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TOWN OF KINGSVILLE

Downtown Cottam Community Improvement Plan

October, 2017

1. Introduction

1.1 Application and Purpose

The Community Improvement Plan applies to the CIP area within the downtown area of Cottam outlined in Schedule 'A' attached.

Community improvement continues to be a key part of the ongoing maintenance and development in the Town of Kingsville. The general purpose of any improvement programs is to maintain and enrich the Cottam downtown area by realizing the benefits of the area.

A Community Improvement Plan, and its associated activities, are intended to improve the existing physical landscape, and to stimulate rehabilitation, revitalization and beautification of an area by using, repurposing, and restoring lands, buildings and infrastructure.

The Town's support will take the form of financial incentives to encourage and support private sector investment.

1.2 Authority

The Town of Kingsville has identified three community improvement areas and has policies within the Kingsville Official Plan which, under the Planning Act give the Town the authority to:

- Designated by by-law parts of the identified community improvement area as "Community Improvement Project Areas." (As noted Council has designated the downtown Cottam area. See Schedule 'A')
- Prepare and adopt a Community Improvement Plan for the project area.

2. Background

In late 2015 Council adopted a recommendation for administration to review the Cottam, Ruthven and Kingsville downtown areas to determine which areas would benefit from the implementation of a Community Improvement Plan. As part of the review and based on Council's direction Cottam was the area that was to be the initial area for review and potential implementation of a CIP. As the first step in development of a CIP it was necessary to establish the specific limits of the CIP. As such, a by-law was presented to and approved by Council in June of 2016 to establish three CIP areas (See Appendix A) including Kingsville, Cottam and Ruthven with Cottam being the initial area for CIP consideration and development.

The downtown Cottam area has not experienced ongoing redevelopment and has continued to have difficulty attracting or retaining long-term commercial tenants. The area would potentially benefit from a more detailed assessment of possible improvements to the area through both municipal programs and private landowner incentives as part of a Community Improvement Plan.

2.1 Overview of Issues

Physical Conditions of Area

The specific study area for Cottam includes all properties with frontage on County Rd 27 from William St. north to Fox St. and along County Rd 34 from Victoria St. east to Clark St.

The main core of this area is the commercial properties on both sides of County Rd 34 from Hill St. extending east to include the Esso gas station on the south side and an auto repair garage on the north side. One of the principle challenges of the Cottam study area is the mix of uses. There is no singular concentration of one particular use. In downtown CIP areas the most common type of use is commercial which generally means that incentive or improvement programs focus on streetscape improvements, reduction of store front vacancies, generally the overall revitalization of the area centered around commercial image and activity improvement.

With such a broad mix of uses in the study area, residential, commercial, industrial and institutional the focus becomes one on the area as a whole versus one specific type of use. For example, if one focuses on the main intersection (County Rd 27 and County Rd 34) traffic travelling north/south on County Road 27 must stop at the intersection. What, during that timeframe, is at the intersection of interest to draw ones attention toward the west? On the other hand, traffic travelling east/west on County Rd. 34 does not have to stop at the intersection and simply continues to travel through Cottam.

Economic Indicators, Issues

The former police village of Cottam is located toward the southeasterly end of an area of residential strip development that starts in the Town of Essex to the northwest on County Road 34. The northerly and southerly limits of Cottam are well defined however, the east west limits are less distinct because of the residential lots which continue along in both directions on County Road 34. Cottam contains approximately 500 households and occupies an area of roughly 125 ha (310 ac.) The area is primarily residential with some commercial uses in the downtown area along with light to medium industrial uses along the west side of County Road 27 West. There are also the typical institutional and recreational uses found in a community of its size.

Social Issues (eg. Housing)

Cottam is a small rural community with a mix of housing types. Rental and affordable housing is not in great supply in the area. Small rural community downtowns such as those in Cottam have experienced increasing difficulty in securing and maintaining long-term commercial tenants which has often lead to a desire to convert commercial buildings to residential uses. However, this is often not supported by the Official Plan policies or zoning which seek to maintain a mix of supportive residential while maintaining ground floor or at least store front commercial space. Cottam's downtown is somewhat unique in this degree as there are a large number of existing residential uses in the form of several single detached dwellings or converted dwellings intermixed with the existing commercial.

