



GRAVENHURST

GATEWAY TO MUSKOKA

TOWN OF GRAVENHURST COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN

GRAVENHURST URBAN AREA

Updated in 2025

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1 BACKGROUND, BASIS AND AUTHORITY

1.1 Interest in Community Improvement

The Town of Gravenhurst is expanding its involvement with the Community Improvement Plan, as part of its overall downtown revitalization initiatives in order to provide business owners and operators in the Town with incentives to improve the physical characteristics of their buildings and properties. The Town has decided to move forward on the preparation of a new Community Improvement Plan, with a focus on financial incentives to the business owners and operators.

The Town has an existing Community Improvement Plan for a portion of the commercial core; however the plan will expand both the scope of the community improvement incentives and the boundaries of the Community Improvement Plan area.

Interest is with the existing commercial areas in the downtown core and along Muskoka Road South and portions of Bay Street. Council may consider budget funds to provide incentives for Community Improvement in its upcoming budgets, and individual businesses have expressed interest in participating in the program.

The Gravenhurst urban area remains important to the day-to-day functioning of Town. A broad range of functions are provided to the community such as;

businesses (retail, office, banking, restaurants, services), places of assembly (the opera house), places of worship (most of the churches in Gravenhurst are located in its traditional core), and residences. Through the Downtown Revitalization Program, of which the CIP is one component, there is recognition of the desirability of having a vibrant and healthy commercial core. All providing opportunities for local shopping, encouraging tourists and visitors to spend time in the Town, offer employment, and contribute towards a healthy tax base for the municipality.

The Downtown Revitalization Committee worked from 2011 to 2015 to provide assistance in a number of areas resulting in part from a series of fires in the downtown core. While the committee is no longer active, downtown revitalization is a core component of the existing Economic Development Division.

The need for community improvement in Gravenhurst has been well established over the past number of years. While steps have been taken, further adjustments are required to continue the momentum. Reports undertaken by the Town over the past 20 years have highlighted specific areas of needed community and infrastructure improvement, from both the private and public sectors. The following documents are referenced and provided background support for the need for community improvement.

- Town of Gravenhurst Urban Design Guidelines, 2000 (Corban and Goode)

- Muskoka Road Streetscape Improvements – various engineering documents (2004-2007)
- Community Improvement Plan # 5
- Official Plan Review
- Gravenhurst Retail Development Strategy, 1999
- CAUSE study

With the completion of the Muskoka Wharf Revitalization Plan in mid 2021, the expansion of the Community Improvement Area was recommended. In December, 2021 this plan was updated to recognize a new boundary that include the remainder of the Bay Street Special Character Area and the Muskoka Wharf.

This Community Improvement Plan focuses on the urban area of Gravenhurst (within the area identified on **Appendix 2**).

1.2 Section 28 of the Planning Act

The Planning Act allows municipalities, under Section 28 of the Act, to become involved in Community Improvement Plans and to provide specific financial incentives to business and property owners to assist in community improvement. The municipality is required to have policies in its Official Plan respecting community improvement.

The Municipal Act generally prohibits municipalities from providing financial “bonuses” or incentives to private businesses unless they are exercising their powers under Section 28 of the Planning Act.

Section 28(1) of the Planning Act states that a “community improvement project area means; an area within a municipality,

the community improvement of which in the opinion of the council is desirable because of age, dilapidation, overcrowding, faulting arrangement, unsuitability of buildings or for any other environmental, social or community economic development reason”. The existing commercial urban area areas of the Town of Gravenhurst would be eligible for designation as community improvement project areas. It may also include the provision of affordable housing.

The Town may become involved in any of the following activities within a community improvement project area:

- Acquire, hold, clear, grade or otherwise prepare land for community improvement – Section 28(3).



- Construct, repair, rehabilitate or improve buildings on land acquired or held by it, or sell, lease or otherwise dispose of any land or buildings acquired or held by it, in conformity with the Community Improvement Plan – Section 28(6).
- Make grants or loans to registered or assessed owners or tenants of lands and buildings within the

community improvement project area, to pay for all or part of the eligible costs of rehabilitating such land and buildings in conformity with the Community Improvement Plan - Section 28(7).

- The total of the grants and loans made under Section 28(7) and 28(7.2) and the tax assistance as defined in Section 365.1 Municipal Act, 2001, shall not exceed the eligible cost of the Community Improvement Plan with respect to these lands - Section 7.3.

Section 28 also provides procedures that are to be followed in the preparation and approval of a Community Improvement Plan.

1.3 Municipal Act

Municipal activities are governed by various pieces of legislation. The Municipal Act, 2001, is the principal statute that governs the administration of municipalities and generally sets out municipal powers. The Act generally prohibits municipalities from assisting any commercial enterprises through the provision of incentives or bonuses. However, exceptions are provided where a municipality participates in Community Improvement as contemplated in Section 28 of the Planning Act. The Community Improvement Plan is needed to allow the municipality to provide financial assistance to private interests.

The Municipal Act, 2001, also cites opportunity to provide tax reductions related to heritage properties or to properties within a Community Improvement Project Area, subject to specific restrictions.

1.4 Ontario Heritage Act

The Ontario Heritage Act contains various provisions to allow a municipality to make grants or loans (up-front or on a tax increment basis) to owners of designated heritages properties.

1.5 Town of Gravenhurst Official Plan

The Town's Official Plan contains policies to allow the Town to be involved in community improvement. The entire Town of Gravenhurst is designated as a Community Improvement Area. Individual project areas may include the existing commercial and industrial areas.

Excerpts from the Official Plan relating to Community Improvement are reproduced in **Appendix 1**.

The Official Plan sets out a theme for the Town's community improvement initiatives, as the Gateway to Muskoka, generally based on the railway and steamship area, in concert with the theme of rocks, trees and water.

The Official Plan contemplates community improvement throughout the Town and establishes a number of goals for community improvement, most of which have been carried forward in this Community Improvement Plan.

