

MUNICIPALITY OF GREY HIGHLANDS

Community Improvement Plan 2024

Department of Economic and Community Development

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KEY UPDATES TO THE COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN (2024)

- Program limited to micro-grants that prioritize projects that focus on beautification in downtown cores.
- Active funding categories:
 - Façade improvements
 - up to a maximum of \$1,000 (or 50% of eligible costs (excluding HST), whichever is less)
 - Signage improvements
 - up to a maximum of \$500 (or 50% of eligible costs (excluding HST), whichever is less)
 - Accessibility improvements
 - up to a maximum of \$250 towards the purchase of a portable accessibility ramp (up to 100% of the cost of the ramp (excluding HST), whichever is less)
- Applications are not currently being accepted for any other funding category.
- Maximum funding cap of \$1,500 on the total financial incentives approved per property roll number per year.
- The total number of approved applications per property roll number is limited to a maximum of three over a five-year period, up to a total combined maximum of \$3,000 in financial incentives.
- There are no intake deadlines for program applications; applications will be received on an ongoing basis.
- Participation in this program is limited to independently owned and operated businesses that are not part of any franchise.
- Due to the simplified nature of the current program, a pre-application consultation meeting with the multidisciplinary staff team is not required.

In the event of a discrepancy between this document and Resolutions of Council, the Resolutions of Council and their intent will be taken as correct.

1 INTRODUCTION

The Municipality of Grey Highlands, the gateway to the Beaver Valley, is the 882 square kilometre region in the southeast corner of Grey County, with a growing population of 10,000 residents.

Situated in one of the most beautiful areas of Grey County, the area's natural landscape includes waterfalls, the Bruce Trail, the Osprey Bluffs, the Saugeen, Boyne and Beaver Rivers and Lake Eugenia, with the Niagara Escarpment World Biosphere running through the area. Agriculture still represents the industry with the largest number of businesses in the Municipality. Farms range from small family-owned to large and highly automated. Mennonite families from the Waterloo Region have migrated to Grey Highlands and contribute to the success and prosperity of the rural agricultural lifestyle. Manufacturing also plays an important part in the community. Chapman's, Canada's largest independent ice cream company is located in Markdale and is a stalwart community champion. Other top manufacturers include Ice River Sustainable Solutions (Feversham); Medike Landes (Markdale); and Rossiter Boats (Markdale); all producing products from Grey Highlands that are shipped across North America.

Grey Highlands includes a number of towns, villages and hamlets that create the fabric of the Municipality, including: Badjeros, Ceylon, Eugenia, Feversham, Flesherton, Kimberley, Markdale, Maxwell, Priceville, Proton Station, Rocklyn and Singhampton.

1.1 WHAT IS A COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN?

A Community Improvement Plan is a tool where municipal planners and economic developers can work hand in hand to develop policies and provide incentives targeting specific types of growth and investment. The Municipality of Grey Highlands has identified a need for a Community Improvement Plan (CIP) program to help promote and enable prioritized development across the Municipality and to support and complement Grey County's Official Plan.

A Community Improvement Plan for the Municipality of Grey Highlands has been prepared to serve as a long-term strategy to revitalize the community, improve the quality of life of the community's residents, better utilize under-developed properties and to promote private investment in land and buildings.

1.2 PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

Grey Highlands intends to realize its economic development vision of being 'Open for Business'; while ensuring Council's goal of being a vibrant and sustainable rural economy, and well-positioned for future generations. This CIP program is meant to enable and boost development momentum across the region. The intent of this program is to offer targeted incentives across

Grey Highlands both within settlement areas as well as in our rural areas.

Along with facilitating the revitalization and improvement of the entire Municipality of Grey Highlands, the CIP program will provide a menu of incentives to promote and support the following types of priority development and revitalization projects (in line with many of the priorities outlined at the County level):

- Increase attainable housing stock, including secondary suites, multi-unit housing, purpose built rental housing, rooming house developments and apartment dormitory style developments;
- Increased value-added agricultural uses, agri-tourism, and facility improvement projects;
- Promotion of the redevelopment and/or conversion of brownfield, vacant, and grey field properties;
- Support for downtown revitalization of store fronts, publicly used frontages, and streetscapes;
- Support the adaptive re-use of commercial, industrial and institutional buildings.

Revitalization and improvement refer, in a broad sense, to activities that contribute to the economic development, beautification, quality of life, aesthetic improvements, environmental sustainability, and the creation of a sense of place. Examples of activities that contribute towards long-term revitalization include:

- The improvement and beautification of buildings, façades and properties;
- The adaptive reuse and restoration of historic properties and structures;
- Improvement of community infrastructure, open spaces and pedestrian networks;
- The remediation and redevelopment or reuse of environmentally contaminated properties (brownfields);
- The sensitive and appropriate redevelopment of underutilized properties, or development of existing properties (e.g. conversion of upper storey space for residential uses);
- Providing opportunities for affordable/attainable housing;
- Improvements of buildings to enhance accessibility for persons with disabilities; and
- Promotion of economic development and business growth.

The revitalization and improvement of the community will take many different forms and will require the participation of the Municipality, the public, and various stakeholders. This Plan establishes a set of financial incentive programs aimed at encouraging private investment to undertake many of the above-noted activities. Eligible projects are listed for each incentive program, along with details regarding the value of the financial incentive and how it is being calculated. The Plan recognizes that improvements achieved through the various Municipal initiatives can serve as catalysts for further private investment and are therefore critical to an overall revitalization strategy.

1.3 APPLICATION OF THIS PLAN

This Plan applies to the geographic area designated by a bylaw of the Municipality as the Community Improvement Project Area. Activities under this Plan can only take place within the designated Community Improvement Project Area. Council may choose to modify the Community Improvement Project Area Bylaw by passing another bylaw to replace it.

Generally, the purpose of this Plan is to promote the revitalization of the Municipality. Revitalization means different things to different neighbourhoods and areas of the community. In a downtown, revitalization will take place in the form of façade improvements, adaptive reuse of historic buildings, improvements to main levels and upper storeys, brownfield remediation, streetscaping, parking, accessibility and other improvements. In commercial areas, revitalization may be better focused on improved landscaping, parking and redevelopment opportunities, as well as improvements to encourage walkability, for instance.

1.4 HOW TO USE THIS PLAN

The Municipality of Grey Highlands' CIP enables the Municipality to issue financial incentives to private property owners interested in undertaking improvements to their building, property, or to developing or redeveloping their land. The financial incentive programs outlined in this Plan will be used by local businesses, property owners, and tenants, and are intended to facilitate community-enhancing property and building improvement projects. This Plan is intended to be read and interpreted in its totality. Interpretation of the Plan will be at the sole discretion of the Council or its designated approval authority. Programs will be made available only when Council assigns incentive funds. Available funding for incentive programs may change on an annual basis based on Council's consideration and to reflect the Municipality's evolving community improvement needs.

Interested property owners and tenants are encouraged to review this Plan and contact the Municipality of Grey Highlands to confirm their eligibility, discuss their project, and to identify the types of financial incentives that could be applicable.

2 THE PLANNING FRAMEWORK

A Community Improvement Plan (CIP) is a tool established under Section 28 of the *Planning Act*. The Plan must consider and conform to other policy plans and studies and it must be prepared in accordance with the requirements of the *Planning Act*. This section briefly discusses the basis for preparing a CIP for the Municipality of Grey Highlands.

2.1 LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

This Plan is prepared in accordance with the *Planning Act*, which provides the legislative authority for the Municipality of Grey Highlands to prepare a CIP.

Section 28 of the Ontario *Planning Act*, 1990, as amended, gives the Municipality of Grey Highlands the legislative authority to define a community improvement project area and prepare a community improvement plan for that area. The Plan must be prepared in accordance with the community improvement policies of the Municipality's *Official Plan* and the specific powers granted under the *Planning Act*. In accordance with subsections 106(1), (2) and (3) of the *Municipal Act*, the Municipality may not provide financial assistance or bonusing to a commercial or other industrial enterprise, unless the assistance is provided through a CIP prepared in accordance with the *Planning Act*.

2.1.1 Community Improvement

Section 28(1) of the *Planning Act* defines community improvement as:

"...the planning or re-planning, design or redesign, subdivision, clearance, development or redevelopment, construction, reconstruction and rehabilitation, improvement of energy efficiency, or any of them, of a community improvement project area, and the provision of such residential, commercial, industrial, public, recreational, institutional, religious, charitable or other uses, buildings, structures, works, improvements or facilities, or spaces therefore, as may be appropriate or necessary" and includes the provision of affordable housing under Section 28(1.1).

2.1.2 Community Improvement Project Area

Section 28(2) permits municipalities, where the municipality has appropriate policy in the Official Plan, to pass a by-law designating a "community improvement project area" and to prepare a "[CIP]." Once the CIP has been adopted by the municipality and comes into effect, the municipality may exercise authority under section 28(6), (7), or (7.2) of the *Planning Act* or section 365.1 of the *Municipal Act*, 2001 in order that the exception provided in Section 106(3) of the *Municipal Act*, 2001 will apply.

