

By-Law No. 10658-2026

THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF SMITHS FALLS

Being a by-law to amend The Community Improvement Plan in the Town
of Smiths Falls, By-Law No. 10386-2022

TOWN-INITIATED AMENDMENTS

File No. CIP 2025 Amendments

January 5, 2026.

3rd Edition

TOWN OF SMITHS FALLS

BY-LAW NO. 10658-2026

COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN AMENDMENTS

On October 11, 2022, Council approved a new Community Improvement Plan for the Town of Smiths Falls. A Community Improvement Plan (CIP) is a community development tool under Section 28 of the Planning Act and supported in the Town's Official Plan that is geared to "promote and focus public and private sector investment into maintenance, rehabilitation, and redevelopment activities that improve the living and working conditions in the Town." This new CIP replaced the 2015 CIP that applied a more limited range of incentives to the downtown area only.

The proposed amendments are to increase funding levels to reflect increasing construction costs and to attract affordable housing development, add incentives specific to heritage properties, and to clarify requirements and eligible projects.

BE IT RESOLVED THAT The Council of the Corporation of the Town of Smiths Falls enacts as follows:

SECTION 1

The existing wording of Section 1.3: Overview of this CIP in By-law No. 10386-2022 is hereby amended by adding the following:

5. *Built Heritage **Resources** where designated heritage buildings are **conserved** and maintained so that current and future generations of residents and visitors can appreciate how our community developed and prospered through the ages.*

SECTION 2

The existing wording of Section 4.1: Conditions of All Incentive Programs subsection 5 in By-law No. 10386-2022 is hereby amended by removing it in its entirety and replacing it with:

"Property taxes shall be in good standing at the time of application and throughout the length of any incentive commitment. Where arrears exist, an application shall not be approved and/or incentives shall not be advanced until arrears are eliminated.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, where arrears exist and with permission from the Property Owner, the commercial tenant occupying space on the property who is not the property owner, may apply for signage only under Program 13. If approved and all requirements have been fulfilled to the Town's satisfaction, then funding will be provided to the tenant that has incurred the cost of signage".

SECTION 3

The existing wording of Section 4.1: Conditions of All Incentive Programs, subsection 6 in By-law No. 10386-2022 is hereby amended by removing the period following last word “eliminated” and adding the following:

*“There shall be no outstanding payments with respect to other municipal accounts or invoicing at the time of application and throughout the length of any incentive commitment. Where outstanding payments exist, an application shall not be approved and/or incentives shall not be advanced until arrears are eliminated **except in accordance with the allowance for commercial tenant signage described in 4.1.5 above**”.*

SECTION 4

The existing wording of Section 4.1: Conditions for All Incentive Programs in By-law No. 10386-2022 are hereby amended to add the following new subsections:

- ***4. In accordance with Section 28(7.3) of the Planning Act, the maximum amount of financial incentives that is provided in respect of the lands and buildings shall not exceed the eligible cost of the CIP with respect to those lands and buildings. Applicants may apply to more than one (1) CIP Program provided the total amount of grants do not exceed eligible costs.***
- ***4.1.19: A completed application will include a minimum of one quote for the project. If the project consists of more than one aspect (i.e.: window refurbish, masonry, signage) the quote provided will be broken down by line item.***
- ***4.1.20: All CIP funded work must be carried out by professional entities operating at arm’s length from the applicant.***
- ***4.1.21: CIP Agreements between the Town and the Applicant must be signed by the Applicant within 30 days of its approval by Council; otherwise the funding approval will be revoked. This time period may be extended at the discretion of Town Staff in extenuating circumstances.***
- ***4.1.22: Submitted invoices must show payments made. Invoices must have an HST number if applicable, and have the contractors’ business name, address, phone, and email information. If there are multiple invoices, they must be summarized by program.***
- ***4.1.23: Changes to the approved project must be approved in writing by the Town, prior to the change being implemented. Otherwise, the project may lose eligibility for funding.***
- ***4.1.24: An applicant can appeal a decision to deny the application within 30 days of Council denying the application by submitting a request with***

reasons in writing. Council will consider the appeal within 30 days of receipt, and its decision of the appeal will be considered final.

SECTION 5

The existing wording of Section 4.2.1. and 4.2.1 (a): Conditions for Incentives for Programs Specific to Attainable Housing in By-law No. 10386-2022 is hereby amended by deleting it in its entirety and replacing it with:

With respect to incentives related to the provision of affordable rental housing as defined in the Provincial Planning Statement; to receive the benefits, eligible applicants shall be required to enter into an agreement with the Town with the following considerations:

a) Each unit that receives a benefit through the program(s) shall meet the program definition of “affordable” as defined in the Provincial Planning Statement, Section 8, Definitions, Affordable, section b.2, which states:

“a unit for which the rent is at or below the average market rent of a unit in the municipality”, as outlined in the most current Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing Affordable Housing Units Bulletin. Note that when applying for development charge exemptions, the provincial requirement is that the units remain affordable for 25 years, and that terms are administered through an agreement under the Development Charges Act.

SECTION 6

The existing wording in Section 5.1.1 Exterior Universal Accessibility, under Criteria to Meet in By-law No. 10386-2022, is hereby amended as follows:

- By deleting the amount of \$15,000 and replacing it with an amount of **\$25,000**.

SECTION 7

The existing wording in Section 5.1.1 Exterior Universal Accessibility, under Eligible Costs in By-law No. 10386-2022, is hereby amended to add the following two additional bullet points:

- ***installing exterior lifts***
- ***where accessibility improvements are not feasible at the primary entrance, allow for accessible improvements on a secondary access point to the building, provided the main interior space is easily accessible from the secondary access.***

SECTION 8

The existing wording in Section 5.1.2: Interior Universal Accessibility, under Criteria to Meet in By-law No. 10386-2022, is hereby amended as follows:

- By deleting the amount of \$15,000 and replacing it with an amount of **\$25,000**.