The Official Plan establishes criteria for delineating Community Improvement Project Areas based on; deficiencies in public services, social or recreational services; areas that no longer meet current development standards; areas that have inefficient service delivery; areas with inappropriate uses, lack of aesthetics, or have deficiencies in parking.

It is contemplated that Council be responsible for the phasing of improvements.

1.6 District of Muskoka Official Plan

In addition to the Town of Gravenhurst, the District of Muskoka has an interest in community improvement, and its policies are generally supportive of local initiatives related to community improvement. It is understood that the District of Muskoka may amend their Official Plan and that this section should be as amended.

The existing Official Plan contains a number of provisions, as noted below:

COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT AND PROPERTY STANDARDS

Introduction

K.23 Municipalities may develop and amend from time to time Community Improvement Plans.

K.24 The policy contained herein has been developed in order to identify certain District interests in community improvement and hence facilitate primary endorsement and approval of such plans at the area municipal level.

K.25 The District will encourage area municipalities to develop and establish community improvement policies and associated community improvement plans, where possible and mutually advantageous, to include District works as part of such programs.

K.26 In order to ensure the proper coordination and development of public works, adequate notification of proposed community improvement plans shall be provided to the District and other appropriate public agencies and no works shall proceed affecting such public works interests until the required approvals of the District have been committed or secured.

K.27 In order to assist in improving the structural integrity and aesthetic appeal of buildings, structures and the environment in Muskoka, the District shall encourage area municipalities to establish, update and implement detailed property standards (maintenance and occupancy) by-laws on an ongoing basis.

2 PURPOSE

The purpose of the Community Improvement Plan (CIP) is to adopt a program of municipal financial incentives that encourage the redevelopment and improvement of private lands in portions of the commercial areas of the Gravenhurst Urban Area, and to encourage a themed streetscape and façade program that enhances the character of the Town of Gravenhurst, its traditional commercial core and the commercial corridor from the Archway to the CN tracks.

The purpose of the financial incentives is to provide assistance to businesses and property owners in the redevelopment of their properties. In turn projects under the CIP will assist with implementing the Façade Guidelines, ensuring that redevelopment of existing commercial and residential properties in the area meet all current legislative requirements.

The CIP applies to a portion of the area identified in the Gravenhurst Official Plan as potential Community Improvement Project Areas. The entire Town identified as a potential project area, although provision is made to establishing CIP's for all or a portion of the defined areas.

As provided in the existing Gravenhurst Official Plan the CIP is undertaken in the context of the stated goals:

- a) To develop a more attractive, safe and efficient community for existing and future residents.
- b) To provide for the continued social and economic viability of the Town of Gravenhurst.

- c) To provide an environment that is attractive to new investment in the Town of Gravenhurst.
- d) To encourage the ongoing maintenance, rehabilitation, redevelopment, upgrading and improvement of the physical environment, and within a framework of sound fiscal management.



3 COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT PROJECT AREA

The Gravenhurst Official Plan provides a list of criteria for Delineating CIP project areas, as noted in Section 1.3. The boundaries of the CIP satisfy the criteria established in Section K6.1.3 of the Official Plan. While a number of public sector improvements have occurred along the Muskoka Road corridor, areas outside the Muskoka Road corridor have not benefitted from public sector improvements.

Council adopted the Community Improvement Project Area boundaries following the Public Meeting on April 16, 2013 (By-law 2013-36). In December 2021, this boundary was repealed and replaced, expanding the current area. It includes the original Community Improvement Plan Project Area, with the addition of the Bay Street Heritage Area and the Muskoka Wharf.

Appendix 2 shows the approved Community Improvement Project Area

4 STREETScape AND FAÇADE DESIGN GUIDELINES

The full implementation of the Community Improvement Plan is predicated on the adoption of the Streetscape and Façade Design Guidelines being prepared by Stempski Kelly Associates Inc., 2013 that will apply to the Community Improvement Project Area. Council adopted the Guidelines on April 16, 2013.

The Guidelines are a component of the Downtown Revitalization Program.

The guidelines contain two components: Part A focuses on Streetscape Guidelines; and Part B focuses on Façade Improvements. As noted in the Final, April 3, 2013 Streetscape and Façade Design Guidelines, the façade guideline (Part B) is “intended to illustrate, in a broad sense, how façades can be altered to satisfy the community’s initiative to maintain the character of the traditional mixed-use downtown district and bear a positive

relationship to the street and adjacent structures” (Part B, p. 2). The Guidelines identify a number of the features associated with façades, and “are intended to create an identity for CIPA (Community Improvement Project Area) façades while respecting the needs of the commercial corridor. These recommendations are not meant to limit creativity, but to encourage and channel it so that participants have the best possible result from their efforts.” (Part B, p. 2) The guidelines are proposing a “Muskoka Cottage” theme within the context of Gravenhurst as the Gateway to Muskoka.



The Façade Guidelines outline:

- The process for evaluating the existing façade and its desired improvements, and obtaining approvals for the revised façades;
- The façade project design checklist; and
- The main elements/features associated with the façades.

Of practical application, the guidelines provide a number of “demonstration projects” that show the transformations from existing façades to the new façades and their contribution to the identified themes.

The Streetscape Guidelines (Part A) note that “Streets are the most vital part of a community’s open public space system and have a distinct position, identity and role within the fabric of any community.” (Part A, p. 2). Guidance is provided for “a street classification system [which] has been based on a street’s role as part of the community’s pattern, whether as a Main Street, or Side Access Street or lane way. In addition to the streets, urban design improvements will occur in special areas such as significant intersections, historically significant locations and community entrances. (Part A, p. 2).

The Guideline provides recommendations on streetscape improvements consistent with the “Gateway to Muskoka” theme, and detailing proposals for Surfacing and Pavements (including sidewalks, plazas and parkettes), Street Greening (including use of planters), Lighting, and Street Furnishings (including benches, other seating options, bike racks and waste receptacles).

