



TOWN OF ST. MARYS COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN



2015

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Photos: courtesy Gordon J. Strathdee

FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN

1.0 INTRODUCTION:

The Town of St. Marys is known for its man-made and natural heritage assets such as its wonderful 19th century streetscape, its lovely natural setting and for its unique festivals. Given the Town's proximity to tourist areas of Southwestern Ontario combined with its cultural and natural assets, the opportunity to harbour an appealing, vibrant downtown attractive to citizens and tourists alike are superb.

The purpose of the Façade Improvement Community Improvement Plan (CIP) is to provide the mechanism for a coordinated municipal effort to preserve and improve the built heritage of the Central Commercial District in the Town of St. Marys by encouraging restoration and rehabilitation of building facades. This CIP is intended to focus on façade improvement within the Central Commercial District for the purpose of escalating the economic climate of the downtown area.

This CIP will be administered through the Town of St. Marys Planning and Development Department. .

2.0 AREA OF APPLICATION:

The lands that are subject to this CIP are described as the Central Commercial District and are shown on the attached Schedule "A".

3.0 SECTION 28 – ONTARIO PLANNING ACT:

Section 28 of the Ontario Planning Act allows municipalities, where there are provisions in its Official Plan relating to community improvement, to designate by By-law a "Community Improvement Project Area", and subsequently provide for the preparation of a "Community Improvement Plan". For the purposes of carrying out a community improvement plan that has come into effect, the municipality may make grants or loans, in conformity with the community improvement plan, to registered owners, assessed owners and tenants of lands and buildings within the community improvement project area, and to any person to whom such an owner or tenant has assigned the right to receive a grant or loan, to pay for the whole or any part of the costs of the community improvement plan.

4.0 PROVINCIAL POLICY STATEMENT

Section 1.7 of the Provincial Policy Statement states that long-term economic prosperity should be supported by:

- Maintaining and, where possible, enhancing the vitality and viability of downtowns and main streets; and,
- Providing opportunities for sustainable tourism development.

5.0 TOWN OF ST. MARYS OFFICIAL PLAN:

Community Improvement is addressed in the Town of St. Marys Official Plan under “Section 6 – Community Improvement” which states, “Council recognizes the need to maintain and rehabilitate the physical environment within the Town of St. Marys and Council is therefore committed to ongoing improvement efforts where deficiencies exist. Specific objectives for community improvement have been selected and areas in need of community improvement have been delineated within the Town based on specific criteria relating to improvement needs.”

Section 6.1 of the Town of St. Marys Official Plan sets out Community Improvement Objectives for the Town of St. Marys. The objectives contained in this section of the Official Plan provide the basis for undertaking community improvement plans and community development projects to help ensure the ongoing maintenance, improvement and rehabilitation of the Town’s residential, commercial and industrial districts. Objectives identified in this section are as follows:

- To develop or rehabilitate hard and soft services in the Town to meet acceptable community standards, without placing undue burden on the Town’s financial resources;
- To enhance the Town’s ability to accommodate development, redevelopment and economic growth and to foster a climate favourable to private investment;
- To preserve and protect, without placing undue burden on the Town’s financial resources, man-made or natural features of the community that Council believes are important community assets; and,
- To preserve the viability of the Central Commercial area as the primary retail-commercial, civic and cultural focus of the Town.

Section 6.2 of the Town of St. Marys Official Plan sets out Criteria for Area Selection which provides the basis for delineation of areas in need of community improvement. One of the two community improvement areas identified by the Official Plan encompasses the commercial core area of the Town of St. Marys. The predominant land use type in this area is commercial and most of the deficiencies listed under criteria for area selection exist here.

Section 6.4 of the Town of St. Marys Official Plan which addresses Phasing of Community Improvements states, “Emphasis shall be placed on improving the business community in the Central Commercial area to protect its viability as a location for business.”

Section 6.5 of the Town of St. Marys Official Plan sets out methods of implementing community improvements. Some of the methods which Council may choose to achieve community improvement objectives include:

- Establish a special committee of Council that will prepare and oversee the implementation of community improvements by utilizing the community improvement provisions outlined in Section 28 of the Planning Act, RSO 1990.
- Take advantage of senior government programs that are available to assist municipal community improvement projects.
- Support the provisions of the Town's Maintenance and Occupancy Standards By-law.
- Acquire land utilizing any assistance available through senior government programs.
- Encourage the redevelopment or rehabilitation of privately-owned properties in need of improvement and take advantage of senior government programs that are available to assist property owners in their efforts.
- Dispose of municipally-owned land to private sector investors who will develop projects that Council believes will be important assets to the community.
- Support and assist the Business Improvement Area and Merchants' Association in their efforts to improve the viability of the Town as a location for business.
- Co-operate and liaise with community service clubs in an effort to improve community services.
- Encourage and support the development of infill projects on underutilized properties.
- Support the preservation of properties that Council believes to be historically significant.