SECTION 9

The existing wording of Section 5.2.3: Program 5: Attainable Housing Tax Increment Equivalent Rebate, Property Eligibility and Criteria to Meet in By-law No. 10386-2022 is hereby amended as below:

Property Eligibility

Your property is eligible to receive a Tax Increment Equivalent Rebate (TIER) if you are developing new multi-unit residential buildings or mixed use (commercial at grade) buildings. The new building shall have at least six (6) new ~~residential~~ **affordable** units. This program shields a property owner from the municipal portion of tax increases that occur as a result of the development if they provide ~~attainable~~ **affordable** rental units, **as follows:**

Criteria to Meet

In the event that the creation of new ~~attainable~~ **affordable** rental units results in an increase of the property's assessed value, a property owner may apply for the rebate equal to ~~50% of the increase~~ **as described below** in the municipal portion of property tax payments as a result of a reassessment for a period of 10 years, where they meet the criteria outlined below:

Non-Profit Organization:

Receive a rebate of 80% of the municipal portion of tax increase if all units in the new development are affordable

Or

100% of the municipal portion of tax increase if all units in the new development are affordable and are universally accessible as per the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

Other Developer:

Receive a rebate of 50% calculated based on the portion of units (out of the total) that are affordable (Footnote 1) of the municipal portion of tax increase of the affordable units

Or

Receive a rebate of 70% calculated based on the portion of units (out of the total) that are affordable (Footnote 2), of the municipal portion of tax increase if all the new affordable units are universally accessible as per the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

Footnote 1: For example, if 6 units of a 10-unit new building will be affordable, then 60% of the municipal portion of tax increase of the affordable units is eligible for 50% rebate. In this instance, if the annual amount of the municipal tax increase is \$100,000 then the annual rebate would be \$30,000.

Footnote 2: For example, if 6 units of a 10-unit new building will be affordable and accessible as indicated above, then 60% of the municipal portion of tax increase of the affordable units is eligible for 70% rebate. If in this instance, if the annual amount of the municipal tax increase is \$100,000 then the annual rebate would be \$42,000.

If you are an applicant to CIP Program 6 5 (Attainable Housing Tax Increment Equivalent Rebate):

Criteria for Program 5:

The property is located in the eligible area (see Section 3.0) AND

Application is received in writing at the time of making an application(s) for a Planning approval AND

The applicant shall provide the Town with a copy of the reassessment of the property by MPAC (at the time of receipt), photographs of the building/units showing the completed project, and other relevant drawings or documentation in support of the completed project, or as required by the Town, in order to receive the rebate AND

The applicant shall not file a property tax appeal while receiving the rebate under this program AND

*Units created shall be ~~attainable~~ **affordable** rental units (see Section 4.3 2).*

Additional Considerations

The property owner pays the property tax in full, which is then rebated in accordance with this financial incentive program, if the application is accepted.

*The TIER financial incentive for a property is offered for a maximum of 10 years from the date of the re-assessment upon which the tax increment is calculated, as long as the units meet the criteria of ~~attainable~~ **affordable** rental units.*

For any mixed-use development, tax assistance is offered to the residential portion of the building only.

Requirements for CIP Incentive Programs

*Notwithstanding any other policy in this CIP, an **attainable affordable** housing project that is also a brownfield redevelopment is permitted to receive a stacked tax increment no greater than 100% of the municipal portion under Program 5 and Program 9.*

The rebate is assignable by the owner of the property to another party (subsequent property owner, tenant or other assignment) at any time during the period of the agreement. Should the original property owner transfer its interest in the property, the rebate can, with the agreement of the municipality, continue to be assigned to the new property owner for the duration of the rebate period.

SECTION 10

The existing wording of Section 5.2.5 – Attainable Housing and Universal Accessibility in By-law No. 10386-2022 is hereby amended to remove the “Program 3 – Attainable Housing Development Charges Rebate” part in its entirety because of new provincial incentives making “affordable units” exempt from Development Charges when certain criteria is met, and renumber other sections accordingly. Subsequent sections shall be renumbered accordingly.

SECTION 11

The existing wording of Section 5.2.5 – Attainable Housing and Universal Accessibility is hereby amended to remove the “Program 5 – Attainable Housing Tax Increment Equivalent Rebate” part in its entirety. The rebates for accessibility (Programs 1 and 2) are for redeveloped properties only and tax increment equivalent rebates (Program 5) are for new developments only.

SECTION 12

The existing wording of Section 5.4.1 Program 13: Front, Side and Rear Façade Improvement Rebate, Criteria to Meet in By-law No. 10386-2022 is hereby amended as follows:

- Rebate 1A) remove “\$20,000 in costs” and replace with “**\$40,000 in costs**” and remove “a rebate of \$10,000 per property” and replace it with “**rebate of \$20,000 per property**”.
- Rebate 1B) remove “maximum of \$20,000 in costs” and replace with “**a maximum of \$40,000 in costs**” and remove “for a maximum of \$17,000 per property” and replace with “**for a maximum of \$34,000 per property**”.
- Create a new funding level for heritage-designated commercial properties as follows:

“Rebate 1C): A rebate equal to 50% of the cost of a large-scale refurbishment project is available for applicants undertaking major exterior improvements on a heritage-designated commercial property. “Large scale projects” are those where total project costs are \$40,000 up to \$100,000 for a maximum rebate of \$30,000 stackable with Rebate 1B.

- Rebate 3: add the word “**commercial**” in front of the words “older windows and “old doors”.
- Add an additional bullet point: ***refurbishing heritage windows and doors on a heritage-designated building where those attributes are described in the accompanying By-law, to protect the heritage attribute and to reduce landfill***
- Delete the sixth bullet point in the highlighted table that reads: “The application is supported by professionally prepared drawings to scale of the building’s façade, illustrating the nature of the proposed work AND” and replace it with:
“Professional drawing(s) or illustration(s) of the proposed works may be required. Photos and/or physical samples of the material(s) to be used may be substituted (for example, roofing material, siding material, etc.). One or more Artificial Intelligent (A.I.) generated image(s) are acceptable where a photo of the actual building is used and is representative of the completed project. In the case of projects on heritage-designated properties, the heritage attributes must be itemized separately from other aspects of the renovation. Staff to advise which is required at time of pre-consultation”.
- ***“Heritage approvals are all conditional on obtaining Heritage Act approvals from the Town”.***

SECTION 13

The Town of Smiths Falls Community Improvement Plan By-law # 10386-2022 Section 5.4.1, footnote 10 is hereby amended as follows:

“Designated under Part IV or Part V listed as “contributing” within the Downtown Smiths Falls Heritage Conservation District pursuant to the Ontario Heritage Act”.

SECTION 14

The existing wording of Section 5.4.2 Program 14: Building Restoration, Renovation, and Improvement Program in By-law No. 10386-2022 is hereby amended to add the following:

- ***“Rebate 3: A rebate equal to 50% of the cost of a large-scale refurbishment project is available for applicants undertaking major interior improvements***

on a heritage-designated commercial property. “Large scale projects” are those where total project costs are \$90,000 up to \$200,000 for a maximum rebate of \$100,000”.

SECTION 15

The existing wording of Section 5.4.2 Program 14: Building Restoration, Renovation, and Improvement Program in By-law No. 10386-2022 footnote14 is hereby amended as follows:

“Designated under Part IV or Part V listed as “contributing” within the Downtown Smiths Falls Heritage Conservation District pursuant to the Ontario Heritage Act”.