5 COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT OBJECTIVES

Within the context of this Community Improvement Plan, the following objectives will guide decisions on private financial incentives and public streetscape improvements:

1. To implement the Community Improvement provisions of the Gravenhurst Official Plan as they relate to the

Gravenhurst Urban Area Community Improvement Project Area

2. To implement the recommendations of the Streetscape and Façade Design Guidelines (Stempski Kelly Associates Inc, 2013).
3. To develop and redevelop the commercial areas as a focus of activity and a gathering area to attract people.
4. To strengthen the vitality and economic viability of the businesses within the Community Improvement Project Area.
5. To stimulate new investment in public and private lands.
6. To encourage building retrofits which meet or exceed current Ontario Building Code and Fire Code requirements.
7. To encourage business owners and tenants to upgrade their facilities to provide improved accessibility and become more energy efficient.
8. To encourage consistency in urban design, façades and signage while recognizing the importance of diversity and character of the existing buildings and areas.

9. To provide an attractive, safe, accessible and pedestrian friendly environment.
10. To improve the visual characteristics of the business community to provide a more pleasant shopping experience for patrons.
11. To encourage a sustainable and visually attractive commercial core for Gravenhurst.
12. To provide a visual continuity and flow between the commercial uses at the south entrance to the Urban Area and the existing downtown commercial area.

The Community Improvement Plan builds on the theme noted in the Official Plan, as the “Gateway to Muskoka”. Through the Streetscape and Façade Design Guidelines, the design style is considered to be the “Muskoka Cottage” style.



6 PRIVATE BUSINESS INCENTIVE PROGRAMS

6.1 Overview:

Table 1 (located at the end of this document) provides a summary of the incentive programs outlined in this Community Improvement Plan. Additional detail is provided in the following sections, outlining the grant programs.

6.2 Grants/Loans:

As part of the review of potential programs, there can be consideration of both a grant program or a loan program (or combination of both) for any of the individual incentive programs that are under discussion.

Through discussions with Town staff and with other municipalities, there is a preference to consider the incentives as grant programs rather than include a loan component. The primary reasons for avoiding loans include; the municipal administrative procedures that are required to be in place to monitor and collect on the loans over an extended time frame, and the desire of property owners/applicants not to have to further encumber their properties with additional loans against their properties or add to their ongoing administrative and financial obligations.

The Gravenhurst Community Improvement Plan will focus on the grants component, and not be involved with loans.

The incentive programs will provide assistance with initial background planning and design, the construction of specific facilities, as well as with mitigating the impacts of any potential

assessment and tax increases on properties resulting directly from the improvements constructed.

6.3 Incentive Programs

Incentive programs have been divided into three basic categories:

- Study/Predevelopment Incentives;
- Building/Property Improvement Incentives
- Tax Development Charge Relief incentives

In order to implement the Community Improvement Plan, the Town will provide the following incentives to private property or business owners within the Community Improvement Plan Area:

6.3.1 STUDY/PREDEVELOPMENT INCENTIVES

Planning and Design Grant

The purpose of this grant is to offset the costs associated with preparing the necessary plans and drawings that will outline the extent of the improvements being applied for.

The Town will provide a one-time grant of 50%, to a maximum of \$1,500 toward the cost of the preparation of architectural or engineering plans and site plans for building façade improvements, Building Code or Fire Code retrofits, signage improvements or landscaping and property infrastructure improvements.

The grant will be conditional on the architect/engineer following the guidelines from the Streetscape and Façade Design Guidelines.

The grant is available to a property owner or tenant.

The grant would be paid in two equal installments, the first upon approval of the design drawings, and the second installment upon completion of the works.

Planning Application Fee and Building Permit Fee Grant

This program will provide assistance with financing the cost of development by providing a grant to offset the amount of the applicable planning and building permit fees.

This grant program only applies for approvals related to other approved grant programs in the Community Improvement Plan.

This grant will apply to site plan approval fees, application amendment fees (if needed – for variance or zoning amendment) and building permit fees for eligible works.

This will be a one-time grant to the applicant and represents an amount equivalent only to the fees as outlined in the Town's current tariff and fees by-law. The grant is available to a property owner or tenant.

All fees will be paid at the time of application for approvals, with the grant payable as noted below;

This grant will be payable in two equal installments as follows:

- first, upon approval of the planning/Building permit application; and
- second, upon completion of the final inspection by the Building Dept. for any works covered by the building permit fee.

Grants will be provided in the amount of 50% of the eligible planning and building permit fees, to a maximum of \$3,000 in building permit application fees; and a maximum of \$1,000 in planning application fees. This provides for a potential total grant of \$4,000 to cover application fees.

6.3.2 BUILDING/PROPERTY IMPROVEMENT INCENTIVES

Building façade improvement Grant (*Main/Front Façade*)

The purpose of this grant is to provide assistance toward improving and updating building façades to renew the façades and improve the attractiveness of the buildings, with a focus on the main/front façade of the building.

Eligible projects will be required to meet the criteria in the Streetscape and Façade Design Guidelines.

The grant is available to a property owner or tenant.

It is recognized that façades and storefronts vary considerably in width and height for buildings in the Community Improvement Area. As such, the maximum grant available is proposed to vary by the size of the facility to which the improvements are proposed.

If a building has 2 or more storeys, any façade improvement for a storefront shall include both storeys, unless the project is for a commercial tenant and the Town is satisfied that the façade improvement of the store front will complement the existing improvement of upper floor levels.

The grant for the main façade improvement will be 50% to a maximum of:

- \$7,500 toward the façade improvement for a façade that is one storey in height and up to 10 metres in width;
- \$10,000 toward the façade improvement for a façade that is two storeys in height or over 10 metres in width.

The grant would be payable at the completion of the project and final inspection by the Town.

Building Façade Improvement Grant (*Rear/Side Wall*)

The purpose of this grant is to provide assistance toward improving and updating building façades to renew the façades and improve the attractiveness of the buildings, where the building has a side or rear facing component that is highly visible or open to public facilities (e.g. on a corner of a street, or abutting a public walkway or public parking area).

Eligible projects will be required to meet the criteria in the Streetscape and Façade Design Guidelines.

The grant is available to a property owner or tenant.