2.1.3 Community Improvement Plan

A community improvement plan is defined in the *Planning Act* as "a plan for the community improvement of a community improvement project area."

2.1.4 Tools and Activities Under the *Planning Act*

The Planning Act allows municipalities when carrying out a [CIP] within a Community Improvement Project Area to:

- Acquire and hold land (Section 28[3]);
- Construct, repair, rehabilitate or improve buildings on the land acquired or held by the Municipality, or it may sell or dispose of land in conformity with the community improvement plan; (Section 28[6]);
- Make grants or loans to registered owners, assessed owners and tenants of lands and buildings within the community improvement project area for the purpose of rehabilitating such lands and buildings in conformity with the [CIP] (Section 28[7.1]); and
- Make grants or loans related to an environmental site assessment, environmental remediation, development, redevelopment, construction and reconstruction of lands and buildings for rehabilitation purposes or for the provision of energy efficient uses, buildings, structure, works, improvements or facilities (Section 28[8]).

2.1.5 Transfer of Grants Between Upper and Lower-Tier Municipalities

Section 28 (7.2) speaks to the allowance of upper-tier municipalities to participate in the funding for local CIP Programs. Section 28 (7.2) states:

"The council of an upper-tier municipality may make grants or loans to the council of a lower-tier municipality and the council of a lower-tier municipality may make grants or loans to the council of the upper-tier municipality, for the purposes of carrying out a [CIP] that has come into effect, on such terms as to security and otherwise as the council considers appropriate, but only if the official plan of the municipality making the grant or loan contains provisions relating to the making of such grants or loans."

2.1.6 Other Relevant Sections

Section 17 of the Planning Act outlines the statutory process for adopting the CIP, including the provision of at least one public meeting to be held a minimum of 20 days after making the CIP publicly available for review.

Section 28(7.3) of the Planning Act specifies that the total of all grants and loans made in respect of particular lands and buildings under Section 28 (7) and (7.2) of the Planning Act and property tax assistance provided under Section 365.1 of the Municipal Act, 2001 in respect of the land and buildings shall not exceed the eligible cost of the [CIP] with respect to those lands and buildings.

Section 69 of the Planning Act allows municipalities to reduce or waive the amount of a fee in respect of a planning application where it feels payment is unreasonable; many CIPs offer application fee refunds as a financial incentive.

2.1.7 Municipal Act

The *Ontario Municipal Act, S.O. 2001, C. 25* governs many procedures, tools, and powers of municipalities. The following sections of the *Municipal Act* are relevant to the implementation of [CIPs]:

Section 106(1) of the *Municipal Act* establishes that municipalities can neither directly or indirectly assist manufacturing businesses or other industrial or commercial enterprise through engaging in "bonusing"; however, municipalities applying a CIP program are exempt from this prohibition under Section 28 of the *Planning Act*.

Section 107 of the *Municipal Act* outlines the powers a municipality has to make grants, including the power to provide a grant in the form of a loan or by guaranteeing a loan, subject to criteria outlined in Section 106.

Section 365.1.2 of the *Municipal Act* provides the authority to allow municipalities to pass a by-law providing property tax assistance to an eligible property in the form of cancellation of all or part of the property taxes levied on the property for municipal and education purposes during the "rehabilitation period" and the "development period" of the property.

2.1.8 | Development Charges Act

Section 5 of the *Development Charges Act* allows a Municipality to provide a full or partial development charge exemption for certain types of development, subject to the Development Charges bylaw.

2.2 PROVINCIAL POLICY STATEMENT (2014)

The Provincial Policy Statement (2014) provides municipalities with policy direction and guidance related to land use planning and development. The Provincial Policy Statement emphasizes efficient and effective land use planning and serves as a pillar upon which plans and policies are developed at a municipal level, in a manner consistent with Provincial interests. CIPs are planning tools that can proactively implement the Provincial Policy Statement, including its policies for redevelopment, intensification, remediation of brownfields, urban renewal, sustainability, enhancing the vitality of downtown areas, and long-term economic prosperity.

2.3 COUNTY OF GREY OFFICIAL PLAN

2.3.1 County of Grey Official Plan (2013)

The Grey County Official Plan provides guidance on Local CIP Areas and Programs. Section 6.16 in Grey County's 2013 Official Plan provides comments regarding a Local Municipality's ability to develop a CIP. The plan states,

"Identifying a Community Improvement Area shall be carried out through a bylaw designating the whole, or any part of the local municipality as a Community Improvement Area. The goal of any Community Improvement Area shall be to foster and co-ordinate the physical improvements and maintenance of older or dilapidated areas of a community for environmental, social or community economic reasons."

Community Improvement Areas are intended to achieve one or many of the following objectives:

- *To encourage the efficient provision and maintenance of physical infrastructure, public services and utilities to serve present and future needs on a local and regional scale;*
- *To address issues which may be particular to one neighbourhood;*
- *To ensure the maintenance and renewal of older housing stock;*
- *To foster redevelopment, reuse and/or maintenance of existing brownfield sites and/or current industrial sites;*
- *To enhance retail and downtown commercial areas within the municipalities;*
- *To encourage the preservation and adaptive re-use of built heritage;*
- *To promote energy efficiency and sound environmental design;*
- *To foster economic growth within designated areas;*
- *To promote intensification in targeted areas;*
- *To enhance the visual characteristics of neighbourhoods; and*
- *To encourage local participation in funding programs for local development which may also be eligible for Provincial or Federal funding.*

2.3.2 County of Grey Official Plan (2018)

The 2018 Grey County Official Plan, which was adopted by Grey County Council in October 2018 and received provincial approval in June 2019, also contains language that guides the development of future CIPs. The description of CIPs is identical to the 2013 Official Plan, except for the following objectives:

- To encourage the efficient provision and maintenance of physical infrastructure, public services and utilities to serve present and future needs on a local and regional scale;
- To address issues which may be particular to one neighbourhood or region;
- To ensure the maintenance and renewal of older housing stock;
- To promote the creation of affordable housing units;
- To foster redevelopment, reuse and/or maintenance of existing brownfield sites and/or current industrial sites;
- To enhance the visual appeal of downtown core areas and neighbourhoods;
- To promote on-farm business growth or farm innovation;
- To encourage the preservation and adaptive re-use of built heritage;
- To promote energy efficiency and sound environmental design;
- To foster economic growth within designated areas;
- To promote intensification in targeted areas;

- To encourage local participation in funding programs for local development which may also be eligible for Provincial or Federal funding.

The County may provide grants, loans or other assistance as County Council deems appropriate for the purposes of supporting the incentives identified in local municipal Community Improvement Plans.

2.4 GREY HIGHLANDS OFFICIAL PLAN

Section 3.0 of the Municipality of Grey Highlands Official Plan provides development criteria that applies to all development conditions, in addition to the more specific criteria located within Section 4: Land Use Designations.

Subsection 3.4(d) of the Official Plan notes that:

"Council may enact community improvement plans in consultation with landowners, retailers, and related community interests. Grey Highlands recognizes that the architectural heritage and economic value of these communities reflect the enduring values of "small-town Ontario".

3 APPROACH TO COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT

Community improvement is a long-term process involving incremental improvements. Over time, many improvements can yield real and visible improvement. A series of goals and objectives, guided by a long-term vision, can be used to evaluate individual decisions to ensure that improvements are working towards achieving the desired ends.

3.1 GOALS and OBJECTIVES

The Plan is further guided by goals and objectives to ensure that community improvement activities are contributing to the vision for the "future-friendly" vision for Grey Highlands. Financial incentive programs should contribute toward achieving one or more of the following goals:

3.1.1 Residential

To increase attainable housing stock, including secondary suites, multi-unit housing, rooming house developments, purpose built rental housing, and apartment dormitory style developments.

- **Why:** limited stock of attainable housing to buy and rent; increasing need for mixed housing types which improve affordability and access.

3.1.2 Agricultural

To increase agricultural value-add, agri-tourism, and facility improvement projects.

- **Why:** Increase diversified agricultural uses, increased agri-tourism.

3.1.3 Brownfield

To promote the redevelopment and/or conversion of brownfield and greyfield properties

- **Why:** improve assessment base; improvement of underutilized property and creation of industry or residential/commercial, depending on development type.

3.1.4 Downtown

Downtown revitalization of store fronts, publicly used frontages, and streetscapes; reduction of vacant storefronts and increased residential capacity.

- **Why:** Creation of neighbourhood character, increased business and tourism

3.1.5 Residential and Commercial

Adaptive re-use of commercial, industrial and institutional buildings, support development of new commercial uses.