SECTION 16

The Town of Smiths Falls Community Improvement Plan By-law # 10386-2022 is hereby amended by adding a new subsection to the end of Section 5 (numbering to be determined after all other amendments are implemented)

“5.4.4 Program 16: Residential Heritage

Property Eligibility

The property owner of a heritage-designated property under Part IV or Part V (“contributing”) of the Ontario Heritage Act in the Town of Smiths Falls is eligible for a 50% rebate of the eligible project costs to a maximum of \$10,000.

Criteria to meet:

- ***The property is a residential property***
- ***The applicant is the property owner***
- ***The property is located within the municipality***
- ***The repairs / rehabilitation is necessary to protect the heritage attributes as listed in the accompanying Heritage Designation By-law for the property***

Additional considerations

- ***The proposed alterations are approved by the Town in accordance with the Ontario Heritage Act”.***
- ***Applicants who have not participated in a Residential Heritage program in the last five years will be given priority.***

SECTION 17

The existing wording of Section 7.1.1: The Working Committee is hereby amended by deleting the second paragraph and the bullet points numbered one through five, and replacing it with:

“Town Council shall appoint members of the Working Committee so that the Working Committee is prepared to evaluate CIP applications at the time that the CIP program(s) is/are launched. Members of the Committee will include:

- ***Manager of Development Services***
- ***Municipal Heritage Committee Chair or designate***
- ***Downtown Business Association Representative***

At staff’s discretion, two of the following Town staff will also be appointed to the committee:

- ***Representative from Finance***
- ***Representative from Economic Development***
- ***Chief Building Official***
- ***Director of Community Services***

SECTION 18

The existing wording of Section 7.1.2: Funds for the CIP, third paragraph, is hereby amended as follows:

“If there are municipal budget constraints to support the CIP programs, the Town shall prioritize funding to support projects that are considered to bring the greatest overall impact to the community. ~~rebate attainable housing with barrier-free design, given the demand for these housing units and their scarcity. Next, the Town shall prioritize funding for attainable housing units, given the demand for these housing units and their scarcity. Otherwise, the Town may prioritize funding for any other program based on the Town’s monitoring of interest in the various funding programs.”~~

SECTION 19

The existing wording of Section 7.2: Monitoring and Updating the CIP, first paragraph, is hereby amended as follows:

“Programs named in this CIP may be offered at the discretion of Council, and they may be established or rescinded by Council without an amendment to this CIP. Council may also amend the administrative details of the specific programs **or clerical corrections to the Plan** without a formal amendment. The incentive programs may apply, at the

discretion of Council, to the whole or to part of the community improvement project area. Additions of other community improvement project areas and additions of programs shall require a formal amendment to this CIP”.

SECTION 20

The Town of Smiths Falls Community Improvement Plan By-law # 10386-2022 is hereby amended by replacing the word “attainable” with the word “**affordable**” throughout the document.

SECTION 21

The Town of Smiths Falls Community Improvement Plan By-law # 10386-2022 is hereby amended by replacing the word “rebate” with the word “**grant**” throughout the document wherever applicable.

SECTION 22

The existing wording of Appendix A – Legislative and Policy Framework, in the Town of Smiths Falls Community Improvement Plan By-law # 10386-2022 is hereby amended by adding the following sentences:

“It shall be noted that the Lanark County 10-year Housing and Homelessness Plan is subject to review and updates every five years. The most current Housing and Homelessness Plan will be the document referenced.

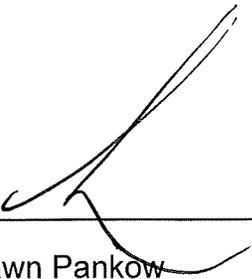
SECTION 23

That this By-law shall come into force and effect as provided in the *Planning Act, R.S.O. 1990*, as amended, and thereupon shall be effective from the date of its final passing.

SECTION 24

That the Clerk is hereby authorized and directed to proceed with the giving notice of the passing of this By-law in accordance with the *Planning Act, R.S.O. 1990*, as amended.

Read a first, second and third time and finally passed this 5th day of January 2026.



Shawn Pankow
Mayor



Kerry Costello
Clerk

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
Copy of the Notice of Public Meeting

APPENDIX B
True Copy of all written submissions and supporting material

APPENDIX “A” – NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING



SMITHS FALLS
RISE AT THE FALLS

NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING SMITHS FALLS COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN AMENDMENTS

TAKE NOTICE that the Town of Smiths Falls will host a Public Meeting on Monday December 15, 2025, at 5:00 p.m. under Section 28 of the Planning Act to consider a series of amendments to the Town's Community Improvement Plan (CIP). The proposed amendments can be viewed on the Town Website at smithsfalls.ca/cip. Copies can also be picked up Town Hall at 77 Beckwith Street North, Monday-Friday between 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. To participate remotely, contact Kerry Costello, Town Clerk, at the email address listed below before Noon on Friday December 12, 2025

BACKGROUND: The CIP has four primary focus areas which are Universal Accessibility, Attainable Market Based Housing, Brownfield Redevelopment, and Downtown Revitalization. The CIP offers 15 funding programs that address the four focus areas, and which Council can decide to activate each year.

AMENDMENTS: The proposed amendments are to increase funding levels to reflect increasing construction costs and to attract affordable housing development, add incentives specific to heritage properties, and to clarify requirements and eligible projects. The proposed amendments affect all the subject lands in the municipality, however certain programs and policies apply to the downtown area. Currently there are two key maps in the CIP.

TAKE NOTICE that if a person or public body would otherwise have an ability to appeal the decision of the Town of Smiths Falls to the Ontario Land Tribunal but the person or public body does not make oral submission at the public meeting or make written submissions to Kerry Costello, Town Clerk, Town of Smiths Falls, 77 Beckwith Street North, Smiths Falls, ON, K7A 4T6 or by email at kcostello@smithsfalls.ca before the Community Improvement Plan Amendments are adopted, the person or public body is not entitled to appeal the decision.

TAKE NOTICE that if a person or public body does not make oral submissions at a public meeting or make written submissions to the Clerk of the Town of Smiths Falls before the CIP amendments are adopted, the person or public body may not be added as a party to the hearing of an appeal before the Ontario Land Tribunal unless, in the opinion of the Tribunal, there are reasonable grounds to add the person or public body as a party.

TAKE NOTICE that if you wish to be notified of the decision of the Town of Smiths Falls Community Improvement Plan Amendments you must make a written request to the Clerk.

For more information about the proposed amendments, contact Karl Grenke, Manager of Development Services, Town of Smiths Falls, 77 Beckwith Street North, Smiths Falls, ON, K7A 4T6 or by email: kgrenke@smithsfalls.ca.