It is intended that this grant apply after (or in conjunction with) the main façade improvement is undertaken, or it is confirmed that no main façade improvement is required.

The grant for side or rear façade improvements will equal 50% to a maximum of \$7,500 per side/rear.

The grant would be payable at the completion of the project and final inspection by the Town.

Structural Improvement Grant

There are a number of components to this grant, related primarily to structural improvements of the interior of the commercial operation, and including renovations/retrofits to improve accessibility, improve energy efficiency, building code and fire code standards, and health and safety features of the facility.

This grant is targeted to upgrade the physical conditions of the buildings to improve their safety and efficiency.

With respect to accessibility, while this may need to be coordinated with sidewalk and public infrastructure improvements, the grant will be used to provide accessible entrances and internal accessibility for grade level store fronts and offices. Where public infrastructure improvements are needed as a prerequisite to developing accessible entrances, this portion of the grant will be deferred until the public infrastructure works are developed.

The grant is available to a property owner or tenant.

The grant will be 50% up to a maximum of \$7,500.

The grant would be payable at the completion of the project and final inspection by the Town.

Heritage Restoration Grant

This grant will work in conjunction with the Streetscape and Façade Design Guidelines and where there are identified heritage features that need to be preserved.

This grant would be an additional grant to the Building Façade Improvement grant, to cover additional costs associated with the heritage preservation of the structure.

The grant would only apply to designated heritage structures pursuant to the Heritage Act.

The grant is available to the property owner, and only where there is compliance with applicable requirements of the Ontario Heritage Act.

The grant will be 50% up to a maximum of \$7,500.

The grant would be payable at the completion of the project and final inspection by the Town.

Residential Conversion/Rehabilitation Grant

This grant would assist with the conversion of unused or underused upper floor or rear space to new residential or

commercial use. The grant will encourage the renovation of the space to be usable for new residential or commercial activities.

The grant is available to the property owner.

The grant will be 50% up to a maximum of \$5,000 per dwelling unit or new commercial unit create, to a maximum of \$10,000.

The grant would be payable at the completion of the project and final inspection by the Town.

Landscaping and Property Improvement Grant

The purpose of this grant is to provide assistance for upgrading the open areas associated with the business property, including parking areas, boulevards, and other landscaping features.

The grant is available to the owner of the property.

Eligible projects will be required to meet the criteria in the Streetscape and Façade Design Guidelines.

A grant of 50% up to a maximum of \$4,000 will be available for the following:

- improving the landscape between parking areas and the roadway, or between parking areas and the building;
- driveway entrance and walkway improvements.

Improvements that require the provision of public infrastructure improvements as a prerequisite for completing the on-site landscape improvements (e.g. removal of drainage swales and provision of improved storm water management along the

roadways), will be deferred until the public infrastructure is completed.

The grant would be payable at the completion of the project and final inspection by the Town.

Signage Improvements Grant

This grant will assist applicants with replacing and updating existing signage. Signage improvement, including street numbering and awnings (seasonal or permanent) may be included.

The grant is available to the property owner or tenant.

Where a sign, awning or lighting projects onto the municipal road allowance, the grant will be conditional upon the applicant entering into an agreement and/or license of occupation for the encroachment, with the agreement/license to stipulate the term of the encroachment, renewal and provisions for the removal of the encroachment.

The Town does have a Sign By-law and any application must comply with the all provisions.

A grant of 50% up to a maximum of \$3,000 will be available for the following projects:

- Removal of older or obsolete signs;
- Erection of signs or awnings in accordance with the Streetscape and Façade Design Guidelines;
- Lighting improvements associated with the signage.

The grant is available initially as a one-time grant for a property; a grant may be provided for a subsequent replacement sign by a new owner/operator, at 50% to a maximum of \$1,000.

The grant would be payable at the completion of the project and final inspection by the Town.

Outdoor Patio Grant

The purpose of this grant is to provide assistance for development of outdoor patios and the temporary sidewalks that may result. This grant is for creation of the temporary handrails, boardwalks and patios and excludes the purchase of signage, patio furniture or umbrellas.

The grant is available to the property owner or tenant.

Eligible projects will be required to meet and maintain the criteria in the Streetscape and Façade Design Guidelines and conform at all times to the Town's Outdoor Patio By-Law. Patios must be approved as per the by-law prior to the approval of a grant.

A one-time grant of 50% up to a maximum for \$4,000, or \$1,000 for subsequent signs. This will be available for the following:

- Professional fees directly related to the design of the temporary sidewalk in accordance with the Streetscape Façade Guidelines and the Sidewalk Patio By-Law;
- Construction for the temporary sidewalk, raised patio , railings and handrails;

- Installation of the temporary sidewalk, raised patio, railings and handrails.

Improvements that require the provision of public infrastructure improvements as a prerequisite for completing the on-site sidewalk improvements will be deferred until the public infrastructure is completed.

The grant would be payable at the completion of the construction and final inspection by the Town.

Commercial Safety and Technology Grant

The purpose of the Downtown of Tomorrow Grant is to encourage businesses located in the Community Improvement Plan Area to work toward the goal of Gravenhurst becoming an intelligent community.

All business and property owners located within the community improvement area are eligible for this grant. Eligible project are required to be a new initiative related to technology that will benefit the general public and that are related to development or redevelopment or construction related to an eligible building.

The Town will provide a grant to a maximum of \$3,000 dollars for new technology implementation, some examples of these projects include:

- Free Public Access Wifi
- Online Catalogue of Inventory
- Digital Surveillance systems

- Digital Application Creation or Enhancement

While the list above provides some eligible expenses related to the grant funding, it should be clear that other technological benefits will exist that are not in this list. New and alternative technologies that assist both the general public and the businesses can be recommended by the committee and approved by Council through the application process.

This grant is payable at the completion of the project and final inspection by the Town.

6.3.3 TAX INCREMENT/DEVELOPMENT CHARGE INCENTIVES

Property Tax Increment Grant

This program will provide economic incentive for the rehabilitation of properties by providing a grant to the owner of the property to pay a portion of the local taxes (excluding education and District taxes) attributable to the increased assessment over a 5 year period. The effect of this grant would be to phase in any tax increase relating to a revised property assessment resulting from the property improvements.

