

City of Dryden Community Improvement Plan

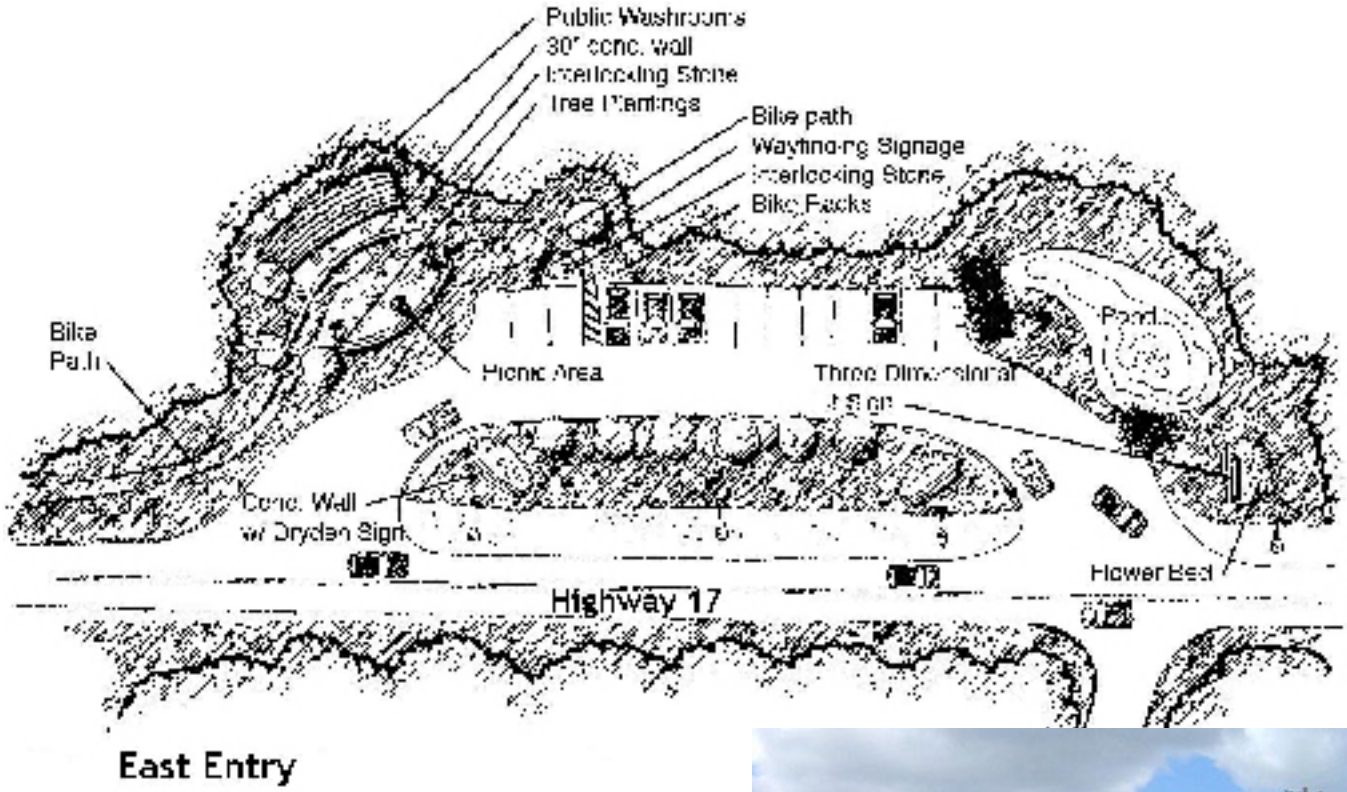
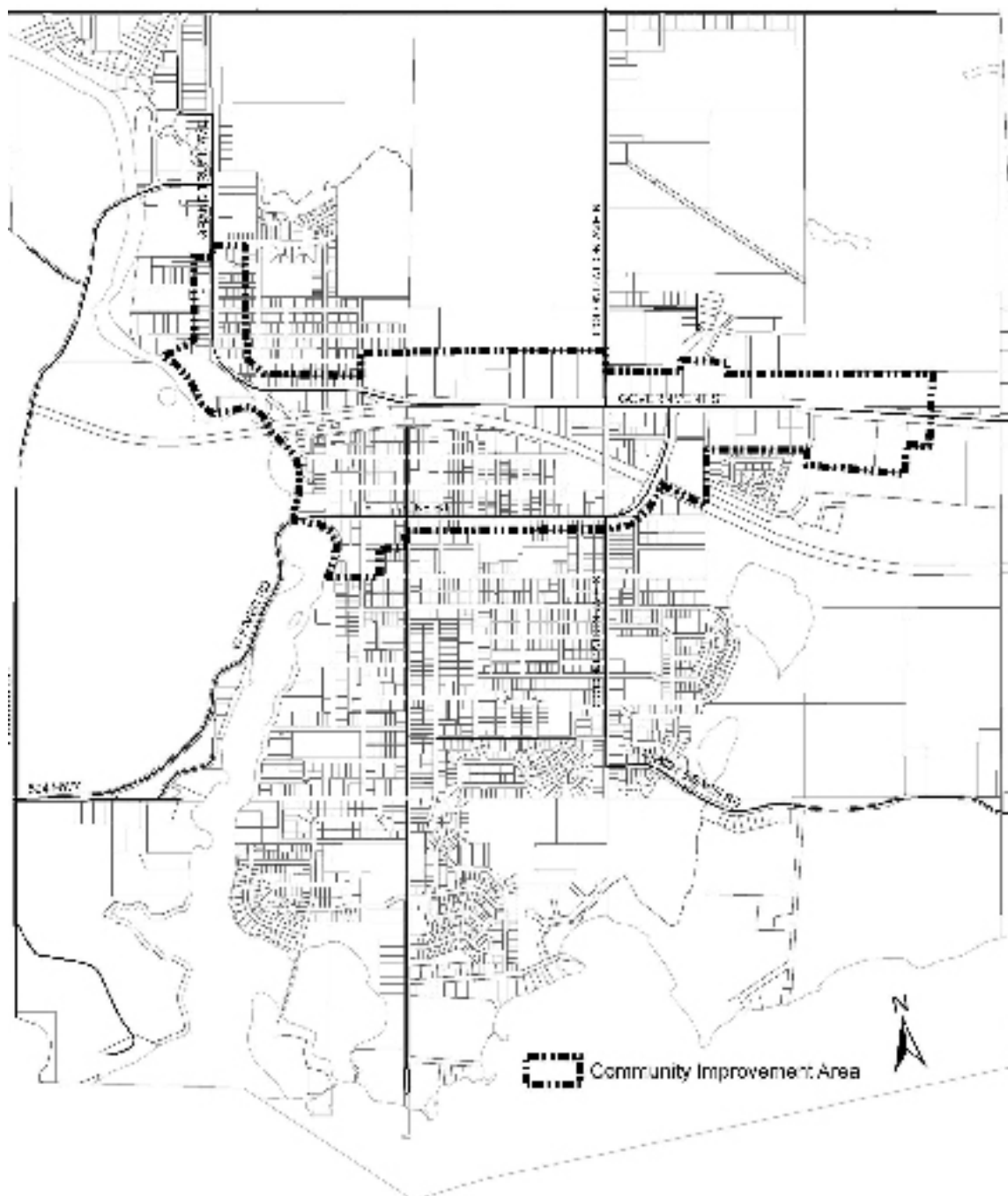