The personal information accompanying your submission is being collected under the authority of the *Planning Act*, R.S.O. 1990, c. P.13, as amended, and may form part of the public record which may be released to the public.

77 Beckwith St N. Smiths Falls, ON K7A 2B8
613.283.4124 • info@smithsfalls.ca • www.smithsfalls.ca

Appendix “B” Council Report # 2025-115



SMITHS FALLS

RISE AT THE FALLS

Report # 2025-115

To: Mayor and Council
From: Marie Elmsley, Planning Clerk
Date: November 6, 2025.
Committee of the Whole Date: November 10, 2025.

For Direction
 For Information
 For Adoption
 Attachment 4 pages

Title: Community Improvement Plan Amendments

Recommendation:

THAT Council directs staff to proceed with holding the statutory Public Meeting as required under Section 28 of the Planning Act to consider the proposed amendments to the Community Improvement Plan, as detailed in Appendix “A” of this report.

Purpose: To obtain Council's direction as it relates to updating the Community Improvement Plan with amendments that will provide staff with clear direction on the types of projects that meet with Council's objectives for improvements to the Downtown Core and for the broader built community.

Background:

On October 11, 2022, Council approved a new Community Improvement Plan for the Town of Smiths Falls. A Community Improvement Plan (CIP) is a community development tool under Section 28 of the Planning Act and supported in the Town's Official Plan that is geared to "promote and focus public and private sector investment into maintenance, rehabilitation, and redevelopment activities that improve the living and working conditions in the Town." This new CIP replaced a 2015 CIP that applied a more limited range of incentives to the downtown area only.

The CIP offers 15 funding programs as outlined in Attachment "A", that address the four focus areas, and which Council can decide to activate each year. The "Co-Application" programs indicate where incentives can be "stacked" to achieve maximum benefit.

The CIP has four primary focus areas, whose goals are listed below:

1. **Universal Accessibility:** improve accessibility of buildings in the Town by incentivizing the creation of new barrier-free design or retrofitting;
2. **Attainable Market Based Housing;** promote the supply of more affordable housing units in a variety of forms. Attainable is defined where housing costs (excluding utilities) are less than 30% of a low-moderate income household's pre-tax income.
3. **Brownfield Redevelopment:** promote the redevelopment of vacant potentially contaminated land to create new public spaces or developments that enhance the Town and create housing and jobs;
4. **Downtown Revitalization:** create a more inviting and vibrant atmosphere and stimulate business vitality by:
 - a. Revitalizing and making usable existing building stock through restoration and renovation to achieve electrical, building and fire codes;
 - b. Enhancing streetscapes and preserving traditional and heritage features through improvements to facades, signage, and accessibility.

The CIP Evaluation Committee, currently comprised of staff, evaluates only Programs 13 (Front, Side, and Rear Façade Improvements) and Program 14 (Building Restoration, Renovation, and Improvement). The remaining programs are evaluated by Development Services staff.

Year over year, staff survey participants in the program, the Evaluation Committee, other groups, and organizations, as well as staff experience to gather feedback and consider best practices. In 2025, discussion regarding some applications highlighted some differences across the entire CIP process regarding how some of the programs were applied, as well as identified the need to clearly define the ultimate objective of the community improvement plan. As a result, staff is updating the CIP to remove ambiguity in the policy and in the Downtown Core Design Guidelines so that the expectations of what constitutes a “good” project is clear to applicants, Council, and staff. Consultation was extensive. Staff met with individuals and community organizations over a period of three (3) months casting the net wide to gather relevant and timely information on making the CIP clear cut on types of projects that are encouraged and on how to make the program more accessible to a wider group of applicants. Staff met on site of past recipients of funding, at Board and committee meetings, individually with Committee Chairs, and consulted with the author of the CIP Program – Dillon Consulting. This report, and recommended changes are the culmination of those discussions with the intent to focus the policies, approach, and operations to ensure the Community Improvement Plan delivers value for the money.

Analysis and Options

Through our current process for intake, evaluation, annual presentation of projects to Council, and tracking of approved projects, opportunities to make the process smoother have been noted. Emerging themes revolve around increased prominence for heritage designated properties and the proposed Heritage Conservation District Plan, operations, policy, funding thresholds and requirements, and expectations around the Downtown Core Guidelines. Through consultation with applicants, committees, groups and organizations, suggestions that highlight the changing economy, rising costs of repairs and renovations, and the ability to secure qualified contractors in a timely fashion were brought forward. There is a general sense that the funding thresholds need to increase, flexibility is required for business tenants, clarification around the acceptance of “maintenance” oriented projects, better and more clear definition in the Downtown Core Guidelines and keeping a placeholder for the Heritage Conservation District Plan and residential heritage. Staff have noted that operational changes will ensure the intake and evaluation process is simplified, and that contractual agreements clearly outline the expectations of both the Town and the applicant.

Universal Accessibility

The uptake in recent years for accessibility funding is encouraging. More properties are installing automatic door openers and ramps. To be eligible for exterior accessibility upgrades, the improvements need to be applied to the main entrance of commercial buildings. However, alterations to the main entrances are not always feasible due to snow removal operations, the configuration of the building, or the improvement would mean altering a heritage attribute on a designated property. In those instances, allowing accessible improvements to another entrance on a commercial property would be acceptable. Ramps are not always feasible for similar reasons. Current eligible projects do not include exterior lifts (since the limited space at front of building entrances in a main street setting make it very difficult for these to be accommodated) however, if other entrances are

being considered then exterior lifts potentially become feasible. These lifts can provide an alternative to ramps, and if they meet code requirements, they should be included as an eligible project.

Funding levels should be increased from \$15,000 to a maximum of \$25,000 to reflect the rising costs of construction.

Attainable Market Based Housing

Accessibility and Housing and "attainable" housing incentives continue to be a focus for the Town. The Smiths Falls for All Committee, upon consultation, passed the following motion and staff are recommending its implementation:

Moved By: Elle Halladay

Seconded By: Janet Sinclair

THAT the Smiths Falls Equity for All Committee provide feedback on the Updated Community Improvement Plan as follows:

THAT the Town increase the Tax Rebate available through Program 5 for Non-Profits to 80% for Attainable Housing and 100% for Universally Accessible Attainable Housing and add 20% for Universally Accessible for Public or Private Developer.

Currently Program 5, Attainable Housing Tax Increment Equivalent Rebate, supports the development of new multi-residential buildings or residential units within a mixed-use (commercial at grade) building. A minimum of six new residential units is required, and all units must have "attainable" rents. Where the tax assessment increases (verified through MPAC with the old and new assessed value statements) the property owner is eligible for a 50% rebate of the increased tax assessment for a maximum of ten years. This motion proposes increasing the rebate for non-profit developers to 80%. If the non-profit developer also makes the units universally accessible then they would be eligible for a 100% rebate of the increased tax assessment. Further, the motion recommends that private developers would still receive a 50% rebate where the criteria is met, and if the private developer also makes the units universally accessible then the rebate would increase to 70%.