Only the property owner is eligible for this program.

This grant will only be available where the property and building improvements undertaken result in an increase in the Town share of the increased taxes (excluding education and District taxes) of a least \$200.00 per year.

Once the grant is made under this program, the property to which it is applied will not be eligible for another grant under the same program.

The following provides a summary of how the tax increment grant will work:

- The grant will be provided in accordance with a schedule to the registered owner(s) of the property on an annual basis;
- The grant is calculated based on the increased assessment value after the renovation/construction (as determined by the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC)) at the tax rate that was applicable in the year the renovation/construction was completed; the annual grant is based upon changes in property taxes as a result of construction and improvement. The annual grant is not based upon occupancy or changes in occupancy.
- The grant represents a percentage of the increase in the Town portion of municipal taxes (excluding education taxes) payable resulting from the improvements;
- The grant will be provided for approved projects on a declining basis over a 5 year period as provided below: (Note: assessment is fixed from year 1 and the change in assessment is to be determined by MPAC such that the market value portion of increased assessment is not eligible.)
- All property tax installments owing for each year must be fully paid for the entire year prior to the provision of any annual grant amount under this program. If a property tax installment is missed, or payment is late, the Town will have the option, without notice and at its own discretion, to terminate all future grant payments;
- The Town will not pay an annual grant which exceeds the Town's portion of the property tax collected in any year on the increased assessed value;
- Tax increases resulting from general re-assessments, changes in tax legislation or increases in the tax rate are not eligible to be considered for the purposes of calculating this grant;
- The amount of the grant over the life of the program shall not exceed Eligible costs as per Section 28(7) and 28(7.2) of the Planning Act, as amended.

Year of Increased Assessment Value	Grant as a percentage of the Year 1 of the Municipal portion on increased assessment value
Year 1	100 %
Year 2	80%
Year 3	60%
Year 4	40%
Year 5	20%
Year 6	0

The Town may at any time discontinue the program, however, any existing participants in the program will continue to receive

the grant as determined for their properties until the conclusion of their approved schedule.

Development Charge Grant

The Town's Development Charge By-law provides for specific charges related to expansion of commercial space and the development of new commercial and residential space.

The grant would provide a rebate of a percentage of the Town development charge payable on commercial, residential or mixed use projects where development charges would be payable.

Only the property owner is eligible for this program.

The grant will be 100% of Town related development charges related to the redevelopment of the property up to a maximum of \$3,000

The grant would be payable at the completion of the project, final inspection, and payment of all development charges calculated before the rebate.

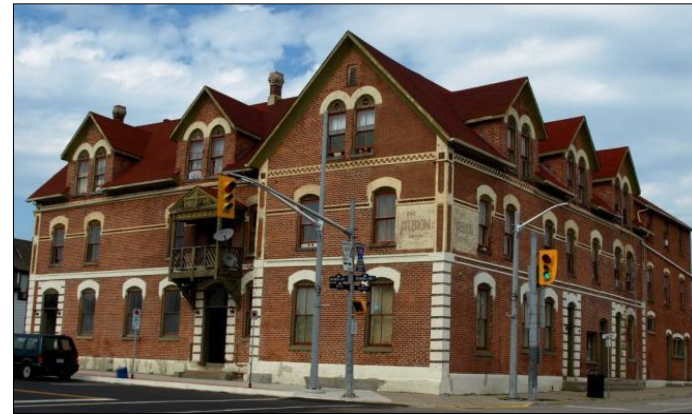
Heritage Property Tax Grant

This program is undertaken through the Ontario Heritage Act and would provide for a reduction in the Town portion of property taxes for designated Heritage Buildings.

Only the property owner is eligible for this program.

Details would be developed in conjunction with the Heritage Committee.

The grant would be payable at the completion of the project and final inspection by the Town.



6.4 Future Programs:

It is contemplated that the Town may wish to expand the scope of the programs available to assist the building community. Such programs may include:

- Assistance with Site Remediation for Brownfield developments;
 - Major structural improvements not otherwise covered in the Community Improvement Plan, such as new roofing, with the intention of making the buildings structurally sound, leading to lower operating and maintenance costs for business operators;
- The addition of these programs will be undertaken through an amendment to the Community Improvement Plan, and will be introduced following a public meeting and adoption of the amendment.

While the Heritage Property Tax Grant has been identified as a component of the Community Improvement Plan, since its implementation will be based on a cooperative approach with the Gravenhurst Heritage Committee, the details of the program will be implemented as an amendment to the Community Improvement Plan.

7 PUBLIC FACILITIES

This Community Improvement Plan focuses on financial incentives for private businesses. However, the Town may consider public improvements within the context of this Plan, and as provided for in the Streetscape and Façade Design Guidelines.

Through the background review of the Downtown Revitalization program, certain public works have been identified as potentially contributing toward community improvement in the Project Area. These include:

- Parking area improvement and improved vehicular circulation;
- Improved landscaping and the provision of street furniture in strategic locations throughout the core;
- Improved pedestrian access and movement through the core area;
- Provision for “way signs” and directional signage at pedestrian level to assist with circulation;
- Improved storm drainage, curb and gutter, sidewalks and definition of boulevards in areas outside of Muskoka Road and Bay/Brock Streets.

The Town will undertake such studies as are necessary to identify and recommend appropriate improvements to these facilities, following which they may be implemented through this Community Improvement Plan.



8 GRANT ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

8.1 Agreement

All applicants that are approved to receive a grant will enter into an agreement with the Town that specifies the terms of the grant. The terms shall include such matters as the total amount of the grant to be provided, entitlement to the grant if the property is sold, the applicant's obligations if the applicant defaults on the agreement, provisions for audit associated with the actual costs associated with the application.

No grant can be issued to two separate parties (e.g. owner and tenant) for the same project or work to be done. Grants would be transferrable to a new owner/tenant, provided the new owner/tenant enters into an agreement with the Town.

