal of this Community Improvement Plan is to encourage downtown property and business owners to improve properties through various means to build upon the traditional character of the downtown as a means to attract visitors and investment to the City's downtown.

Specific objectives of this Plan are to:

- improve the aesthetics of the existing building inventory in the downtown;
- preserve the traditional and the heritage features within the downtown streetscape and encourage improvement that is sympathetic to the history of the area;
- strongly encourage improvements to all facades including those facing municipal parking lots and particularly those facing the Riverfront Trail;
- encourage investment in the downtown that improves the economic climate of the core area and increases its importance as a destination for residents and visitors.

5. Plan Parameters

At the option of City Council, the following Programs may be implemented for the whole or any part of the lands to which this Plan applies:

Permit and Fee Reduction Program - to waive or reduce municipal fees such as building and sign permit fees, and development charges;

Capital Grant Program - to assist eligible building owners and tenants with the costs of upgrading existing buildings;

Tax Rebate Program - to offset the increase in the municipal portion of taxes resulting from improvements to buildings.

6. Permit and Fee Reduction Program

Under the Permit and Fee Reduction Program, the City may provide for the reduction or the elimination of fees and charges that apply to development in the City's central area as a means to encourage residential and commercial development in the City Centre.

Examples of fees that are under the direct control of the City that could be reduced or eliminated include building permit fees, plumbing permit fees, and sign permit fees.

Of more significance usually from a financial perspective are development charges. Development charges may be reduced or eliminated from certain or all classes of development in the City Centre as a means to encourage new investment in the City's core.

7. Capital Grant Program

Under the Capital Grant Program, the City may provide for a financial grant of up to 50% of the cost of façade or other approved improvements (as defined in a design or program guideline to be established by the City). Under this program, no grant should exceed \$10,000 in any calendar year.

Prior to establishing a capital grant program in accordance with this Plan, City Council shall establish a design or program guideline to define in clear terms the parameters of the program and the nature of projects that would be approved under the program, and on what basis. This guideline shall define those lands within the community improvement project area to which this program would apply. Only projects that support the common objectives of the City to enhance the City's core area should be provided for under this program. Of particular interest would be improvements to the facades of buildings in the downtown area in a manner sympathetic to the history and the architecture of the downtown.

8. Tax Rebate Program

Under the Tax Rebate Program, the owner (or tenant) of a property that has undergone improvement resulting in an increase in realty taxes may apply to the City of Belleville for a tax rebate for the municipal portion of the realty tax bill.

The City would provide the rebate annually, and should decline each year over a period of time not to exceed five (5) years at which time the rebate would no longer apply. Further, under this program, no property shall be entitled to participate in the Tax Rebate Program more than once.

Prior to establishing a Tax Rebate Program, City Council shall establish a procedural guideline to assist applicants and the City in understanding and

implementing the Program. This guideline shall also define those lands within the community improvement project area to which the *Tax Rebate Program* would apply.

9. Implementation

Programs under the Community Improvement Plan may be offered at the discretion of Council, and may be established or rescinded by Council without an amendment to this Community Improvement Plan. These programs may apply, at the discretion of Council, to the whole or to part of the community improvement project area.

The introduction of any other incentive programs applicable to private lands not so defined in this Plan shall require an amendment to this Plan.

Nothing in this Plan shall limit the right of the City of Belleville and its Council to undertake any other initiatives provided for under the City's Official Plan to facilitate or achieve improvements to the downtown area of the City of Belleville. For example, initiatives to improve municipal parking lots and parkettes, and municipal infrastructure upgrades may be undertaken as deemed necessary by Council and/or the Board of Management of the Business Improvement Area.

City Council will determine during preparation of its annual budget the contribution to be made available to the various programs under this Community Improvement Plan for the current year. Any unspent funds at year-end may be placed in reserves to be used in subsequent years.

Council will conduct periodic review of the programs being implemented under this Community Improvement Plan to determine their effectiveness.