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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The City of Dryden is a fully serviced growing community of approximately 8,1980 people located in the centre of Northwestern Ontario. The City is situated almost exactly half way between Thunder Bay and Winnipeg and, as a result is a significant service centre for trans-Canada traffic. The City has historically been centred around the pulp and paper mill but it's function as a residential and tourism service centre has grown over the last decade. The City is becoming a thriving community with a successful central business district and significant highway commercial area. The City continues to show moderate growth and it is expected that this growth together with an economic development strategy that will increase the diversity of the economy will provide opportunities for sustained growth and rejuvenation in the coming years.



2.0 PURPOSE

A Community Improvement Plan is a planning document that establishes a framework for providing a coordinated plan for improvements and rehabilitation to public and private lands. A background report was completed to support this Community Improvement Plan and is available for viewing at the City of Dryden Planning and Building Department. This document provides policies that will enable the municipality to encourage improvements to private lands through a financial incentive program within a defined Community Improvement Area. These improvements might take the shape of improvements to lands and buildings, signage, streetscape and landscaping improvements. These improvements may be encouraged with the help of incentive-based programs which may include grants, loans, or property tax assistance. It will be further stated that the Community Improvement Plan is for the redevelopment of existing properties, and not for new development.

3.0 RECOMMENDED COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENTS

The City of Dryden has been extensively studied and, as outlined in this report, significant plans have been prepared to support Community Improvement throughout the commercial areas of the City. The City has been implementing public works programs to enhance the entrances and streets within the downtown and major improvement have occurred in the last five years. These improvements can be enhanced through private investment in lands and buildings. Providing financial incentives to property owners will greatly encourage private participation in the over-all enhancement of the City.