Environmental Conditions

No municipal servicing issues (water, sanitary sewer, storm drainage) are identified for the project area of the existing uses. It should however be noted that should additional development occur where added sanitary sewer capacity was necessary there is no additional capacity at present in the lagoon system for Cottam.

There are properties within the designated CIP area that may have environmental contamination. The Town at present does not have a Brownfield strategy so rehabilitation assistance would not be available should these properties require clean-up or remediation.

Town Policies for Community Improvement

Section 8.3 of the Kingsville Official Plan outlines that community improvement initiatives will be used to revitalize existing planning districts, neighbourhoods, corridors or any other identified area in decline or in transition from one land use to another.

Goals

- a) to use community improvement plans to revitalize areas in decline or in transition from one land use to another;
- b) to establish minimum standards for building and property maintenance and occupancy;
- c) to encourage the preservation, rehabilitation, renewal and reuse of heritage resources;
- d) to establish partnerships with the community to revitalize and strengthen neighbourhoods.

Policies

- a) Council may designate, by by-law, a Community Improvement Project Area in accordance with the Planning Act to revitalize neighbourhoods or any identified area in decline or in transition from one land use to another;

Comment: This step has been completed in the form of the CIP By-law approved in June of 2016.

- b) a Community Improvement Project Area may include any area within the Town. Specifically, project areas that have any of the following characteristics shall be considered:
 - i) residential areas where the housing stock is in need of maintenance, rehabilitation and/or repair;
 - ii) declining commercial or mixed-use areas where there are a number of vacant or under-utilized properties;
 - iii) declining or obsolete industrial areas;
 - iv) areas in which there are land use conflicts as a result of incompatible uses;
 - v) areas that have deficient municipal services such as parks, walkways, sanitary and storm sewers, waterlines and roads;
 - vi) areas that have the potential to be new employment areas.

Comment: Cottam has characteristic of item ii) and iv).

- c) where Council authorizes the preparation of a Community Improvement Plan, it shall be prepared in accordance with the Planning Act and shall contain the following information:
 - i) a statement of the basis or rationale for the preparation of the Community Improvement Plan;
 - ii) a description of the project area including a map;
 - iii) a statement of the desired purpose of the Community Improvement Plan;
 - iv) the goals and policies for the Community Improvement Area;
 - v) provisions for the revitalization of land and buildings and the acquisition, sale or lease of lands or buildings acquired by the Town to facilitate community improvement;
 - vi) provisions for the establishment and/or distribution of grants or loans for the purpose of revitalizing the area;
- Comment:** these details will be defined as part of this outline.
- d) Council shall provide an opportunity for public input on the Community Improvement Plan in accordance with the Planning Act;
- Comment:** an initial public meeting was held to introduce the development of a CIP and get affected landowner input. A second open house was held at Council's direction to review the financial options to be included as part of the CIP. Public input has also lead to the potential establishment of the Cottam Revitalization Committee to help provide ongoing input on the improvement of the area.
- e) Council shall dissolve a Community Improvement Area in accordance with the Planning Act once it has been determined that the purpose for the Community Improvement Plan has been accomplished;
- f) Council shall continue to enforce its Property Standards and Occupancy By-law;
- g) Council may contribute funding toward the revitalization of areas through the capital works budget for projects including, but not limited to, streetscape improvement, infrastructure improvements, the provision and upgrading of open space areas and the provision and upgrading of community facilities.

3. Community Improvement Plan

3.1 Vision, Goals & Objectives

Vision

Cottam is the central point for the majority of the rural area in the Town of Kingsville. The Cottam downtown area is a mix of many types of uses, which have and continue to primarily service the needs of the former village of Cottam and the surrounding rural area. It's quiet, slow paced character is typical of its rural setting and provides a respite as you travel along County Road 34 or County Road 27.