Staff recommend supporting the above motion with the expectation that it will encourage more applications as Council has identified the crucial need for more affordable housing and certainly more affordable accessible housing. Any potential rebate in taxes will have a direct impact on the Town's revenue.

In addition to increased funding levels as above, staff have noted that attainable and affordable housing definitions create confusion when applicants are looking to stack funding between the County and the Town, and with the Province if the applicant is also looking into development charge rebates. The rents for the Town, the County, and the Province are different as well as the length of time that the units must maintain the "attainable"¹ or "affordable"² rents. To simplify this process for both staff and developers, Council could

¹ For the current Smiths Falls CIP, housing is "attainable if housing costs (excluding utilities) are less than 30% of the before-tax income of a low- to- moderate- income household.

² The provincial definition from the 2024 Provincial Planning Statement, Section 8, Affordable b) In the case of rental housing, the least expensive of 1) a unit for which the rent does not exceed 30 percent of gross annual household income for low and moderate income households; or 2) a unit for which the rent is at or below the average market rent of a unit in the municipality

consider replacing our current attainable rent calculator with either the provincial or county rates and definitions. We also need to ensure that affordable units are being rented to residents who qualify for them. This could be in the form of an annual condition that the developer must provide proof that the tenants meet the provincial criteria for income limits (H.I.L.s) We understand that Belleville is updating their CIP to align with the province's definition of affordable, and other municipalities are following suit as they are also looking to simplify their programs. By adopting definitions and rental rates from the province it would make it easier for developers to stack funding, and therefore we may see more applications in the future.

Changes to Development Charges Act through Bill 23 In November 2022 have rendered Program 3: Attainable Housing Development Charges redundant as the province has implemented an incentive to exempt affordable units from development charges. The province stipulates a 25 year agreement for units to be maintained as "affordable" and uses the Affordable Housing Unit bulletin produced by Municipal Affairs and Housing outlining what is considered affordable rents for Smiths Falls. Staff recommend removing Program 3 from the CIP Program.

Brownfield Redevelopment

No changes.

Heritage Properties

With the proposed Heritage Conservation District Plan under consideration combined with proposed new residential properties to be designated under Part IV of the Heritage Act, incorporating heritage incentives designed to protect and revitalize our community gems is paramount to being successful in this regard. Incentives will encourage residential property owners to maintain and improve their properties. Currently there are no incentives for residential heritage properties. Other municipalities have implemented various incentives that range from tax rebate programs to 100% funding opportunities up to a stipulated maximum amount. Staff recommend a new category of funding for residential property owners of heritage-designated properties from anywhere within the municipality for improvements to the exterior heritage attributes as defined by the by-law attached to the property. The funding recommended for individual projects is 50% of the cost up to \$10,000. With a focused effort in heritage conservation, the Town is poised to ensure that our built heritage is preserved for generations to come and in a manner that is not unfairly cumbersome to property owners.

Funding Thresholds

Funding levels for Program 13 (Front, Side and Rear Façade Improvement) should increase from a maximum of \$10,000 to \$20,000. This is a direct reflection of the rising costs of construction. The **funding ratio for heritage-designated commercial properties** in the proposed Heritage Conservation District and Downtown Core should remain the same at 85% but increase from a maximum of \$17,000 to \$34,000. This provides a more significant incentive to property owners to invest in the revitalization of the property and reflects the rising costs on repairs. The incentive for windows and doors should be amended to allow for the refurbishment of windows and doors on commercial heritage-designated properties if they are listed attributes and their refurbishment can be as effective in preserving heat loss and will reduce material going to landfill.

Currently Program 14 (Building Restoration, Renovation, and Improvement Program) has a limited and general heritage incentive of \$5,000 for projects that incorporate an *interior* heritage design. Heritage-designated private properties in Smiths Falls do not include interior attributes so staff recommend removing this. The maximum funding for a project under Program 14 is 50% of the project cost to a maximum of \$45,000. Similar to Program 13 (Façade) Council may consider adding in a heritage incentive stepped up to 85% funding (the same as in Program 13, Façade) meaning the maximum funding for a heritage-designated property would be \$76,500 for building, restoration, and renovation. Given the size of this potential grant in relation to the CIP budget, it is not proposed for inclusion in Appendix "A."

Commercial tenants, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Downtown Business Association have indicated that commercial tenants are excluded from the opportunity to submit signage projects that will enhance the business because the property owner is in arrears with the Town. It is recommended that a sub-program under Program 13 be added to accommodate this because we stand to see better quality signage that does not just meet the signage by-law criteria, but that uses higher quality materials and design that will improve the overall look of the downtown. Staff note that this concession varies from our normal practice, it is supported on the limited basis as it will benefit the tenant and the Town. There is a possibility that the property owner may be benefited though perceived increase in property values because the building "looks better". MPAC does not consider signage when assessing a property's value. Council will have to consider whether this outweighs the benefits to the business versus the property owner.

Additionally, it was noted that small businesses do not always have their portion of funding readily available to start a project, which is why some approved projects never got completed. As such, the DBA and Chamber recommended that Council should allow some funds (up to 50%) to be released for façade improvements at contract signing. Staff have determined that releasing funds in advance would leave the Town vulnerable to being unable to recoup funds for incomplete projects and is therefore not being recommended. The only program where funds are released in advance of project completion is Program 14 – where one third of the approved funds are released at contract signing.

Program 13 stipulates that the application must be accompanied by professionally prepared drawings illustrating the nature of the proposed improvements. These drawings can often be expensive. Property owners may be more inclined to apply if they can use an altered photo or A.I. generated renderings accompanied by examples of materials (if required) for projects where building permits are not required. These projects would tend to be smaller in scope and cost. The project would need to look like the rendering when complete and the supplied material examples would have to be the exact materials used. The Town still needs to understand what specific elements of the exterior renovation are heritage-related, so the applicant remains obligated to identify these.

Downtown Core Design Guidelines

Although this report does not focus on the Downtown Core Design Guidelines, staff will bring forward a separate report after the proposed Heritage Conservation District Plan has been resolved as the two documents will influence each other. The current Downtown Core Design Guidelines were approved by Council in 2024 and articulate Council's preferences and provide basis for evaluating projects. The wording used in the Guidelines such as

“avoid,” “consider,” “should” implies permissiveness to alternative materials and methods, which have caused some conflict in interpretation. Staff will be recommending that the verbiage be changed throughout the document to more definitive wording like “use,” and “acceptable.” This would also be in keeping with the draft HCD Plan approach and offer more clear expectations. Applicants would have a clear understanding of expectations noting that for properties outside of the HCD, if they want to deviate from the guidelines, they will have to include supporting rationale for not using what is recommended, and a comparable quote for at least one of the acceptable requirements (for example, materials to be used) for comparison. The Evaluation Committee could then decide to recommend or deny the application based on the rationale provided. The Glossary will be updated to include the proposed HCD glossary and other definitions as required.