8.2 Application

All applicants shall submit an application for the specific grant program(s) to the Town prior to the commencement of any works and prior to the issuance of a building permit. Submission of drawings and/or plans shall be required as part of the application.

Where a building is multi-tenanted, preference may be given to façade improvement applications that provide a comprehensive façade improvement to an entire building in order to maximize the benefit of the improvements.

In order for an application to be reviewed by the Review Committee, the applicant, with assistance from the Town, shall ensure that all other applications/permits are obtained, and contact is made with

other utilities and agencies that may have to approve the development. These include, where applicable, Veridian Connections (for utilities) and the District of Muskoka (sewer, water and roads).

The application form will identify what information is required to accompany specific applications, including circumstances where plans are required to be stamped by a qualified professional (architect, engineer and designer).

8.3 Eligibility

The Incentive/Programs may be available to both Property Owners and Tenants (with approval from owners), although items that go beyond traditional "leasehold improvements" would tend to be the responsibility of the Property Owners. Where a particular incentive program is restricted to an Owner, it will be noted in the details associated with the specific grant program in Section 6.3. Where a tenant proposes to undertake the improvement for a particular project, written approval from the owner is required.

8.4 Area of Application

All grant programs are available to any eligible project with Community Improvement Project Area, subject to the qualifications noted for either the individual grant program or the restrictions related to the location of the grant.

8.5 Expiration of grant

Approvals of grant programs will expire if work is not completed within 18 months from the date of execution of the agreement

between the applicant and the Town. Any request for an extension beyond 18 months shall be subject to the recommendations of the Review Committee and approval of Council.

8.6 Grants payable upon completion of the project

Unless otherwise specified, grants will be advanced to the applicant upon full completion of the works, final inspection and approval and/or issuance of any required certificates, all to the satisfaction of the Town. Notably, the final invoice for the project submitted will reflect the final amount payable for the grant. The grant is applicable up to 50% of the final invoice, to the maximum amount the committee had granted. Progress payments will not be made, except where specifically noted.

8.7 Maximum Grant

A number of the programs could be combined for a particular project, as would be outlined in the detailed implementation plan. For example, a project may benefit from the grant for reduction of building permit fees, the façade improvement, and property tax increment. However, the implementation plan will provide details on how these incentives can work.

The grant programs recognized in this Community Improvement Plan may be combined in a manner that will permit more than one grant per property provided all eligibility criteria and conditions are met for each program. Where this is permitted, the total financial incentive in the form of grants to an applicant or for an individual property shall not exceed \$15,000, with the exception of the Tax Increment grant or the Development Charge Grant

program, which shall be in addition to any other grant. This maximum grant applies to multi-tenant buildings as a whole, however, where the façade improvements apply to multi-tenant two storey buildings with a width of 10 metres or greater, the maximum grant may be up to \$20,000 for the building.

The grant programs are not meant to preclude an applicant from being eligible for other grant and/or loan programs offered by other agencies or as part of a future Community Improvement Plan.

The grants provided cannot exceed the maximum percentage of the eligible costs associated with each project.

8.8 Tax Arrears or other charges (monies owing to the Town)

Lands or buildings shall not be eligible for any grants if they have any tax arrears, or any other legal claim, lien or order or any other charges or claims that may adversely or abnormally affect title of the property, other than mortgages in good standing.

8.9 Transferability to other properties

Unless otherwise specified, approved grants allocated to a specific property are not transferable to any other property, but may be transferred to a new owner/operator of an approved property.

8.10 Works already commenced

Grant programs are not retroactively applied to works started or completed prior to the submission of an application.

9 IMPLEMENTATION

9.1 Administration

The Community Improvement Plan will be administered by the Town of Gravenhurst economic development division, with assistance from other Town Departments, as required to administer components of the Plan or such other Department as Council may direct.

Applicants are encouraged to pre-consult with Town staff to determine whether their project is eligible for funding under the Community Improvement Plan, determine what information is required to assess the application, and provide contact to other Town Departments and other agencies.

9.2 Review Committee

Council will appoint a Review Committee to review and recommend funding for applications for all grants. Although, for the tax increment or development charge grants, the review committee will need to make separate recommendations to Council in addition to the rest.

The Review Committee may include Council and citizen representatives, with staff providing an advisory function.

Council may review the membership of the Review Committee and adjust appointments as needed.

Staff representatives who will act as advisors to the Review Committee in addition to economic development staff other staff members may be included to consult on specific applications. Council may adjust staff appointments where required.

The terms of reference for the Review Committee have been established by resolution of Council.

9.3 Streetscape and Façade Design Guidelines

The Review Committee will be satisfied that approvals for grant funding will conform to the Streetscape and Façade Design Guidelines.

9.4 Financing of Improvements

Council will establish an annual budget for grants related to Community Improvement projects. Funds may be allocated to public works as well as incentive programs.

Grants will be made available subject to available funding.

Given budgetary limitations for available funding, there may be instances when an application cannot be processed in the current fiscal year, in which case it may be considered in a subsequent fiscal year, subject to available funding. Alternatively, the maximum grant available for any project may have to be reduced.

A grant application may be approved for an amount less than the determined entitlement and less than the maximum amount allowed under a given program.

The Review Committee, based on advice from staff, will work with the applicant to consider adjustments to the grant request to work within the Town's budgetary restrictions.

As part of its budget allocations, Council may allocate funds to specific targeted programs (e.g. component to residential conversions, priority locations, etc.).

9.5 Phasing of Community Improvements

The Town may determine particular priority areas for phasing of Community Improvements.

However, at this time, there will be no priority areas identified for the initiation of the Community Improvement Plan.

Community Improvements that would require public sector improvements shall not be initiated until the Town has prepared its required studies unless the Town is satisfied that such improvements may proceed without compromising future public sector improvements. For example, landscaping improvements abutting a roadway that will be subject to redevelopment may not be appropriate if they would have to be removed as part of any public infrastructure improvements.

Where the grant amounts requested exceed the Town's available budget for a given year, the applicant may opt to defer the grant application to a subsequent year when funds are available.