Goals

The goals of the Community Improvement Plan conform to and are a refinement of the Official Plan. They focus on key issues and opportunities that are of immediate and near term priority. The goals are:

1. To encourage new investment in the downtown;
2. To attract the attention of the travelling public to increase tourism;
3. To attract and retain longer term tenants to commercial store fronts;
4. To support and improve existing residential uses in the downtown area;
5. To work with existing non-traditional downtown land uses to improve compatibility;

General Objectives

1. To encourage building rehabilitation, development and redevelopment by providing technical support and advise;
2. To encourage building rehabilitation, development and redevelopment by providing financial incentives as defined herein;
3. To suggest that the properties owners within the CIP Project Area consider the establishment of a Cottam BIA.
4. To suggest the review of the Cottam CIP Project Area by the Kingsville Heritage Committee for possible heritage and façade enhancement.
5. To monitor the condition of streetscape, public buildings and public space and to approve capital projects and introduce programs that enhance these aspects of the downtown Cottam project area;
6. To encourage the expansion of the downtown as appropriate and in a planned manner; and
7. To develop supportive Zoning and Official Plan policies that encourage and permit residential intensification projects with the downtown.

Solutions to both of these issues could include:

- i) a four-way stop at the intersection;

Comment: A simple solution however, this still does not generate attention toward the downtown area.

- ii) surface treatment alterations at the intersection or creating pedestrian crossings such as additional road linkage or use of stamped concrete, pavers, or even creative road painting;

Comment: In 2016 sidewalk replacement was undertaken along County Road 34 west of County Road 27. More recently, County Road 34 was resurfaced through the downtown area.

- iii) Improved signage (crossroads signage) which shows other nearby destinations or points to Cottam businesses.

Comment: Added signage can have a significant impact with less financial impact.

- iv) Landscaping corner properties to soften the mix of uses and provide some degree of screening for the Agris parking lot, Esso parking area and auto repair parking lot and display.

Comment: this will require the co-operation of private landowners along with planned investment by the Town.

In addition to the possible intersection upgrades, there is also a need to delineate or define the downtown Cottam area. This is necessary because of two main factors, one the mixed use and lack of concentrated commercial storefronts and the linear nature of the development leading into Cottam from the west. Achieving this goal is something that can be done using signage/gateway type features that identify entry into the area and cause a slowing of travel and attention to be drawn to uses in the area. In addition pole mounted banners within the downtown area can also be used to help demarcate the location and extent of the Cottam downtown area.

Implementing the Plan

A CIP can include a wide variety of financial incentive programs, grants, loans, tax base incentives or combinations of all of these. The scale of improvement and term of investment typically drive these programs necessary to achieve a specific result. The key to encouraging the use of any program is committing enough financial incentive to spark interest in the initial phase or phases of the program. There are 63 properties within the current CIP limits for Cottam approximately 25 residential properties and 38 other mixed uses.

Once the Plan is finalized and has received approval from Council the area(s) which are now within the CIP need to be made aware of the programs available through the CIP. Although the development of the CIP has involved public input, particularly in the affected areas, it is still important to market the programs on an ongoing basis. If the CIP is going to achieve its goals the programs made available as part of its development must be used. Through the initial public input into the CIP, and in addition to determining the expectations, it will be important to identify properties and or areas that could benefit from the developed programs in the CIP.

The Incentive Programs

As a result of the open house, public feedback, Council feedback and internal discussions with staff it was determined that the best initial financial option was that of an Exterior Improvement Grant. This program would be structured to provide a broad field of opportunities including façade upgrading and improvement, accessibility upgrades, new signage, permanent landscaping infrastructure and energy efficiency improvements.

Grants would be available for up to 25% of the total cost of the qualifying changes in the Cottam CIP area with a maximum grant of up to \$2,500. The program is suggested to have a funding commitment of \$20,000 in the first year. This would provide up to 8 grants (based on the maximum grant). After the initial year of the CIP uptake will be assessed and annual funding adjusted accordingly. The intent would be for the program to run up to 5 years which would provide opportunity for up to two-thirds of the property owners to participate. Any funds not utilized during each year would be placed in a reserve fund. Money in the reserve fund, if available, at the end of the five year program would then be used to continue to fund the program until exhausted.