- **Why:** Increase assessment base, increase housing stock, increase marketable commercial rental units

3.2 COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT PROJECT AREA

All community improvement activities described in this Plan will only be undertaken within an area currently designated as a Community Improvement Project Area.

The Community Improvement Project Area is designated by bylaw, passed by Council, in accordance with Section 28 of the *Planning Act*. Changes to the Community Improvement Project Area will not require amendment to this Plan but can be implemented by passing a new bylaw. The entire Municipality of Grey Highlands has been designated as a Community Improvement Project Area.

The Community Improvement Project Area is not included in this Plan, as it is passed by a separate bylaw and may be subject to change by Council. Readers should consult with the Municipality to identify the most current Community Improvement Project Area.



3.3 COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT ACTIVITIES

The revitalization of the Municipality of Grey Highlands is best approached as a partnership between the Municipality, private stakeholders, such as property owners, business owners and tenants. The Municipality will not be able to successfully implement this Plan on its own. Along with working closely with Grey County to ensure alignment, collaboration, complementary and supportive approaches towards revitalization, the Municipality will also rely on other organizations, including community associations, the Chamber of Commerce, and service clubs to promote the incentives of this Plan and champion its implementation. These organizations can also complement the programs of the Plan through their own initiatives, such as maintaining seasonal streetscape beautification improvements, like flower plantings, lighting, light post banners, and so on.

The Municipality will lead its own programs and initiatives to demonstrate its leadership in community revitalization, including specific improvements to streetscapes and public spaces, other capital improvements, further studies, marketing/administration of the Community Improvement Plan, and support for community involvement. The private sector will become engaged in revitalization by participating in private property improvements, and accessing the financial incentives outlined in the Plan as made available by the Municipality.

Financial incentives in the form of grants may be offered to private landowners or tenants to assist them in improving their properties. Eligible landowners and tenants will be encouraged to re-use, improve and redevelop their property through the availability of these incentives. It is not the intent of this Plan to require Council to fund or operate all the identified incentive programs throughout the life of this Plan. At Council's discretion, based on feedback from Municipal staff and input from the community and stakeholders, different programs may be implemented in any given year by adjusting funding to specific programs.

4 FINANCIAL INCENTIVE PROGRAMS

The private sector needs to be engaged in community improvement to revitalize the Municipality. While Municipal leadership programs may help address public lands, improvements to private property would need to be initiated by property owners and tenants. Financial incentives are established to help stimulate private investment in buildings and properties.

The following set of financial incentives have been established by this Plan, however not all are currently active. The most recent Community Improvement Plan updates (2024) have streamlined the program to prioritize beautification of downtown cores through microgrants targeting façade and signage improvements; the portable accessibility ramp reimbursement program is also active.

Active Incentives

[4.11 Portable Accessibility Ramp Reimbursement Program](#)

[4.12 Heritage Property Tax Rebate](#)

[4.13 Façade and Signage Improvement Micro-Grants](#)

4.11 PORTABLE ACCESSIBILITY RAMP REIMBURSEMENT PROGRAM

4.11.1 Purpose

The Portable Accessibility Ramp Reimbursement Program is intended to help business owners offset the costs associated with the purchase of a portable access ramp (also known as a suitcase ramp) to make their place of business more accessible to persons with mobility issues. Businesses may consider availing of this reimbursement program in cases where they may not be permitted to construct a permanent ramp, due to factors such as easements, sidewalk clearances, and other considerations. The Portable Accessibility Ramp Reimbursement Program can be combined with other grants as applicable.

4.11.2 Eligible Costs

- Reimbursement of up to a maximum of \$250 towards the purchase of a portable accessibility ramp; it may cover up to 100% of the cost of the ramp (excluding HST).

4.11.3 Program Details

- The Portable Accessibility Ramp Reimbursement Program is offered to eligible businesses that have identified the need to make their location accessible using a temporary ramp that can be placed and removed as required.
- The Portable Accessibility Ramp Reimbursement Program will provide up to \$250 towards the purchase of a portable accessibility ramp for use in a business setting.
- Grants are payable upon proof of purchase and are limited to one per business per location and may cover up to 100% of the cost of the ramp (excluding HST).

4.11.4 Payment of Grant

- The Portable Accessibility Ramp Reimbursement Program is payable after the portable ramp has been purchased and the invoice submitted to the Plan Administrator for review. Upon satisfactory review, reimbursement will take place.

4.11.5 Eligibility Criteria

- All general eligibility criteria outlined in Section 9 apply. For clarity, this shall mean that the project must comply with all Municipal bylaws, policies, standards, guidelines and Official Plan and zoning, as well as any applicable Provincial, Federal or government agency requirements (e.g., conservation authority).
- Commercial or industrial properties are eligible to apply.

4.12 HERITAGE PROPERTY TAX REBATE (*By-law Pending*)

4.12.1 Purpose

The Heritage Property Tax Rebate is intended to assist owners of designated heritage properties offset the costs of upkeep and maintenance through the provision of a rebate of 20% of the taxes for lower-tier municipal and school purposes that are levied on the property that are attributable to the building or structure (or portion of the building or structure) that holds the heritage designation (and the land used in connection with the eligible heritage property), as determined by the Municipality.

4.12.2 Eligible Costs

- Owners of heritage properties designated under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act (OHA) or that are part of a heritage conservation district designated under Part V of the OHA (should one be created in Grey Highlands in the future), may apply for a Heritage Property Tax Rebate of 20% of the municipal portion of property taxes.
- The Municipality may request information from the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation concerning the portion of a property's total assessment that is attributable to the building or structure or portion of the building or structure that is the eligible heritage property and the land used in connection with it.

4.12.3 Program Details

- The Heritage Property Tax Rebate is offered to the owners of properties that contain a building or structure (full or partial) that is subject to a heritage conservation agreement for the property and either designated under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act (OHA), or part of a heritage conservation district designated under Part V of the OHA (should one be created in Grey Highlands in the future).
- Once an application is made for the Heritage Tax Rebate, Municipal staff will consult with Heritage Grey Highlands to ensure that all pertinent criteria have been met, including the facilitation of a heritage easement agreement with the Municipality.
- The rebate is available once annual property taxes have been paid in full and supporting documentation is provided to the Plan Administrator. This rebate will not be paid retroactively, and properties will only be eligible for this rebate once all conditions of the program are met and the grant approved by Grey Highlands Council.
- A pre-application meeting is not required for this grant component; however, applicants must provide proof of heritage designation with their application.
- This grant may be combined with other CIP grant elements as applicable and pending eligibility, but the Heritage Property Tax Rebate will not contribute to the applicant's overall CIP program funding cap eligibility.

4.12.4 Payment of Grant

- Upon approval for the Heritage Property Tax Rebate, the owner of a designated heritage property must provide a property tax statement clearly showing that the balance has been paid in full.
- Once all required documentation has been submitted to satisfaction of the Plan Administrator, reimbursement of the approved rebate will take place.

4.12.5 Eligibility Criteria

- To be eligible for the Heritage Property Tax Rebate, a property must contain a building, structure, or a portion of a building or structure that is subject to a heritage conservation agreement for the property, and either be designated under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act (OHA) or be part of a heritage conservation district designated under Part V of the OHA (should one be created in Grey Highlands in the future).
- The Heritage Property Tax Rebate is only applicable to properties already formally recognized through a heritage conservation agreement; properties currently in the designation process are not eligible, nor are properties with anecdotal heritage value without formal designation.
- Properties must be (and remain) in good condition and only be rehabilitated or restored in such a way that would not compromise the reasons for designation.
- The Heritage Property Tax Rebate will be approved for a two-year term, providing the property remains in a state of good repair (as determined by the Plan Administrator in consultation with Heritage Grey Highlands), and the property owner continues to comply with all terms and conditions of the heritage easement agreement.
- This incentive may be renewed after two years, providing the Heritage Property Tax Rebate remains an option through the CIP. However, renewals will be subject to any changes to grant criteria and reimbursement structures that are current at the time of renewal, and continued participation by either the Municipality or the County is not guaranteed or implied.
- The Heritage Property Tax Rebate is specific to the property owner and is non-transferrable. Should a property be sold, the new owner may apply for a Heritage Property Tax Rebate in their own name through the CIP program.
- All general eligibility criteria outlined in Section 9 apply. For clarity, this shall mean that the project must comply with all Municipal bylaws, policies, standards, guidelines and Official Plan and zoning, as well as any applicable Provincial, Federal or government agency requirements (e.g., conservation authority).
- Owners of commercial, industrial, institutional, or residential properties are eligible to apply, providing they meet all other eligibility criteria.

4.13 FAÇADE AND SIGNAGE IMPROVEMENT MICRO-GRANTS

4.13.1 Purpose

Façade and signage improvement micro-grants are intended to encourage high-impact visual improvements on the part of property owners and tenants. Improvements will focus on facades, along with signage, which includes pedestrian-scaled, blade signs.