An updated building diagram that shows heritage attributes will also be included in the amendments.

Operations

Operational changes will ensure a smooth application process that gives the applicant, staff, and the Evaluation Committee the time required to properly and thoroughly evaluate a proposal against the amended CIP.

- Changing the composition of the Evaluation Committee from what is currently all-staff to three staff and including the Chair or designate from the Municipal Heritage Committee and the Manager of the Downtown Business Association, making a total committee complement of 5, will further enhance evaluation process with expertise and important perspectives. In this instance, staff recommend that a quorum would be three members present. This will require a corresponding update in the policy.
- During consultation, staff heard that the application itself needs to be made easier to complete and so it will be revised accordingly.
- The agreements will be updated to include a number of points designed to clarify the Town's expectations of the project and ensure that those expectations are clearly communicated to the applicant.
- Invoice submission will be standardized and streamlined for efficiency.
- Program 7, which outlines ways in which housing incentives can be stacked with accessibility needs to be clarified. Currently Program 7 indicates that Program 5 can also apply for Programs 1 and 2, but Program 5 is for *new* builds, and Programs 1 and 2 are for renovating existing buildings.

Given that funding levels may increase, and assuming that the CIP Budget will remain the same, fewer projects may be approved as a result. The current prioritization for projects is as follows.

1. Accessible Housing (Program 5 -Tax Increment Rebate- and when units are made universally accessible)

2. Housing

Council could consider altering the priorities based on current market trends and the need to revitalize the downtown core.

An amendment to the Community Improvement Plan requires a public consultation process including a public meeting which will be scheduled at Council's direction. Once the HCD Plan is finalized and comments from the public on the recommendations for the CIP update have been considered, the CIP Policy and the Downtown Core Design Guidelines will be updated and brought back to Council for approval.

OPTION 1 (RECOMMENDED)

THAT Council directs staff to proceed with the recommendations to the Community Improvement Plan as outlined in the attachment,
AND THAT staff proceed with holding the statutory Public Meeting as required under Section 28 of the Planning Act to consider the proposed amendments.

OPTION 2

Council could decide to implement some but not all the recommendations or alter the recommendations.

OPTION 3

Council could decide to make alternative recommendations.

Budget/Financial Implications: The CIP budget will continue to be set yearly. If it remains the same, fewer projects may be awarded as funding thresholds may be increased because of the amendments. The Town Budget overall may be affected with increased tax rebate forms for Attainable Housing and ARU's meaning less future revenue for a specific period of time. Any potential rebate in taxes will have a direct impact on the Town's revenue. With less revenue coming in, budgets may be adversely affected as a result.

Link to Strategic Plan: Goal # 4 – Building a diverse economy with a strong business sector, Goal # 6 – Preserving and enhancing our heritage buildings and services, Goal # 8 – Pursuing environmental sustainability and climate adaptation.

Existing Policy: CIP By-law 10386-2022, Downtown Core Design Guidelines By-law 10528-2024, Planning Act, Heritage Act, Smiths Falls Official Plan, Ontario Heritage Toolkit, Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada, the Ontario Heritage Trust "Window Rehabilitation and Restoration Guidelines for Heritage Conservation and to Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions", Provincial Planning Statement, Development Charges Act

Consultations: Downtown Business Association, Chamber of Commerce, Municipal Heritage Committee, Smiths Falls for All committee, Smiths Falls Accessibility Committee Member, CIP Evaluation Committee, Past CIP Funding recipients, Manager of Development Services, Economic Development Staff, Dillon Consulting, Chief Building Official, Treasurer

Attachments: Appendix "A" Summary of Recommendations

Respectfully Submitted by:

Marie Elmsley, Planning Clerk
Original Copy Signed

Reviewed by:

Karl Grenke, RPP, MCIP
Manager of Development Services
Original Copy Signed

Approved for agenda by CAO:
Malcolm Morris, CMO

APPENDIX "A" – SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE CIP PROGRAM

DESCRIPTION	CURRENT POLICY STATEMENT	RECOMMENDED
Section 3.1 Community Improvement Project Area Placeholder for the Heritage Conservation District Plan	Identifies the entire municipality (figure 1) for as the eligible area for attainable housing, brownfield development, universal accessibility, and only the Downtown and Waterfront Area (figure 2) for Programs 13 and 14.	Placeholder to add an additional area identified as the "Heritage Conservation District" adding in a map of the HCD labelled figure 3 and that only properties designated under Part IV or V of the Heritage Act are eligible for Heritage Incentive funds under program 13.
Section 4.1.5 Allow business owners the opportunity to apply for signage independent of the property owners tax arrears	Property taxes shall be in good standing at the time of application and throughout the length of any incentive commitment. Where arrears exist, an application shall not be approved and/or incentives shall not be advanced until arrears are eliminated.	Add in the following: Where arrears exist and with permission from the Property Owner, the commercial tenant occupying space on the property who is not the property owner, may apply for signage only under Program 13. If approved and all requirements have been fulfilled to the Town's satisfaction, then funding will be provided to the tenant that has incurred the cost of signage.
Section 4.1.6 Allow business owners the opportunity to apply for signage independent of the property owners other accounts arrears	There shall be no outstanding payments with respect to other municipal accounts or invoicing at the time of application and throughout the length of any incentive commitment. Where outstanding payments exist, an application shall not be approved and/or incentives shall not be advanced until arrears are eliminated.	Add in the following: ...until arrears are eliminated, except in accordance with the allowance for commercial tenant signage described in 4.1.5 above.
New Section (4.1.19)	None	A completed application will include a minimum of one quote for the project. If the project consists of more than one aspect (i.e.: window refurbish, masonry, signage) the quote provided will be broken down by line item.
New Section (4.1.20)	None	CIP work must be carried out by professional entities operating at arm's length from the applicant.
New Section (4.1.21)	None	CIP Agreements between the Town and the Applicant must be signed by the Applicant within 30 days of the By-law being created.
New Section (4.1.22)	None	Submitted invoices must show payments made. Invoices must have an HST number if applicable, and have the contractors' business name, address, phone, and email information. If there are multiple invoices, they must be summarized.
New Section (4.1.23)	None	Changes to the approved project must be approved by staff and/or Council depending on the type of change, prior to the change being implemented.
Section 5.1.1 Exterior Universal Accessibility Increase funding level to 15,000 to a maximum of 25,000	A property owner or tenant (with the authorization of the property owner) may apply for a rebate for up to 50% of the cost of eligible exterior universal accessibility improvements to their building that satisfy design criteria set out in this document, to a maximum rebate of \$15,000, meeting the criteria outlined below.	Change to: A commercial property owner or commercial tenant (with the authorization of the property owner) may apply for a rebate for up to 50% of the cost of eligible exterior universal accessibility improvements to their building that satisfy design criteria set out in this document, to a maximum rebate of \$25,000, meeting the criteria outlined below.