Administration

Project Guidelines

1. On an annual basis, Town Council will determine the monies to be made available to the financial incentive programs(s) outlined in the Community Improvement Plan. Council reserves the right, where project numbers exceed expectations, to offer financial incentives to eligible projects on a “first come first served” basis.
2. The incentive received on any project will be limited to the amount of incentive approved by Council or the total cost of rehabilitating the land and/or buildings whichever is the lesser.
3. Interested parties (i.e. owners and assessed tenants) may apply using the Town’s application form and providing appropriate supporting information.
4. Town administrative staff will prepare a report on each application addressing the merits of the proposal.
5. Based on the application meeting the goals and objectives of the Community Improvement Plan, the staff report and its own assessment, Council will approve, defer or refuse each application. The Town will advise the applicant of the decision and the reasons for the decision.
6. If a property is rehabilitated or redeveloped or otherwise improved with the support of a Town financial incentive and the building is subsequently changed, renovated or demolished contrary to the approved project, any incentive provided may be forfeited or recovered by the Town.
7. The Town reserves the right to register documents on title, including liens, when determined necessary.

How to Apply

1. Applications are made to Planning Services.
2. Applications must be made by the registered owner(s) of the subject property, or the Applicant must provide authorization from the owner.
3. An application for a property will not be considered for which there are taxes owing or any other municipal financial obligation.
4. Outstanding work orders must be resolved prior to approval for assistance.
5. The project must comply with all by-laws, codes and municipal guidelines, except where a minor variance or Zoning amendment are applied for.
6. The applicant will specify the targeted Community Improvement Project type using Section 3.2 as a guide. Only one incentive option or target may be selected as a primary target. Secondary targets may also be identified for the same project.

Eligibility Criteria

1. Only application for properties with the designated Community Improvement Project Area will be eligible. Applications must be approved or adopted by the Town.
2. Applications that are approved by other bodies, such as the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB), are not eligible.
3. An application for a Community Improvement Incentive must be consistent with the Official Plan and Community Improvement Plan’s goals and general objectives.
4. Expansion or rehabilitation of legal non-conforming uses are not eligible.

5. The provision of incentives is subject to fund availability and yearly budget allocation from Town Council. However, the Town of Kingsville is committed to offering financial incentives over a period of time to be determined by Council and in consultation with Administration.
6. In assessing concurrent applications, priority will be given to those, which most closely meet the criteria herein described and the goals and the objective of the Plan. Alternatively, financial support may be apportioned according to merit.
7. Eligible proposals, which receive public assistance from other sources, may for that reason be ranked lower than other eligible proposals.
8. Financial incentives are not permitted to be retroactive, and only projects commencing following the adoption of the Plan will be considered.

Administration of Approved Applications

Payment Requirements

Incentives will be provided only where the Town has inspected the property/project and has issued a certificate of compliance and/or other statement of compliance with building permit, zoning, site plan, terms of the incentive agreement, and any relevant laws.

Compliance Agreements

The owner/applicant shall enter into an agreement with the Town stipulating:

- Terms of the financial assistance;
- Timetable for provision of assistance and completion of the project;
- An undertaking by the owner to satisfy all municipal and other relevant laws and requirements for the project.
- All taxes and fees owing to the Town will be kept current and up-to-date prior to approval. The agreement and/or payments will be terminated and/or payments may be reclaimed should taxes or fees fall into arrears during the project development.

Changes

The project proponent (the property owner) shall notify the Town of any substantive or proposed change in the project such as a change in design, in density, in ownership or in occupancy. The Town will determine the need to amend agreements or permits.

Failure to provide such notification may result in the withdrawal of the financial incentive.

Monitoring

Council will monitor the program. The following records will be maintained:

- The Town may conduct an audit of the work done and the use of incentives for any approved project, as it determines necessary.
- Terms and conditions of the incentive program may be amended as a result of the monitoring efforts, or the program may be discontinued.

Appendix 1. Council Approval of Community Improvement Plan

Appendix 2. Approved Designation of Community Improvement Project Area

Appendix 3. Application Form