4.13.2 Eligible Costs

Façade improvements, up to a maximum of \$1,000 (or 50% of eligible costs (excluding HST), whichever is less), focusing on the following areas of improvement:

- painting of exterior doors and trim
- installing wall-mounted flagpoles and flags/banners
- installing awnings

Signage improvements, up to a maximum of \$500 (or 50% of eligible costs (excluding HST), whichever is less), focusing on the following:

- designing and installing blade signage

Any combination of the two, up to the maximums noted for each component.

4.13.3 Program Details

Façade improvements, up to a maximum of \$1,000 (or 50% of eligible costs (excluding HST), whichever is less).

Signage improvements, up to a maximum of \$500 (or 50% of eligible costs (excluding HST), whichever is less).

The maximum grant for professional services shall not exceed 15% of the grant that is calculated for eligible costs.

4.13.4 Payment of Grant

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

4.1.5 Eligibility Criteria

All general eligibility criteria outlined in Section 9 apply. For clarity, this shall mean that the project must comply with all Municipal bylaws, policies, standards, guidelines and Official Plan and zoning, as well as any applicable Provincial, Federal or government agency requirements (e.g., conservation authority).

Application submission shall be in accordance with the requirements noted under Section 9, however due to the streamlined nature of this grant component, a pre-application meeting is not required.

Applications should include a description of the work proposed, and mock-ups (if applicable).

Improvements shall comply with the design criteria outlined in Section 8, along with any and all design guidelines as may be implemented by the Municipality in the future.

Where a property is designated under the Ontario Heritage Act or listed by the Municipality as being of historical interest, applicants may be required to submit historical documentation in support of the grant application. The Municipality may be able to supplement this information based on its own information and records.

Only commercial properties located in clearly defined Municipal downtown cores are eligible for this grant. The Plan Administer and/or Council may exercise its discretion in determining the eligibility of a property location.

5 BROWNFIELD INCENTIVE PROGRAMS

- Applications for this component are not currently being accepted.

6 SURPLUS LAND and BUILDINGS

- Applications for this component are not currently being accepted.

7 SUMMARY OF CURRENT PROGRAM INCENTIVES

Incentive Type	Description	Support Available (Excluding HST)
Portable Accessibility Ramp Reimbursement Program	To help make businesses more accessible to persons with mobility issues by supporting the purchase of a portable accessibility ramp.	Maximum reimbursement of \$250.
Heritage Property Tax Rebate (<i>By-law Pending</i>)	To assist owners of designated heritage properties offset the costs of upkeep and maintenance.	Reimbursement of 20% of the taxes for lower-tier municipal and school purposes.
Façade and Signage Improvement Micro-Grants	To encourage high-impact visual improvements to downtown commercial districts by painting doors and trim, installing banners or flags, or installing awnings, along with signage improvements, including pedestrian-scaled, blade signage.	Up to a maximum of \$1,000 (or 50% of eligible costs (excluding HST), whichever is less) for façade improvements. Up to a maximum of \$500 (or 50% of eligible costs (excluding HST), whichever is less) for signage improvements.

8 MONITORING and EVALUATION

This Community Improvement Plan is primarily intended to be a flexible revitalization tool. As circumstances evolve, and as market forces, economic conditions, and financial resources change, the CIP will also need to evolve. Council or its designated authority will have the discretion to determine funding for the financial incentive programs. However, in order to inform decision making about the implementation budget, and to ensure that the programs are working as they are intended, the Plan should be monitored, evaluated and, if necessary, revised, on a regular basis.

8.1 PROCESS FOR MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Immediately following adoption of the Community Improvement Plan, the Plan Administrator will begin to undertake the activities outlined in the following sections.

8.1.1 Establish the Monitoring Database

The Plan Administrator should initially develop a database upon which to monitor the number, types and success of financial incentive applications. As applications for financial incentives are received, they should be recorded in the database. Additionally, the Administrator should record all pre-application consultations related to potential application submissions, even if the consultations do not result in an application being submitted.

Specific performance indicators will need to be identified and monitored. The selection of indicators will provide guidance about the success of the Plan and its individual programs. At this time, it is suggested that the Plan Administrator gather the following information from applicants (which should be incorporated into the application form for financial incentives):

- The approved/denied value of the grant and the total value of construction (the total public investment versus private investment);
- The effect of the incentives, such as the number of new residential units created and/or rehabilitated, the number and type of retail or businesses created, the number of trees being planted, etc.;
- The projected and actual increase in property assessments and property taxes, as may be applicable; and
- Indirect indicators including economic indicators, qualitative indicators and other indicators which speak more generally to the success of the Municipality, and which may or may not be directly attributed to the influence and success of the Community Improvement Plan.

Other indicators should be identified and monitored on a period basis, such as:

- Utilization of the total financial incentives program budget;
- Utilization of the various incentive programs;

- Total dollars spent on other specific variables which indicate advancement of the program (e.g., number of trees planted, number of metres of sidewalks improved, etc.);
- Other indirect indicators, such as economic indicators as may be identified (e.g., number of overnight stays, number of new businesses established in the Municipality, etc.).

8.1.2 Determine Baseline Conditions

For the indicators identified in 8.1.1, the Plan Administrator should identify baseline conditions at the outset of the Plan implementation, so that variables may be compared from year-to-year, beginning with implementation of this Plan.

8.1.3 Collect Data

Throughout the course of a one-year review period, the Plan Administrator should enter information from applications and pre-application consultation meetings into the database on an on-going basis.

8.1.4 Prepare Annual CIP Evaluation Report to Council

Based on the information obtained, the Plan Administrator will prepare an annual report to Council to evaluate the Community Improvement Plan and its individual programs, based on the changes to the baseline conditions established above, and based generally on the uptake of the programs and any new challenges that have emerged. The report will recommend adjustments to the Community Improvement Plan, including its terms, financial incentive programs and eligibility criteria, in order to improve the programs offered through the Plan. The report will provide recommendations based on the results of monitoring. Recommendations may include:

- Budget adjustments or funding strategies;
- Potential revisions to the Community Improvement Plan area;
- Adjustments to the financial incentive programs including the addition or discontinuation of programs, where necessary;
- Any necessary changes to plan administration or processes.

The report should be made available on the Municipality's website each year for public review. The reporting of financial incentive program success should be accompanied by before and after photos of the projects completed to communicate the successes of the Plan.

Additionally, the annual report should include a review, summary and analysis of potential funding opportunities from the Province, County or other sources as may become available.

8.1.5 Program and Plan Adjustment

Based on the annual review and report to Council, adjustments to this Plan may be required, including:

- **Adjustments to the Plan:** Based on the monitoring and evaluation process, changes to the terms of this Plan, the eligibility requirements, or the financial incentive programs may be required. Council may also choose to discontinue funding for one or more of the financial incentive programs and may do so without amending this Plan. However, the permanent/change/removal of a financial incentive program or the addition of eligibility criteria or eligible costs will require an amendment to this Plan in accordance with Section 28 of the *Planning Act*.
- **Adjustments to Program Funding:** It is recognized that Council or its designated authority may choose to cease, reduce or increase funding to one or more of the financial incentive programs, based on an evaluation of this Plan. Adjustments to program funding or the amount of the annual budget will not require an amendment to this Plan.

The activities above are intended to be repeated on an annual basis throughout the life of this Plan.

9 IMPLEMENTATION

Council or its designated approval authority will oversee the implementation of this Plan while day-to-day tasks associated with implementation will be coordinated by the Plan Administrator. This section outlines how the Plan is to be implemented and administered.

9.1 DEFINITIONS

To assist in the interpretation of this Plan, the following defines some of the terms used in this Plan:

Administrator or Plan Administrator means one or two Municipal staff members assigned by Council, who are primarily responsible for ensuring that the responsibilities of the Plan Administrator, as set out herein, are fulfilled.

Affordable/Attainable Housing can be defined as housing which accounts for no more than 30% of a household's gross income. Affordable/Attainable housing is housing that gives a household the ability to enter the local housing market before graduating to successively higher levels of housing within the market. Implicit in this definition of attainability is the idea that a range of housing options (type, size, tenure, cost) exist in the local market, allowing households at various income levels to find and secure suitable housing as their needs or means change.

Applicant, unless otherwise indicated, means a registered owner, assessed owner or tenant of lands and buildings within the community improvement project area who has a right to apply for one or more financial incentive(s) in accordance with the policies of this Plan.

Approval Authority means the body responsible for approving or denying financial incentive applications. By default, the approval authority is Council. However, Council may designate an approval authority in accordance with the policies of this Plan.

Brownfield means a site that is under-developed or was previously developed and may be contaminated. They are usually, but not exclusively, former industrial or commercial properties that may be underutilized, derelict or vacant.

Certificate of Property Use means a certificate of property use issued in accordance with Section 168.6 of the *Environmental Protection Act*. The Certificate of Property Use may outline actions or restrictions on use or construction in relation to managing adverse effects of contaminants, as outlined in a risk assessment.