Section 5.1.1 Exterior Universal Accessibility Buildings in the downtown cannot always add permanent ramps to the front entrance due to restrictions on snow removal or due to configuration of the building, so using lifts is an excellent alternative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> installing wheelchair ramps; and installing new automatic/powerd doors; and widening the doorway opening of a primary entrance. 	Add <ul style="list-style-type: none"> installing exterior lifts conditional on approval as per the Ontario Building Code requirements
Section 5.1.1 Exterior Universal Accessibility Currently, it is policy interpreted to mean that accessible improvements must be to the main entrance, but this is not always possible due to snow removal issues or building configuration. Where is not possible to alter the front entrance, allow for other public entrances to the building to be modified.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> installing wheelchair ramps; and installing new automatic/powerd doors; and widening the doorway opening of a primary entrance. 	Add <ul style="list-style-type: none"> where adding ramps or lifts is not feasible to the primary entrance, allow for accessible improvements on a secondary access point to the building
Section 5.4.1, Program 13, Front, Side & Rear Façade Improvement Rebate, page 31 Professional drawings are expensive to obtain up front. Allow for sketches/renderings or AI generated likeness stipulating that the finished project must look like the render	Delete bullet point as follows: The application is supported by professionally prepared drawings to scale of the building's façade, illustrating the nature of the proposed work AND	Add in the following: Professional drawing or illustration of the completed works may be required. Photos and/or physical samples of the material(s) to be used may be substituted (for example, roofing material, siding material, etc.). One or more A.I. generated image are acceptable where a photo of the actual building is used and is representative of the completed project. In the case of projects on heritage-designated properties, the heritage attributes must be itemized separately from other aspects of the renovation. Staff to advise which is required at time of pre-consultation
Section 5.4.1 Program 13 Increase funding threshold	Rebate 1A: up to 50% of the cost (to a maximum of \$20,000 in costs, for a maximum rebate of \$10,000 per property) of a non-heritage building's eligible front, side, and/or rear façade improvements that satisfy design criteria set out by the Town, or,	Rebate 1A: up to 50% of the cost (to a maximum of \$40,000 in costs, for a maximum rebate of \$20,000 per property) of a non-heritage building's eligible front, side, and/or rear façade improvements that satisfy design criteria set out by the Town, or,
Section 5.4.1 Program 13 Heritage designated buildings qualify for 85% funding	Rebate 1B: up to 65% of the cost (to a maximum of \$20,000 in costs, for a maximum rebate of \$17,000 per property) of a heritage-designated building's eligible front, side, and/or rear façade improvements that satisfy design criteria set out by the Town.	Rebate 1B: up to 65% of the cost (to a maximum of \$40,000 in costs, for a maximum rebate of \$34,000 per property) of a heritage-designated building's eligible front, side, and/or rear façade improvements that satisfy design criteria set out by the Town.
Section 5.4.1 Program 13 Heritage designated buildings in the Downtown Core and the proposed HCD would qualify for 85% funding	Rebate 3: An additional pro-rated rebate of \$5,000 (based on 50% of the cost) may also be given to applicants who have received Rebate 1A or Rebate 1B, that additionally implement building technology features that would help to reduce the carbon footprint of the building, specifically: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> replacing older windows with those that are more energy-efficient, with a U-factor of 1.22 W per square metre or lower, or an Energy Rating of 34 or higher¹¹; and/or, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> replacing older commercial windows with those that are more energy-efficient, with a U-factor of 1.22 W per square metre or lower, or an Energy Rating of 34 or higher¹¹; and/or, by replacing older commercial doors with those that are more energy-efficient, with a U-factor of 1.22 W per square metre or lower, or an Energy Rating of 34 or higher. Add in a third bullet point <ul style="list-style-type: none"> refurbishing windows on a heritage-designated building to protect the heritage attribute and to reduce landfill

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> by replacing older doors with those that are more energy-efficient, with a U-factor of 1.22 W per square metre or lower, or an Energy Rating of 34 or higher. 	
<p>Section 5.4.2 Program 14: Building Restoration, Renovation, and Improvement Program</p> <p>Create an incentive for commercial heritage-designated properties in the proposed HCD and Downtown Core for projects related to interior</p>	<p>Rebate 2: An additional pro-rated rebate of up to \$5,000 may be given to applications that implement a heritage design of the restoration and/or renovation to the interior of a heritage-designated building, as prepared by a qualified heritage professional (e.g., licensed architect, Professional Membership status in the Canadian Association of Heritage Professionals). The applicant must meet the criteria outlined below:</p>	<p>Remove: An additional pro-rated rebate of up to \$5,000 may be given to applications that implement a heritage design of the restoration and/or renovation to the interior of a heritage-designated building, as prepared by a qualified heritage professional (e.g., licensed architect, Professional Membership status in the Canadian Association of Heritage Professionals). The applicant must meet the criteria outlined below:</p> <p>Replace with Rebate 2: A property owner of a heritage-designated building zoned for a non-residential, commercial, mixed use (commercial component only) or institutional use may apply for a rebate of up to 50% of the cost of eligible interior renovations, restorations, and/or improvements to their building that satisfy criteria set out in this document, to a maximum rebate of \$50,000. The rebate would be provided to the applicant in equal instalments that are tied to the following project milestones:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Instalment at agreement/approval execution; 2. Instalment at the time of substantial completion/occupancy; and, 3. Instalment at the time of full completion/occupancy.
<p>New Section 5.4.4 Program 16</p> <p>Residential Heritage Grant for Designated Properties</p>		<p>Program 16</p> <p>Property Eligibility</p> <p>Your property is eligible to receive funding under Program 16 if the property is in the Town of Smiths Falls and has been designated under Part IV or Part V of the Ontario Heritage Act as a residential heritage property with an approved By-law in place.</p> <p>Criteria to Meet</p> <p>A property owner of a residential property in the Town of Smiths Falls that has been designated under the Ontario Heritage Act may apply for a grant of \$10,000 towards repairs or renovations of the heritage attributes listed in the By-law associated with the property, or towards renovations or repairs that have a direct impact on the heritage attributes (for example: roof replacement, heating and cooling systems).</p>
<p>Section 7.1.1 The Working Committee</p>	<p>Town Council shall work to appoint members of the Working Committee as soon as possible after CIP adoption, so that the Working Committee is prepared to evaluate CIP applications at the time that the CIP program(s) is/are launched. The appointment of the Working Committee shall be at the discretion of Town Council. If the Working Committee consists of Town staff, the following representatives may be considered:</p>	<p>Town Council shall appoint members of the Working Committee each year at time of opening the CIP Programs so that the Working Committee is prepared to evaluate CIP applications at the time that the CIP program(s) is/are launched. The appointment of the Working Committee shall be recommended to Council by staff and be at the discretion of Town Council. Members of the Committee will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manager of Development Services