9.6 Property Standards

The Town will review and revise, if necessary, its Property Standards By-law. All works approved through the Community Improvement Plan shall comply with the Property Standards By-law, as amended from time to time.

9.7 Sign By-law

The Town will review and revise, if necessary, its Sign By-Law. All works approved through the Community Improvement Plan shall comply with the Sign By-Law, as amended from time to time.

9.8 Impediments to Private Sector Community Improvement

The Town will review its existing administrative and fiscal procedures to determine where impediments occur that work as a disincentive for private sector improvement. Such practices should be reviewed and revised to be consistent with the objectives of this Plan.

9.9 Sale of Land

The Town may dispose of land or buildings in the Community Improvement Project Area in accordance with the provisions of Section 28(10) of the Planning Act.

9.10 Monitoring and Amendments

The Town will review the programs and activities relating to Community Improvement to determine their effectiveness. Council may amend this Plan as is necessary to ensure that the program remains relevant.

The availability of funds for grant purposes will be reviewed by Council as part of its annual budget deliberations. The funding available on an annual basis will not require an amendment to the Plan unless the funding is proposed to apply to new programs that are not contemplated in this Plan.

Table 1 – Components of the Program – Financial Incentives

Table 1 - GRAVENHURST COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN – SUMMARY OF FINANCIAL INCENTIVES				
1.	Study/Predevelopment Incentives			
	Program	Purpose	Comment	General Terms
1.1	Planning and Design Grant	Offset the costs associated with preparing the necessary plans and drawings that will outline the extent of the improvements being applied for.	Can be used toward the preparation of architectural or engineering plans and site plans related to development or redevelopment of an eligible site. Plans must follow the Streetscape and Façade Design Guidelines Grant Available to property owner or tenant.	Grant of 50% to a maximum of \$1,500. Grant payable in two equal installments, first upon approval of the design drawings and second upon completion of the works.
1.2	Planning Application Fee and Building Permit Fee Grant	Offset the amount of the applicable planning and building permit fees.	This would apply in conjunction with other approved grant programs. The grant would apply to site plan approval fees, application amendment fees (variance or zoning amendment), and building permit fees. Grant available to property owner or tenant.	Grant of 50% of eligible planning and building permit fees, to a maximum of \$3,000 in building permit application fees; and maximum of \$1,000 in planning application fees. Grant payable in two equal installments, first upon issuance of the building permit; second upon completion of the final inspection by the Building Department for any works covered by the building permit fee.

2.	Building/Property Improvement Incentives			
	Program	Purpose	Comment	General Terms
2.1	Building Façade Improvement Grant (Front/Main)	Provide assistance towards improving and updating building facades to renew the facades and improve the attractiveness of the building. This category only applies to the main or front façade of a building.	<p>Eligible projects will be required to meet the criteria in the Streetscape and Façade Design Guidelines.</p> <p>Grant available to property owner or tenant.</p> <p>Maximum grant will vary by the size of the building (i.e. one or two-storey, width of building).</p>	<p>Grant of 50% of façade improvements to a maximum of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$5,000 for a one-storey façade, up to 10 metres in width • \$7,500 for a two-storey façade or over 10 metres in width. • <p>Grant payable at the completion of the project and final inspection by the town.</p>
2.2	Building Façade Improvement Grant (Rear/Side)	Provide assistance toward improving and updating building facades to renew the facades and improve attractiveness of the building where the building has a side or rear facing component that is highly visible or open to public facilities (i.e. on a corner lot, or abutting a public walkway or public parking area).	<p>Eligible projects will be required to meet the criteria in the Streetscape and Façade Design Guidelines.</p> <p>Grant available to property owner or tenant</p>	<p>Grant of 50% of façade improvements to a maximum of \$5,000 per side/rear façade, with a maximum of \$7,500 total.</p> <p>Grant payable at the completion of the project and final inspection by the town.</p>
2.3	Structural Improvement Grant	Upgrade the physical conditions of the interiors or buildings (including their accessibility) to improve their safety and efficiency.	<p>Available of accessibility component may be linked to any public infrastructure works that may be required.</p> <p>Grant available to property owner or tenant</p>	<p>Grant of 50% to a maximum of \$5,000.</p> <p>Grant payable at the completion of the project and final inspection by the town.</p>

2.4	Heritage Restoration Grant	This grant should work in conjunction with the Streetscape and Façade Design Guidelines, where there are identified heritage features that could be preserved.	This program would only apply to designated heritage structures where in compliance with the requirements of the Ontario Heritage Act. Available to a property owner.	Grant of 50% to a maximum of \$5,000. Grant payable at the completion of the project and final inspection by the Town.
2.5	Residential Conversion/Rehabilitation Grant	Conversion of unused or underused upper floor or rear space to new residential or commercial use.	Encourage the renovation of space to be usable for new residential or commercial activities. Grant available to property owner.	Grant of 50% to a maximum of \$4,000 per unit, to a maximum of \$8,000. Grant payable at the completion of the project and final inspection by the town.
2.6	Landscaping and Property Improvements Grant	Upgrading the open areas associated with the eligible property, including parking areas, boulevards and other landscaping features. Grant will be for improving the landscape between parking areas and the roadway, or between parking areas and the building, or driveway entrance and walkway improvements.	Eligible projects will be required to meet the criteria in the Streetscape and Façade Design Guidelines. Availability may be linked to any public infrastructure work that may be required. Grant available to the property owner.	Grant of 50% to a maximum of \$2,000. Grant payable at the completion of the project and final inspection by the town.
2.7	Signage Improvement Grant	Replacing and updating existing signage. Signage improvements, including street numbering, awnings, removal of obsolete signs and lighting are all included.	Eligible Signage must meet Streetscape and Façade Design Guidelines and the requirements of the Sign By-Law.	Grant of 50% to a maximum of \$1,500, or \$1000 for subsequent signs. Grant payable at the completion of the project and final inspection by the town.