Community Improvement unless otherwise specified, is as defined in accordance with its definition under Section 28 of the *Planning Act*.

Community Improvement Plan unless otherwise specified, is defined in accordance with its meaning under Section 28 of the *Planning Act*.

Community Improvement Project Area unless otherwise specified, is as defined in accordance with its meaning under Section 28 of the *Planning Act*.

Community Improvement Works refer to the activities undertaken in accordance with the policies of this Plan, including activities that may be funded by the financial incentives.

Council means the Council of the Municipality of Grey Highlands.

Development Period means a period that begins when the Rehabilitation Period ends and concludes on the earlier of a) the end date specified in the municipal property tax assistance bylaw or b) when the property tax assistance is equal to the eligible remediation costs, as per section 365.1 of the *Municipal Act, 2001*.

Eligible Applicant means an applicant (as defined above) who meets all the general and program specific requirements of the financial incentive programs and prepares and submits an application for a grant or loan that is in accordance with the specific requirements of the program, as outlined in this Plan. The Plan Administrator reserves the right to determine whether an applicant is eligible for the financial incentive programs.

Financial Incentive Program means a program listed in Section 4 of this Plan.

Financial Incentive Program Agreement means an agreement executed between the Municipality and a successful applicant for a financial incentive program, as required by this Plan.

Greenfield Property means a vacant property that has no prior history of development, or an agricultural use that has not been developed or redeveloped for urban uses. In determining whether a property is considered a greenfield, the Approval Authority, in consultation with the Administrator of this Plan, shall have sole discretion.

Greyfields are underutilized properties that have been affected by development, but not to the extent required to be considered a brownfield site. Unlike brownfield sites, greyfield sites have not endured significant environmental damage. An example of a greyfield would be a property containing an abandoned restaurant.

Gross Floor Area means, for a dwelling, the total area of the storeys exclusive of basements, cellars, attic, garages, sunrooms, unenclosed verandas or porches; and for a building other than a dwelling, the total area of all the floors contained within the outside walls of the building. Only that floor area having a clear height to the ceiling of at least 2.25 metres may be used to calculate floor area.

Heritage, when used as an adjective, means historic and significant with respect to cultural heritage value or interest. Heritage, when used in designated heritage buildings, refers to buildings designated under Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act*. Similarly, the term heritage,

when used in reference to a Heritage Conservation District as designated in accordance with Part V of the *Ontario Heritage Act*.

Mixed Use means a combination of a mix of commercial uses (retail, restaurant, office) along with apartment dwellings located either in the upper storey(s) or the rear of the same building.

Municipality means the Municipality of Grey Highlands.

Plan or **this Plan** means the Municipality of Grey Highlands Community Improvement Plan, unless otherwise specified.

Qualified Person is a person as defined by Section 168.1 of the *Environmental Protection Act*, Ontario Regulation 153/04 (as amended by Ontario Regulation 66/08) who meets the qualifications to be a qualified person for the purpose of:

- a) Conducting or supervising a Phase I environmental site assessment;
- b) Conducting or supervising a Phase II environmental site assessment; and
- c) Completing the certifications that must be completed by a qualified person in a record of site condition in respect of a property.

A qualified person is considered to meet the qualifications to be a qualified person if:

- a) The person holds a license, limited license or temporary license under the *Professional Engineers Act*; or
- b) The person holds a certificate of registration under the *Professional Geoscientists Act* and is a practicing member, temporary member or limited member of the Association of Professional Geoscientists of Ontario.

Record of Site Condition means the record of site condition prepared and filed in accordance with Section 168.4 of the *Environmental Protection Act*.

Risk Assessment means an assessment of risks prepared and filed in accordance with Section 168.4 of the *Environmental Protection Act*.

Rehabilitation Period means the period starting from the date a municipal property tax assistance bylaw is passed to the earlier of a) eighteen months, b) the date a Record of Site Condition is filed, or c) when the property tax assistance is equal to the eligible remediation costs (as defined) under Section 168.4 of the *Environmental Protection Act*.

Vacant land is land that does not contain any permanent structures and is not environmentally damaged.

9.2 INTERPRETATION

9.2.1 | Interpretation at Sole Discretion of Council

Ultimately the Community Improvement Plan will be interpreted at the sole discretion of Council or the designated approval authority in consultation with Plan Administrator. In some cases, as provided herein, interpretation and discretion may rest with the Plan Administrator.

9.3 IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD

9.3.1 Implementation Period

It is anticipated that this Plan will be implemented over a 10-year period. Council may adjust this implementation period as it deems appropriate or necessary, subject to funding, as approved by Council.

9.3.2 Dissolution of Community Improvement Plan

Once Council is satisfied that the Plan has been carried out, Council may choose to dissolve the community improvement project by bylaw which renders the Plan inoperative.

9.4 ADMINISTRATION OF PROGRAM

9.4.1 Designation of Plan Administrator

Upon implementation of this Plan, Council will designate a member of Municipal staff to be the Plan Administrator. An alternate Plan Administrator should also be designated in the event that the primary Plan Administrator becomes unavailable.

9.4.2 Designation of Approval Authority

By default, Council will be the approval authority, making decisions on financial applications. Council may choose to delegate this authority to a committee of its choosing by bylaw in consideration of recommendation by staff. The Plan Administrator may be included as a member of this committee or function as a coordinator for the committee.

9.4.3 Administration of Financial Incentive Programs

The financial incentive programs outlined in this document will be administered primarily by the Plan Administrator, and decisions about whether to approve financial incentive applications will be made by Council or its designated approval authority.

9.4.4 Submission of Applications for Financial Incentives

Applications for financial incentive programs will be submitted and processed in accordance with the steps outlined in this document. The Plan Administrator will be responsible for ensuring that this process is carried out in a timely manner.

9.4.5 Approval of Applications for Financial Incentives

Decisions on financial incentive applications and Financial Incentive Program Agreements will be made by Council. Should an application be refused, all applicants will be given an opportunity to request that Council reconsider its decision, as applicable. Where Council has designated approval authority to a committee, an applicant will be given an opportunity to appeal a refusal for Council consideration.

9.5 BUDGETING FOR THE INCENTIVE PROGRAMS

9.5.1 Annual Budget for Financial Incentive Programs

Council will establish an annual overall budget for financial incentive programs and may allocate all or a portion of the funds to individual programs based on the monitoring process outlined in this document and based on annual priorities.

9.5.2 Changes to Funding Levels

In accordance with the monitoring process outlined in this document, Council will determine changes in the funding and incentive levels are necessary or warranted to ensure that the Community Improvement Plan functions properly considering the Municipality's financial circumstances. Any change to the funding for the financial incentive programs of this Community Improvement Plan will be made at the sole discretion of Council, without an amendment to this Plan.

9.5.3 Funding Sources

The Municipality shall identify, explore, and pursue external funding sources where possible to support the incentive programs, including Provincial funding sources as may be made available from time to time, and Provincial or County participation in the financial incentives, where possible.

9.6 GENERAL ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS FOR INCENTIVE PROGRAMS

The following General Eligibility Requirements are applicable to all incentive programs and must be met in order for an applicant to be considered eligible for any of the financial incentive programs. The General Eligibility Requirements must be read by the applicant in association with program specific eligibility requirements and program details.

General Eligibility Requirements include:

9.6.1 Timing of Community Improvement Works

In order to be eligible for any incentive program contained with the Municipality of Grey Highlands Community Improvement Plan, a financial incentive program application form must

be submitted to the Municipality (accepted and processed by the Plan Administrator) prior to commencing any community improvement works.

9.6.2 Only Property Owners or Tenants with Consent

Eligible applicants must be either the owner of the property, an agent for the owner of the property, or the tenant of a property to whom the owner has provided written consent for the application. Should ownership change hands prior to the approval of an application or while works are being undertaken, the tenant shall advise the Municipality and obtain the new owner's authorization.

9.6.3 Financial Incentives Not Available to Greenfield Properties

In no case shall a greenfield property, as defined in this Plan, be eligible for financial incentive programs. This criterion was temporarily waived in 2020 as part of the Residential Municipal Development Charges Reimbursement Grant offering, which has now expired.

9.6.4 No Outstanding Property Tax Arrears

The property owner must not have outstanding tax property arrears and must be in good standing regarding taxation at the time of application and through the duration of the incentive benefit period, as identified within the Municipality of Grey Highlands Community Improvement Plan.

9.6.5 Number of Applicants Per Property

The total number of approved applications per property roll number is limited to a maximum of three over a five-year period, up to a total combined maximum of \$3,000 in financial incentives.

9.6.6 Complete Financial Incentive Application and Supporting Materials

In order to be eligible, all incentive program applications must include completed application forms and supporting materials such as detailed work plans, cost estimate(s), applicable reports, and any additional information as may be applicable or required by the Municipality.