6.0 ST. MARYS DOWNTOWN/COMMUNITY ECONOMIC REVITALIZATION STRATEGY

In the spring of 2002 three organizations came together and partnered in preparing a terms of reference and then submitted an application for funding assistance under the province's Rural Economic Development Program. The three partners included the Town of St. Marys, the Business Improvement Area (BIA) and the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame & Museum (CBHFM). In July 2002 the province announced its financial commitment to the project. The Town then retained the consortium of Priority Grow Inc., TCI Management Consultants Ltd. and Commonwealth Historic Resource Management Ltd. to undertake the development of the strategy. In order to ensure local input and feedback, the partners created a Strategy Steering Committee with representation from the three groups plus from Heritage St. Marys and the Tourism Committee. The resulting St. Marys Downtown/Community Economic Revitalization Strategy document was finalized in the spring of 2003.

The purpose of the study was to help guide and stimulate the community's economic, cultural and social development.

The Downtown/Community Economic Revitalization Strategy cites five approaches to direct the future of prosperity and vitality for St. Marys:

- Encouraging Economic Development
- Marketing the Community
- Addressing Social Issues
- Guiding Image and Design
- Managing Development

The St. Marys Downtown/Community Economic Revitalization Strategy recommends that there be:

- Appropriate economic development focusing on specialized retail, services and cultural spaces within the downtown core;
- Preservation and enhancement of the significant architectural and natural assets in creating an even more appealing setting for both residents and visitors; and,
- Continued building on the community's base as a tourism destination.

7.0 COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN

7.1 Area of Applicability

This CIP dated January 31, 2015 shall apply to the Town of St. Marys Central Commercial District (CCD) as illustrated in Schedule "A" to this plan and identified as a Community Improvement Area in the Town of St. Marys Official Plan.

7.2 Goals and Objectives

This CIP encourages property owners and developers in the CCD to pursue an incentive offered in support of preservation, restoration and rehabilitation of their properties. Registered owners, assessed owners and tenants of land and buildings within the Community Improvement Project Area are encouraged to undertake building façade improvements through the Façade Improvement Program under the Town of St. Marys Community Improvement Plan.

The intent of offering a financial incentive for façade improvement as part of the Community Improvement Plan is to:

- Encourage improvements to and maintenance of existing buildings within the CCD;
- Encourage the preservation of heritage features within the CCD; and,

- Provide opportunity for investment in downtown buildings that improves the economic climate of the area and increases its importance as a destination for residents and visitors.

7.3 Plan Parameters:

This CIP allows for the financial assistance to registered owners, assessed owners and tenants of land and buildings within the Community Improvement Area as identified on the attached Schedule 'A,' and to any person to such owner or tenant has assigned the right to receive the grant.

More than one payment may be issued to a property provided the total funding does not exceed the annual grant maximum or the cost of rehabilitating the lands and/or buildings. Only projects which meet the list of eligible improvements or are otherwise deemed eligible upon review by the Chief Building Official (CBO) or designate will be eligible to receive a grant.

Grant monies will be awarded to a prescribed maximum dollar amount based upon a percentage of total costs of eligible work, whichever is the lesser. For the purposes of this CIP a façade shall be a portion of the building adjacent to a public roadway or a public pedestrian way. For buildings with facades adjacent to more than one public roadway or public pedestrian way, total linear façade measurements shall be based upon a total of the building facades subject to improvements under the application.

All applications for grant assistance under this CIP will be considered in priority of application received and will be restricted to the limit of the budgeted funding. Projects subject to any applications submitted under this CIP must be completed by December 15 of the calendar year of application, including final inspection and submission of final paperwork. In cases of unforeseen circumstances, the applicant may apply in writing to the CBO or designate for consideration of an extension to this timeline.

Applications received after December 15th of a given calendar year will be eligible for consideration and if approved, will be processed as applications under the following calendar year and paid pending availability of funding to the program.

All grants provided as part of this CIP will be paid out after the applicable façade improvements have been completed and inspected by the Town and the final paperwork has been received by the Town. A property owner or applicant that is in arrears of property tax or any other municipal financial obligation is not eligible to participate in the program.

In all situations, the total amount of grant provided to an applicant under this CIP shall not exceed the cost of rehabilitation.

The Façade Improvement Program will be administered by the Town of St. Marys Planning and Development Department under the Community Improvement Plan.

This Community Improvement Plan is consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement and the St. Marys Downtown/Community Economic Revitalization Strategy and implements the Town of St. Marys Official Plan.

7.3.1 Role of the Chief Building Official (CBO) or Designate

It shall be the responsibility of the CBO or designate to maintain and implement the façade improvement grant program established under the CIP, to encourage and review façade improvement grant applications, to prioritize façade improvement grant applications in the event funding is oversubscribed, to provide consultative services to façade improvement grant applicants, to monitor progress of façade improvement projects, to identify material variances from the original façade improvement grant applications, to inspect and verify completion of façade improvement projects, and to review and approve façade improvement grant disbursements. The CBO shall function as the designate of Council in granting final approval regarding financial incentive programs and applications.