			Grant available to the property owner or tenant.	
2.8	Outdoor Patio Grant	For construction of infrastructure regarding the development of outdoor patios including professional fees, construction and installations	<p>Eligible projects must meet the Streetscape and Façade Design Guidelines and conform to the Outdoor Patio By-Law.</p> <p>Grant will be for a cost related to design, construction and installation of the outdoor patio, but does not cover any fees associated with the outdoor patio policy.</p> <p>Grant available to the property owner or tenant.</p>	<p>Grant of 50% to a maximum of \$2,000.</p> <p>Grant payable at the completion of the project and final inspection by the town.</p>
2.9	Commercial Safety and Technology Grant	For digital and technology projects related to development, redevelopment or construction at an eligible building. This could include public facing digital surveillance, public internet infrastructure or the creation of online catalogue for enhanced ecommerce, digital application creation	<p>Eligible projects will be new projects related to technology that are tied to a development, redevelopment or construction project that will benefit the general public.</p> <p>Grant available to the property owner or tenant.</p>	<p>Grant of 50% to a maximum of \$1,500.</p> <p>Grant payable at the completion of the project and final inspection by the town.</p>

3.	Tax Increment/Development Charge Incentives			
	Program	Purpose	Comment	General Terms
3.1	Property Tax Increment Grant	Credits a portion of the municipal taxes (excluding education and District taxes) relating to a revised property assessment resulting from the property improvements, phased over a 5 year period.	Available where the Town share of the increased taxes is \$200.00 or more a year. Based on increase in assessment resulting from improvements. Available to a property owner.	Grant would be over a five year period; with 100% of the value of the increase in year one, decreasing 20% in year five (see detail in CIP Plan, Section 6.3.3).
3.2	Development Charge Rebate Grant	Provides a rebate of a percentage of the municipal Development Charge (excludes education and District fees) payable on commercial, residential or mixed use projects where DC's would be payable. Payment of all DC's calculated before the rebate is given.	This grant is in the form of a rebate. The proponent is required to pay all fees and be rebated following the completion of the project. Available to a property owner.	Grant of 100% of Town related development charges related to the redevelopment of the property, to a maximum of \$3,000. Grant payable at the completion of the project and final inspection by the town.
3.3	Heritage Property Tax Relief	This program is undertaken through the Ontario Heritage Act and would provide for a reduction in the Town portion of property taxes for designated heritage buildings.	Would apply where the building is designated and there is a Heritage Conservation Agreement. Available to a property owner.	Details are developed in conjunction with the Heritage Committee and the Ontario Heritage Act. Grant payable at the completion of the project and final inspection by the Town.

Appendix 1 – Town of Gravenhurst Official Plan Excerpts

K6 COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT

K6.1 DEFINITION AND IDENTIFICATION

K6.1.1 The community improvement provisions of the Planning Act provide opportunities to maintain and promote an attractive, well maintained and safe living and working environment through initiatives that will stimulate community improvement, rehabilitation and revitalization.

K6.1.2 In designated community improvement project areas, the Town may prepare community improvement plans that can provide incentives to stimulate or leverage private and/or public sector investments.

K6.1.3 The entire Town is designated as a Community Improvement Area. All or any portion of the Town may be identified by by-law as a Community Improvement Project Area as provided under Section 28.2 of the Planning Act, and a community improvement plan may be prepared for the area.

K6.2 PURPOSE OF COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVES

K6.2.1 The Town may undertake community improvement projects to address any of the following matters:

- a) Protect and enhance the aspects of a neighborhood or area that the residents value highly;

- b) Improve the quality of the housing stock and to stimulate community pride, ownership and occupancy;
- c) Eliminate the deficiencies in municipal services and community facilities wherever it is physically and economically feasible;
- d) Improve the physical and aesthetic amenities of the public streetscapes thereby stimulating private investment in revitalization;
- e) Protect and enhance the cultural heritage attributes of the Town and ensure that the redevelopment activities do not weaken these attributes;
- f) Improve parking, transportation and pedestrian patterns to make them more accessible and compatible with surrounding uses;
- g) Promote a flexible and adaptable economic environment;
- h) Promote community health, safety and broad aesthetic appeal;
- i) Encourage long-term sustainable investment in the Town, within a framework of sound fiscal management; and
- j) Facilitate the remediation and redevelopment or reuse of brownfield sites.
- k) Provide an environment that is attractive to new investment in the Town.

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- l) Promote the provision of affordable housing.

K6.3 COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT PLANS

K6.3.1 Community improvement plans may be prepared to provide incentives designed to achieve a number of benefits, including:

- a) Provide support for community growth and development, including with regard to housing, arts and culture, tourism and employment;
- b) Encourage redevelopment in keeping with smart growth and sustainable development principles such as sustaining a strong economy, building a strong community and promoting a healthy environment;
- c) Assist with the conservation of cultural heritage resources and encourage improvement consistent with the cultural heritage attributes of the area;
- d) Upgrade and maintain municipal services, transportation systems (including active transportation), public utilities and community facilities;
- e) Upgrade facilities to provide improved accessibility;
- f) Improve and maintain the existing building inventory, including energy efficiency upgrades and alternate energy sources;
- g) Support affordable housing initiatives through conversion of underutilized space or intensification in the Gravenhurst Urban area; and
- h) Encourage a diversity of housing types in appropriate locations.

K6.4 IMPLEMENTATION METHODS

K6.4.1 The Town may undertake a range of actions to implement community improvement plans, including:

- a) Acquisition of land and/or buildings and the subsequent clearing, grading, environmental remediation, renovation, rehabilitation, construction, improvement, sale, lease or disposition for purposes which conform to the intent of the Plan;
- b) Provision of public funds such as grants, loans and other financial instruments;
- c) Application for financial assistance and participation in programs from senior levels of government;
- d) Supporting heritage conservation;
- e) Supporting the efforts of community groups and associations to revitalize improvement areas through the implementation of various public and private realm improvements; and
- f) Enforcing the Property Standards By-law.

K6.5 EXISTING COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT PLANS

K6.5.1 Existing Community Improvement Plans approved by the Town remain in effect.