9.6.7 Project in Accordance with Municipal Bylaws, Etc.

Community improvement works associated with an incentive program application must be in accordance with all Municipal bylaws policies procedures, standards, and guidelines in order to be approved.

9.6.8 Project in Conformity with the Official Plan and Zoning Bylaw

Existing and proposed land uses must be in conformity with the policies and standards provided by the Municipality's Official Plan, and in accordance with applicable regulations, such as the Zoning Bylaw, and all other planning documents.

9.6.9 Project in Accordance with Planning Approvals and Building Permits

Community improvement works associated with an incentive program application must be undertaken pursuant to application for planning approval and/or building permit, and any additional required permits, and in accordance with the Ontario Building Code and all applicable planning policies and standards.

9.6.10 Conformity with Design Criteria

The proposed exterior design of buildings, including signage associated with an incentive program application must be considered by the Municipality as consistent with the Municipality's desired goals for appearance/character of the Municipality, in relation to the design criteria outlined in this Plan, and any design guidelines adopted by the Municipality in the future, as applicable. Council will consider details of exterior design proposed by each application when determining eligibility for incentive programs of the Community Improvement Plan. Council will use the design criteria as well as any future design guidelines adopted by the Municipality as tools to characterize whether a project is considered desirable and meets the goals and objectives of this Plan.

9.6.11 Completed Works to be Consistent with Approved Application

Community improvement works undertaken and completed that are associated with an approved incentive program application must be consistent with the project description contained in the application form and supporting materials, and with the program agreement. Should the works not be consistent with the original project description, to the satisfaction of the Plan Administrator the Municipality may delay, reduce or cancel the approved incentive program benefits, and may require repayment of any of the incentive program benefits, at the discretion of the Municipality.

9.6.12 Combination and Value of Incentives

The incentive programs made available under the Municipality of Grey Highlands Community Improvement Plan may be used individually or may be combined, subject to the exceptions outlined within the specific program details and eligibility criteria in the Community Improvement Plan.

The total of all incentive benefits (including grants and reimbursements) provided to each applicant for each community improvement proposal for buildings or lands must not exceed the project's costs related to the planning, or re-planning, design or redesign, re-subdivision, clearance, development, or redevelopment, and/or reconstruction and rehabilitation association with the application.

There is a cap of \$1,500 on the total financial incentives approved per property/business owner per property per year.

9.6.13 Not Maintenance or Life Cycle Replacements

Eligible projects are generally only considered to include improvements over existing features. The incentive programs are not intended to cover life cycle replacements or maintenance activities. Exceptions may be considered for original features of designated historic/heritage buildings.

9.6.14 Grants to be a Maximum 50% of the Eligible Costs

In no case shall the total amounts of all grants be greater than 50% of the calculated eligible costs of the project(s), with the exception of the portable accessibility ramp reimbursement grant, which may provide up to 100% of the total cost, not including HST, up to a maximum of \$250.

9.6.15 Minimum Grant of \$500

Should a grant have a value of less than \$500, the approval authority has the sole discretion to reject the application on the basis that the project is too minor and the administrative costs too high to be worth processing the grant.

9.6.16 Franchises Are Not Eligible

Participation in this program is limited to independently owned and operated businesses that are not part of any franchise.

9.7 GENERAL PROCESS AND SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS FOR INCENTIVE PROGRAMS

A pre-application meeting with a multidisciplinary staff review team (includes representatives from Building, Economic Development, Finance, and Planning Departments) is required prior to the submission of an application; email ecdev@greyhighlands.ca to schedule a meeting.

In order to be eligible for any of the incentive programs, applicants must submit a complete application in accordance with the General Process and Submission Requirements outlined below.

A complete application will include:

1. Completed application forms; and
2. Supporting materials such as plans, cost estimate(s) and contracts, applicable reports, and any additional information required by the Plan Administrator and/or Council or its designated approval authority.

General process and submission requirements include the following:

9.7.1 Municipality Not Responsible for Applicant's Costs

The Municipality is not responsible for any costs incurred by the Applicant during the application process, including costs associated with preparing the materials which are required by the Municipality as part of a complete application.

9.7.2 Application Prior to Commencement of Works

An application must be submitted to the Municipality prior to commencing any community improvement works. Should an application be submitted following the commencement of community improvement works, the application will be rejected upon receipt.

Potential projects may commence upon acknowledged submission of the CIP application to the Municipality, with the explicit understanding that the Municipality will not be held liable or responsible for any costs incurred if the project is not approved.

9.7.3 Applicant to Declare Other Funding

All sources of additional funding or incentives must be declared at the time of submission. The Plan Administrator is entitled to make recommendations for incentive reductions based upon any declared funding or incentive.

9.7.4 Administrator's Application Review

The Plan Administrator will initially evaluate all applications and supporting materials and offer a recommendation to Council or its designated approval authority who will then make a decision on the applicant.

9.7.5 Financial Incentive Program Agreement

Should the application be approved by Council or its designated approval authority, a Financial Incentive Program Agreement will be required, which will outline the terms, duration, default, and any other provisions of the incentive program. This agreement will also be subject to approval by Council.

9.7.6 Additional Information May be Required

Should the Plan Administrator, or Council or its designated approval authority require additional information, plans, studies, or any additional works related to the proposed project and incentive program application, the requested information and/or works must be adequately provided and/or undertaken prior to approval of the application.

9.7.7 Project Audit at the Cost of the Applicant

Upon approval and/or completion of community improvement works, the Municipality, under direction of the Plan Administrator, reserves the right to audit the costs associated with any of the works described by the approved application for financial incentive(s). Audits will be undertaken at the expense of the applicant.

9.7.8 Inspection of Completed Project

Upon approval and/or completion of community improvement works, the Municipality reserves the right to inspect any properties/buildings that are associated with an incentive program application offered within this Plan. Inspections would be carried out by the Plan Administrator.

9.7.9 Failure to Meet Requirements

Should the applicant fall into default of the General Eligibility Requirements, or fail to meet the detailed requirements of each of the incentive programs, the financial incentive program agreement, or any other requirements of the Municipality, the Municipality, under the direction of the Plan Administrator, may delay, reduce or cancel the approved incentive program benefits and may require repayment of any of the incentive program benefits, at the discretion of the Plan Administrator in consultation with Council or its designated approval authority.

9.7.10 Discontinuation of Funding

The Municipality may discontinue funding any of the incentive programs at any time; however, all applicants with approved incentive program benefits will continue to receive the benefits in accordance with the terms outlined in this Plan, subject to fulfilling any requirements and agreements and subject to available funding as approved by Council or its designated approval authority.

9.7.11 Cancellation of Grant due to Failure to Initiate the Project

Any program commitments may be cancelled if work does not commence within six months of the approval of an application, or in accordance with an agreement with the Municipality.

9.8 APPLICATION PROCESS FOR INCENTIVE PROGRAMS

9.8.1 Application Process

The Municipality may implement either a "first come, first served" or an "intake window(s)" process for receiving and making decisions on financial incentive applications. By default, this Plan is to be administered by a "first come, first served" process. However, Council may choose to change the process in consideration of a recommendation of staff and/or a Committee of Council.

Council has the discretion to modify the approval process for applications at any time. The general process types are outlined as follows:

First Come, First Served: In a first come, first served application process, the Municipality accepts grants applications throughout the year, provided funding is still available. Applications are processed and decided upon in the order in which they are received. When funding is exhausted, the Municipality will close the application process until funding becomes available.

Intake Window: In an intake window application process, the Municipality may establish a set timeframe in which it will accept applications. All applications will be reviewed and decided upon at a meeting of Council or the delegated approval authority. During this process, funding may become exhausted. Accordingly, there may be a need to prioritize which approved applications will receive funding. Council or the designated authority will have the sole discretion to determine how the applications may be prioritized for funding (in consideration of the Plan Administrator's recommendations). In no order, applications may be prioritized on a basis of:

- Consultation with the applicants to determine if any applicants are accepting of application deferral until funding becomes available;
- Whether properties are designated or listed as being of historical interest;
- The value of the grant being sought (i.e., a large application may be deferred to permit many smaller improvements to benefit a larger number of property owners);
- Whether the project or property is considered to carry great importance and significance (e.g. highly visible corner lots); and/or
- Other criteria as may be determined by Council or its designated approval authority.

The program is currently operating on a first come, first served basis with no intake deadlines.

9.8.2 Application Process Changes

Council may direct changes to the application process without amending this Plan. Changes should be considered as part of the annual monitoring and evaluation of the Plan and in consideration of the recommendations provided by staff, the Review Panel and/or a Committee of Council.