7.3.2 Façade Improvement Program

What is It?

Under the Façade Improvement Program, a registered owner, assessed owner or tenant with written permission of the owner, of a building located within the boundaries of the CCD as identified as Improvement Area 2 on the attached Schedule 'A' is eligible to apply for grant funding for façade improvements.

What Expenses are Eligible for Funding?

Only building facades adjacent to a public roadway or a public pedestrian way are eligible for funding under this program.

Eligible expenses include costs of materials, contracted labour and equipment required to complete improvements to the building façade. Professional fees are also eligible. Eligible expenses are subject to approval and audit by the CBO or designate. Chattels or landscaping are not eligible for funding under this program. Labour provided by the applicant shall not be considered an eligible expense for the purpose of this program. Expenses incurred by the applicant prior to submission and approval of the application for funding under the Façade Improvement Program are not eligible for consideration.

Rehabilitation activities which occurred prior to approval of this CIP will not be eligible for consideration.

How Much Money is Available?

The schedule of available funding is a continuum to accommodate facades of exceptional linear measurement. For buildings with facades adjacent to more than one

public roadway or public pedestrian way, total linear façade measurements shall be a total calculation of the building facades subject to work under the application.

Façade Description	% of Eligible Costs	Annual Maximum Grant
Façade portions greater than 0 linear metres to 15 linear metres	30%	\$3,000 for the façade subject to the application
Façade portions greater than 15 linear metres to 30 linear metres	20%	\$400 per every 3 linear metres subject to the application to a maximum of \$2,000
Façade portions greater than 30 linear metres to 45 linear metres	10%	\$200 per every 3 linear metres subject to the application to a maximum of \$1,000

More than one payment may be issued to a property within a calendar year provided the total funding does not exceed the annual grant maximum or the cost of rehabilitating the lands and/or buildings.

At the time that Council establishes its annual budget, Council shall determine the budget allocation to be made available to the Façade Improvement Program under this CIP for the current year. Council shall have the sole discretion to determine whether or not an annual budget allocation will be made. If these funds are not used in a budget year, Council shall provide for the unused balance of the funds to be transferred to a reserve fund, established for this purpose, to be used for the grant program in subsequent budget years.

How Does the Program Work?

Applications for the Façade Improvement Program will be reviewed by the CBO or designate. Final Council approval is required for applications under the Façade Improvement Program.

Successful applicants will be required to enter into an agreement with the Town. Where an application has been approved, grant monies will be paid upon completion of the façade improvement and after an inspection of the completed work to the satisfaction of Town staff. The façade improvements and all applicable paper work must be completed and submitted to the Town no later than December 15 of the calendar year in which the improvements were made. In cases of unforeseen circumstances, the applicant may apply in writing to the CBO or designate for consideration of an extension to this timeline. In the event that any portion of the façade improvement remains incomplete, as determined by the Town, on the final completion date and an extension was not requested or granted, neither the funding nor any portion thereof shall be payable by the Town and, the Town shall not be liable

for any loss, costs or damages arising as a result of the Applicant's failure to obtain funding due to the failure to complete the façade improvements within the project completion time frame. Work completed prior to grant application approval will not be eligible for consideration. No grant payments will be made at any time prior to the completion of the planned façade improvements.

Applications received after December 15th of a given calendar year will be eligible for consideration and if approved, will be processed as applications under the following calendar year and paid pending availability of funding to the program.

8.0 PLAN IMPLEMENTATION:

Any financial incentive programs under this CIP will commence following consultation with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the coming into effect of the plan.

This Community Improvement Plan will be implemented over five years, ending December 31, 2020..

Council may conduct periodic reviews of the program(s) being offered under the community improvement plan to determine the effectiveness of the program and whether funding levels should be increased or decreased, or whether modifications to the program should be made.

Should Council decide that additional programs are to be added to the CIP or that the financial commitment to the program(s) is to significantly increase, an amendment to this plan shall be required.

At the time that Council for the Town of St. Marys establishes its annual budget, Council will determine the monies to be made available to the program(s) under the CIP for the current year. Council shall have the sole discretion to determine whether or not an annual budget allocation will be made to the program(s) under the CIP. In addition, the Town of St. Marys reserves the right to limit the amount of assistance it will provide to any particular project.

The municipality shall consult with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing where amendments to the CIP include:

1. a change or expansion in the geographic area to which financial or land programs outlined in a CIP apply;
2. a change in the eligibility criteria;
3. the addition of new municipal assistance programs involving grants, loans, tax assistance or land; or
4. an increase in a financial incentive to be offered within a municipal CIP program, regardless of its significance.

9.0 AMENDMENTS TO THE PLAN.

NOTES:



SCHEDULE "A"

Town of St. Marys Community Improvement Area