<p>General editorial, consistency, punctuation, formatting, etc</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Finance Department. 2. The Senior Planner or their designate. 3. The Manager of Economic Development and Tourism or their designate. 4. The Chief Building Official (CBO) or their designate; and, 5. The Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) or their designate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipal Heritage Committee Chair or designate • Downtown Business Association Manager <p>And 2 of the following Town staff positions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representative from Finance • Representative from Economic Development • Chief Building Official • Director of Community Services
		<p>Staff are directed to make other editorial and similar changes as needed to complete the task of revising the CIP.</p>

Commentary from the Smiths Falls Downtown Business Association

Re: Community Improvement Plan (CIP) for Downtown Smiths Falls

The Smiths Falls Downtown Business Association (DBA) values the Community Improvement Plan as an important tool to encourage revitalization, attract investment, and support a vibrant downtown economy. We believe the CIP can be strengthened to better serve our community, property owners, and visitors while aligning with broader goals of tourism and economic development. We are proactive actors looking out for the core business sector with the focus of providing innovation and highlighting and preventing unintended outcomes.

We go above and beyond the base requirements for the Town's vitality in the core—we are concerned that this is not a priority for the last decade. Without a strong foundation, the house crumbles. Crumbling foundations exacerbate current and future problems. This is important in the context of the CIP, for if the business is not vital enough to grow, the CIP never attains its intended outcomes to support in the community, in sustainable and meaningful ways.

We would like to propose a focus priority of the CIP to be available to the Downtown Core. Supporting development to fringe areas of the downtown may distract from the most pressing issues of attracting of the town, as seen through property standard issues in the downtown core.

The following are the key areas we wish to discuss:

Areas of Concern

1. Accessibility of CIP Programs

- **Concern:** Application processes and technical language can be challenging for small businesses and independent property owners.
- **Recommendation:** Simplify forms and create plain-language guides with visual aids and easy to follow checklists. Make the contact list for the processes involved in the project clear both in the document and in a separate document.
- **Policy Opportunity:** Use the re-working of the application to help determine the goals of the CIP that align best with the Town's vision and the health of the Downtown core

2. Equity of Incentives

- **Concern:** Larger property owners may disproportionately benefit from funding pools, leaving fewer resources for smaller businesses or even their tenants. Also, the smaller businesses as tenants may not have the capital required to make the substantive changes needed in the spaces available in the downtown.
- **Recommendation:**
 - Introduce funding caps per property or reserve a portion of funds for small-scale projects that would benefit "move-in-ready" changes to downtown properties, or projects prioritizing key policy areas,
 - Reconsider funding allocation to market value, including more up-front payment options to allow for addressing cash-flow issues often experienced by tenants.
- **Policy Opportunity:** Ensure equitable access by embedding fairness and innovation/ sustainability criteria in CIP program guidelines.

3. Stability of Funding

- **Concern:** Year-to-year funding uncertainty makes it difficult for businesses to plan long-term improvements, there is also the concern for being able to have the capital to complete a project under current funding allocations (i.e. signage).
- **Recommendation:** Commit to multi-year CIP budgets that align with Council's long-range financial planning and re-consider allocation policy and amounts.
- **Policy Opportunity:** Secure CIP as a stable policy tool for consistent downtown revitalization and as a meaningful support to uphold property standards and policy focus (i.e. Heritage and Environmental Sustainability and downtown core revitalization).

Opportunities for Positive Change

Policy Opportunities Summary:

- Build accessibility into CIP policy by requiring a "user-friendly" standard for all municipal programs. Create Alternate funding CIP categories: Accessibility, Heritage + Environmental Sustainability/ Responsibility focuses of grants

1. Tourism Integration

- Opportunity: Use CIP to strengthen tourism by prioritizing projects that enhance visitor experience (façade restorations, heritage signage, outdoor patios, wayfinding).
- Action: Create a CIP funding stream specifically for tourism-focused projects.
- Impact: A more inviting downtown core encourages longer stays and repeat visits.

2. Green and Sustainable Development

- Opportunity: Expand CIP to reward environmentally sustainable upgrades (energy efficiency retrofits, green roofs, stormwater systems).
- Action: Add a “green bonus” grant category.
- Impact: Positions Smiths Falls as a forward-thinking, eco-conscious destination.

3. Heritage and Cultural Alignment

- Opportunity: Align CIP funding with the upcoming Heritage Conservation District (HCD) plan to support authentic, heritage-sensitive improvements that help our town tell its unique story of re-creation, and boom as well as our ability to overcome the “busts” times.
- Action: Prioritize façade, signage, and accessibility upgrades that reinforce Smiths Falls’ historic character and story.
- Impact: Strengthens the Town’s tourism brand and supports cultural storytelling.

4. Business Attraction and Retention

- Opportunity: Use CIP as a tool to attract new businesses in priority sectors (hospitality, retail, creative industries).
- Action: Offer top-up grants for entrepreneurs filling and updating vacant storefronts or introducing tourism-related services.
- Impact: Reduced vacancies, increased foot traffic, and diversified downtown economy.

5. Communication and Support

- Opportunity: Make CIP easy to navigate and promote widely.

- Action: Develop a “CIP Made Simple” handbook, launch an online portal, and designate a Town staff liaison for applicants to help connect the applicants to the exact contacts that will have the answers they need.
 - Impact: Encourages higher uptake and demonstrates the Town’s commitment to business-friendly policy.
-

Closing Statement

The DBA strongly supports the intent of the Community Improvement Plan and believes that with thoughtful adjustments—focused on accessibility, equity, stability, and alignment with tourism and heritage goals—the CIP can become a cornerstone of downtown renewal.

We encourage Council and staff to position the CIP not only as a funding mechanism but as a policy driver for long-term economic development, tourism growth, and community vitality.

We are developing a further proposal that might help usher in a new era of Community Improvement for Smiths Falls, and will be happy to share when it is completed.

Respectfully submitted,
Smiths Falls Downtown Business Association