9.8.3 Pre-Application Consultation (*Discretionary Based on Nature of Project*)

- Applicants are required to arrange and participate in a pre-application consultation meeting with the Plan Administrator, in order to discuss and confirm application requirements, program eligibility, proposed scope of work, project timing, supporting documentation requirements, etc.
- The applicant will be required to submit a completed application, which will include all the required application forms, in addition to any supporting documentation, as required by the Plan Administrator or by Council or its designated approval authority.
- Supporting documentation may include, but is not limited to, the following materials:
 - Photographs of the existing building condition or property;
 - Historical photographs and/or drawings
 - A site plan and/or professional design study/architectural drawings;
 - Specification of the proposed works, including a work plan for the improvements and construction drawings; and/or
 - At least one cost estimate for eligible work, preferably provided by licensed contractors or consultants, as appropriate in the context of the financial

incentive program. Multiple quotes are preferred, however if only one quote is provided, it will be evaluated using construction industry reference tools to help validate the proposed costs are within reason for the project.

- Once all the required forms and supporting materials are received, the Plan Administrator will undertake a preliminary screening of the proposal and application.
 - Based on the application and proposal, the results of the preliminary screening, the Plan Administrator may perform an initial site visit and inspection of the building/property, as necessary. The Plan Administrator will inform the applicant of the approximate time for the site visit and inspection. The applicant will accompany the inspector during the inspection, if possible, and will inform the inspector of any potential safety hazards on the site.
 - If the application clearly does not meet the program requirements, the application will not be accepted.
 - If the application meets the program requirements, the application will be accepted. By accepting an application for any of the financial incentive programs, the Plan Administrator does not guarantee program approval.

9.8.4 Application Review and Evaluation

- i. Once an application has been accepted by the Plan Administrator, information related to the applicant, application, and proposal information will be entered into the Municipality's database in order to track the application details, progress and results in according with the Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy. This will be an on-going task throughout the remainder of the application process as this information will need to be updated as the application is processed.
- ii. Applications and supporting documentation will be considered by the Plan Administrator against the incentive program eligibility requirements (including both general and specific requirements). Based on the proposal, application, and fulfillment of eligibility requirements, the Plan Administrator will determine if the proposal and application will be considered eligible. Based on eligibility, a recommendation report will be prepared by the Plan Administrator. The report may recommend approval of the application or refusal of the application.
- iii. Should the Plan Administrator recommend approval of the application, a financial incentive program agreement will be prepared by the Plan Administrator. If applicable, the financial incentive program agreement will be forwarded to the applicant to be dated and signed.
- iv. Once the financial incentive program agreement has been reviewed by all parties and returned to the Municipality, the application, recommendation report, and agreement will be forwarded to Council or its designated approval authority to initiate the approval process. Should the application be approved, the Plan Administrator will ensure that all parties sign the agreement prior to the commencement of any approved works. If the agreement is not signed by all parties, the Municipality does not guarantee program approval.

9.8.5 Application Approval

- If the Plan Administrator has recommended that the application be refused, the Recommendation Report will be provided to Council or its designated approval authority for a decision. Where a designated approval authority has refused the application, the applicant may re-submit the application for reconsideration by Council, provided the applicant has made consideration of the designated approval authority's reasons for refusal. If Council or its designated approval authority determines that the application should be approved, the process continues from Step 3.3 (below).
- Alternatively, if the Plan Administrator has recommended that the application be approved, the Recommendation Report and signed agreement will be forwarded to Council or the designated approval authority for consideration. If the application is approved, the process continues with the next step (3.3). If the application is refused, the applicant may re-submit the application for reconsideration by Council provided the applicant has made consideration of Council's reasons for refusal.
- If Council or its designated approval authority approves the application and Financial Incentive Program Agreement, the Agreement will be executed by the signing and dating of the agreements by Municipal officials. A copy of the signed and dated Financial Incentive Program Agreement will be provided to the applicant.

9.8.6 Completion of Works and Payment

- The applicant may commence improvement works once the Community Improvement Plan application has been submitted to the Municipality, however in doing so, explicitly understands and acknowledges (in writing) that the Municipality will not be held liable or responsible for any costs incurred if the project is not approved.
- Payment of the financial incentive, in accordance with the Financial Incentive Program Agreement, will be provided upon successful completion of the approved works as per Section 4.
- Prior to the issuance of the financial incentive, the applicant may be required to provide the Plan Administrator with final supporting documentation, which may include but is not limited to:
 - Photographic evidence of the completed works satisfactory to the Municipality;
 - Other documentation proving completion of the project;
 - Invoices for all eligible work done, indicating the total amount paid for eligible works;
 - Proof of payment to contractors, in full; and
 - Presentation of the terms of a loan and/or proof of approval of a loan provided by a financial institution, as it may be applicable in relation to the interest rebate programs contained in this Plan.
- Final Site Inspection (if required): the Plan Administrator may perform a final site visit and inspection of the building/property (as necessary) in order to ensure that the

project has been completed in accordance with the Financial Incentive Program Agreement.

- Assurance of Conformity to the Program Requirements and Financial Incentive Program Agreement: prior to issuance of the financial incentive payment, the Plan Administrator will ensure that all program requirements and details of the Financial Incentive Program Agreement have been met.
- If Applicant has Defaulted on the Agreement: the Plan Administrator will take appropriate remedies as specified in the agreement if the applicant defaults on the Financial Incentive Program Agreement.
- Payment of Grant: if all the program requirements and Financial Incentive Program Agreement requirements have been met to the Plan Administrator's satisfaction in accordance with the decision of Council or its designated approval authority, the Plan Administrator will issue payment of the approved grant in accordance with the general and specific program eligibility requirement, and the Financial Incentive Program Agreement.

9.9 TIMELINE FOR APPLICATION REVIEW AND DECISION

This Plan recognizes that the success and uptake of the financial incentive programs will depend in part on the expedience of the application and review process. As a guide, and subject to the availability of staff resources, the Plan Administrator will accept and review applications for funding in consideration of the following timeline:

- The Plan Administrator should be available to meet with a potential applicant for a pre-consultation meeting within ten (10) business days of being requested to meet by a potential applicant, or as soon as is reasonably possible.
- The Plan Administrator should review an application for financial incentives and notify the applicant of its completeness within ten (10) business days of receiving the application, or sooner, if possible.
- Upon receipt of the application, the Plan Administrator should prepare a recommendation report to Council or its designated approval authority and, if applicable based on the recommendations contained within the recommendation report, prepare a Financial Incentive Program Agreement and forward it to the applicant within twenty-five (25) business days of receiving the application.
- The application for funding should be considered for approval at the next meeting of Council if Council is the approval authority or the next planned meeting of the designated approval authority.
- The total time between receipt of a complete application for funding and the meeting to consider the application should not exceed thirty-five (35) business days.
- The execution of the Financial Incentive Program Agreement should occur within ten (10) business days of the application approval. Should the application be approved, payment of the grant should occur within thirty (30) business days of completion of the project. The applicant is responsible for notifying the Municipality of the completion of the project and may be required to provide proof of its completion.

- The timelines identified above are for guideline purposes only and are not intended to be construed as deadlines. Timelines will vary depending on the availability of staff and resources and the nature of the application received.

10 URBAN DESIGN CRITERIA

The implementation of this Plan depends in part upon the establishment and application of design-related eligibility criteria. Urban design criteria are intended to establish an aesthetic standard for improvements made under this Plan. It is recognized that not all urban design criteria outlined in this section will be applicable in all cases due to the context of the financial incentive application. The interpretation and application of these criteria will ultimately rest with Council or the designated approval authority. The criteria are supported by photographs of useful precedents in the Municipality of Grey Highlands or other communities, to help illustrate the intent of the criteria. However, the wording takes precedence over the images, which are provided for illustrative purposes only.

10.1 FAÇADE AND BUILDING IMPROVEMENT CRITERIA

These criteria are applicable to the façade and building signage improvement grant program. Additionally, these criteria should also be considered as part of the development of new buildings under the tax increment equivalent grant program, the planning and building application fees program and the brownfields property tax assistance programs. Applications will be assessed for conformity and compatibility with the overall streetscape and adjacent properties.

Principle

Maintain and restore historic or original building materials, architectural elements and features.

Criteria

1. Original colours, architectural detailing (such as original woodwork and decorative trims) and original materials should be maintained and restored where possible. If original materials or detailing must be replaced, similar materials should be used as much as possible.
2. The reconstruction of missing historic features of the façade is encouraged, based on historic documentation.
3. Alterations should not remove, obscure, overwhelm or cover original historic materials and architectural elements.
4. The use of economical materials such as aluminum cladding is strongly discouraged.
5. Where original colours are not known even in consideration of historic documentation of a property, the use of a palette of heritage colours, as may be offered through many paint supply stores, is encouraged for exterior painting. The applicant will be required to supply samples of proposed paint colours in support of their application.

Maximize façade interest, detailing and differentiate the components of a façade (base, middle and top).

6. Proposals must be in consideration of historical documentation about the original appearance of the façade, where such documentation is available.
1. Principal building entrances should face the street/sidewalk. Secondary entrances may be provided from side yards or rear yards.
2. Doors should be articulated through recessed entryways and detailed framing.
3. Windows should be articulated with detailed framing and division of window panels. Large, undivided windowpanes should be avoided.
4. Detailing and design of the façade should be differentiated using different materials, colours or the application of architectural elements. There should be a base, a middle and a cornice. Repeating elements along the façade are encouraged (e.g., repeating architectural elements or windows). A storefront cornice and signboard should be provided.

Maximize barrier-free access.

1. Entryways should be barrier-free in accordance with the Ontario Building Code's standards. Building entrances should not have steps. Where this cannot be avoided, the installation of an accessibility ramp or an alternate entrance is encouraged even where it is not required by the Ontario Building Code.
2. Automatic doors are encouraged even where they are not required by the Ontario Building Code.

Create an active, inviting façade using murals, awnings and patios/sidewalk cafes.

1. Murals are encouraged on side and rear facades. While traditional murals (painting directly onto a wall or building exterior) are acceptable, the program also encourages murals, paintings and photographs on weatherproof boards/materials that can be affixed directly to the exterior of the building/property.
2. Murals should generally relate to historic persons, places and events which reference and celebrate the Municipality of Grey Highlands' history. Reproductions of historic photographs and images are also encouraged.
3. Awnings are encouraged; where provided, awnings should be designed to be proportional to the façade and use colours that are complementary to the façade colours.

4. In all cases, consideration should be made to incorporate awnings into a façade improvement. Permanent, fabric awnings and retractable awnings are encouraged.
5. Bubble-style awnings are discouraged.
6. Signage may be imprinted on an awning provided it is proportionally sized and scaled for pedestrians.
7. Informal sidewalk cafes are encouraged in the front yard. Where space permits, designated patio areas may be provided in the front or side yard.
8. Large outdoor seating areas (more than 12 seats) should be designated with decorative fencing.

10.2 SIGNAGE CRITERIA

These criteria are particularly applicable to any applications made for a signage improvement grant. However, these criteria should also be considered under any other program where the applicant is proposing new signage as part of their project (e.g., as part of a new building being constructed with the property tax increment equivalent grant program, the planning and building application fees program and the brownfields property tax assistance program).

Principle

Signage should be scaled for pedestrians and not vehicular traffic.

Criteria

1. Signage should be scaled according to the building height and oriented for slow traffic and pedestrians.
2. Only one principal sign should be used, and it should be located above the principal building entrance; and no more than two small signs should be used, and only if they are used to enhance the appearance of the storefront. For clarity, large signs and cluttered signs are to be avoided.
3. Hanging perpendicular signs are encouraged.
4. Back-lit and neon signs are strongly discouraged; and will not be supported by any of the CIP programs.
5. Front-lit signage is encouraged.
6. Embossed or engraved signage is encouraged.
7. Where provided, signage should be contained in the storefront cornice/sign board area of the façade.
8. Signage should not be used in the storefront windows, except a minimal number of painted signs. Storefront windows should be as transparent as possible.

10.3 PROPERTY AND LANDSCAPING IMPROVEMENT CRITERIA

These criteria are particularly applicable to any applications made for a property and landscaping improvement grant. However, these criteria should also be considered under any other program where the applicant is proposing landscaping, parking and similar property improvements.

Principle	Criteria
Minimize visual impact of parking area.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Parking areas should ideally be located in the rear of buildings. Only existing side yard parking areas will be considered for a grant. 2. Rear yard parking should have a clear access or entrance to the building. Rear building entrances are encouraged; where they cannot be provided, signage is encouraged to direct visitors to the main entrance. 3. Driveways from main arteries should be minimized. The width of driveways from main arteries should generally be minimized (two one-way driveways are preferred over one large, two-way driveways). 4. Parking areas should be buffered from the sidewalk/street. A planting strip including vertical elements (decorative fencing, trees, plantings) is encouraged. 5. The use of permeable paving surfaces is encouraged. 6. Parking areas should not restrict pedestrian access to building entrances. Clearly designated walkways and pathways should be provided within parking areas to enable persons to walk from the parking area and into the building or onto the sidewalk. 7. Large parking areas should be broken up with decorative landscaping and tree planting.
Maximize landscaping and planting to create visual interest.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Generally business owners and residents are encouraged to implement and maintain temporary plantings, such as hanging window planters. 2. Landscaping and planting strips are encouraged in accordance with the criteria noted above for minimizing the visual impact of parking areas. 3. Permanent planting should be completed in accordance with the Core Area Design Study as may be prepared by the Town.

Encourage sustainable planting and paving materials.

1. The use of permeable paving surfaces is encouraged.
2. The use of native plantings as part of landscaping is encouraged to minimize watering needs and maintenance costs.

10.4 BUILT FORM, SCALE AND MASSING CRITERIA

These criteria will be applicable to the development of new buildings or any additions made to buildings as may be part of the property tax increment equivalent grant programs, the planning and building application fees program or the brownfields property tax assistance program.

Principle

Criteria

Additions should be sensitive to the existing context and have a minimal impact on the existing building, particularly historic buildings.

1. For buildings considered to be historic, additions should not be located closer to the front lot line than the original building face.
2. The height of building additions should be consistent with the original building height.
3. The roof should correspond with the original roof (e.g., flat or sloping).
4. The design of building additions should be in accordance with the criteria for façade improvements.

New buildings should be compatible with the existing urban fabric and be designed to be pedestrian-oriented.

1. New buildings should be located similarly to adjacent buildings. In downtown cores, buildings should be located close to the sidewalk.
2. New builds should not be less than two storeys in height, providing for active uses at the ground floor (retail, restaurants, personal service shops, etc.) and other uses in the upper storey(s) (residential, office space, etc.). New buildings should not exceed three storeys unless in accordance with the Official Plan and Zoning Bylaw. Buildings over three storeys should be subject to step-backs and/or angular plane requirements to minimize the visual impact of tall buildings.
3. The height of the proposed buildings should be similar to the height of adjacent buildings, with the aim of creating a harmonious roofline, minimizing large variations in building height and creating transitions in building height.

4. Principal building entrances should face the street/sidewalk. Secondary entrances may be provided from side yards or rear yards.
5. Parking areas and landscaping should be in accordance with the property and landscaping improvement criteria above.
6. New building facades and signage should be in accordance with the façade and building criteria and the signage criteria above.

11 MARKETING THE PLAN

It is important that the Municipality's residents and other stakeholders are kept aware of the programs offered by the Community Improvement Plan, and of opportunities to participate in the process. Grey County has also identified the importance of Community Improvement Plans across the County and will support and promote the opportunities presented in this Plan through their channels. To this end, marketing and promoting the incentive programs will be necessary to increase their uptake, and therefore help to implement the Plan.

At its discretion, the Municipality will complete the following activities on an on-going basis, to market and promote the Plan:

Collateral Material: The Municipality may prepare educational newsletters and/or brochures or other printed collateral material that provide an overview of this Plan and the incentive programs that are available. Collateral material may be delivered to all property owners, tenants, and other interested parties within the designated Community Improvement Project Area. Brochures and newsletters may also be displayed and provided by the Municipality at its municipal office and on the Municipal website.

Web Page: The Municipality may create a link on its website to provide general information about the Plan, as well as details for each of the financial incentive programs, along with eligibility criteria and how to apply. It may also be informative to provide profiles of successful completed projects.

Promotional Display: The Municipality may prepare promotional displays that provide an overview of this Plan that can be used at events in which the Municipality is participating.

Public Consultation Events: The Municipality may hold informational seminars, workshops or open houses upon adoption of the Plan and on an annual basis during the Plan's implementation to educate property owners, tenants, and other interested parties about the Plan, allow them to ask questions, and to communicate any changes to stakeholders.

Responsiveness to Public Inquiries: The Plan Administrator will be available on an on-going basis to answer questions from potential applicants with respect to the Plan and its programs. The Plan Administrator will also participate in pre-application consultation meetings as well as site visits to discuss the merits of a potential application with the applicant.

Communication of the Monitoring and Evaluation Program: Information obtained as a result of the monitoring and evaluation program may also be made available through newsletters and information sheets to promote the achievements of this Plan and to highlight case studies.

Other Activities: The Municipality may organize and participate in other appropriate activities to encourage participation by property owners, tenants, and other interested parties in this

Plan's programs. The Municipality may undertake other marketing initiatives as deemed appropriate without requiring an amendment to this Plan.

12 CONCLUSION

The Municipality of Grey Highlands' Community Improvement Plan sets forth a long-term strategy for improving, strengthening and revitalizing the Municipality. The Plan outlines opportunities for participation in community initiatives on the part of both the Municipality and the private sector.

This Plan outlines the types of projects and programs that will encourage desirable private property improvements and activities that the Municipality may initiate to improve the public realm. Additionally, the Plan outlines a strategy for monitoring and evaluating its performance, to ensure that the vision, goals and objectives for the community are being achieved, and that the community is evolving in a positive and desirable way.