The following Community Improvement programs are recommended for the City.

3.1 PLANNING AND DESIGN

A one-time grant of 50 per cent to a maximum of \$500 will be available toward the cost of the preparation of architectural plans for building façade improvements. The grant would be conditional on the architect being approved by the City to ensure that the guidelines outlined in the Downtown Façade Improvement study and this report are implemented at the design stage of the development.

These grants would be paid at 50% (to a maximum of \$250) upon design completion, and the remaining after implementation.

3.2 BUILDING FAÇADE IMPROVEMENTS

Primary Grant

The City will provide a one-time grant of 50 per cent (to a maximum of \$5,000) of the costs to assist commercial building owners to improve a building façade in accordance with the Downtown Façade Improvement Study and this report. Buildings must be within the study area of the "Downtown Façade Improvement Study". The grant would include buildings materials, labour and professional fees.

The area for façade improvements includes the central part of the downtown core area bounded by Earl Avenue to the west, Queen Street to the north, Van Horne Avenue to the east and Duke Street to the south. The area encompasses an eight block quadrant of the downtown Dryden commercial core. The area includes all commercial properties within the area and excludes residential and ancillary buildings.

Secondary Grant

Improvements to each exterior side and rear of buildings, where the building fronts onto a street and backs onto a lane will be eligible for grants provided at 50 per cent (up to \$2,500) of the costs. In no instance will one landowner receive grants totaling greater than \$5,000 in one year. Grants would be paid upon completion of the work.

3.3 IMPROVED SIGNAGE

A grant of 50 per cent (up to \$2,000) will be available toward the cost of replacing an existing sign that does not comply with the Façade Improvement Study. New signs should be front lit rather than internally lit, should use three dimensional lettering with historic fonts and should be of a style that is in keeping with the Façade Improvement Study. Grants will be paid in equal installments over three years. The second and third installments will only be available should the business/sign remain in the Façade Improvement Area.

3.4 PARKING AREA IMPROVEMENT

A grant of 50 per cent, up to a maximum of \$2,500 of the costs will be available for improving parking lots and spaces in the downtown area within the Community Improvement Area. Grants shall be provided up to \$2,500 for landscape improvements based on a landscape plan approved by the City. Landscape improvements may occur between parking areas and roadways or laneways or funds may be used for resurfacing and line painting of resurfaced parking areas. The grant will be payable upon completion of the works.

On lands adjacent to the Highway 17 corridor a full \$2,500 grant will be available to property owners who alter their parking areas to provide formal connections to abutting parking lots or remove an existing entrance from the current Highway in favour of an entrance onto a future service road or a joint entrance with an adjacent property owner.

On lands adjacent to Highway 17 a \$5,000 grant will be available to property owners who propose a landscape and/or entrance improvement project based on an approved plan that utilizes plantings and signage to improve the area of the property directly abutting the Highway.

3.5 APPLICATION FEES

These are not CIP incentive programs but are intended to augment the grants and loan program under Section 28 of the Planning Act. In particular, the waiving of Building permit fees is permitted under Section 7 of the Ontario Building Code Act.

Where a property owner or business is undertaking improvements to lands and buildings in accordance with this report, the City will provide a grant equivalent to the cost of the normal application fees for approved projects in accordance with the provisions of Section 69 of the Planning Act and the City's Tariff of fees by-law:

Site Plan approval	(current fee - \$600.00)
Rezoning	(current fee - \$800.00)
Minor Variance	(current fee - \$300.00)
Building Permit	(current fee - \$0.50/sq.ft or, 0.15/sq ft for an accessory building)

The applicant will be responsible for all mapping and registration costs for agreements where applicable.

3.6 PROPERTY TAX INCREMENT GRANT

Where property improvements are undertaken in a manner supported by this report that result in an increased assessment and therefore increased taxes, the City will provide a grant equal to the property tax increase resulting from the development for up to a maximum of three years following the increase in the assessment. The grant will be equal to the municipal portion of the increased taxes that have resulted only from the property improvements that have been undertaken in accordance with this Plan.

4.0 GRANT ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

- 4.1 Council shall appoint a Committee to review applications for financial incentives. The Committee shall review all applications based on these eligibility requirements and the degree to which the project implements the City's Official Plan, Downtown Façade Improvement Study and Community Improvement Plan. The Committee may develop a ranking system to rank multiple applications in a situation where applications exceed the available funds. Council shall establish a deadline for the receipt of grant applications for each year. Applications received after this deadline will be ineligible for grant funds.
- 4.2 No improvements carried out prior to the approval of the application will be eligible for funding. Only pre-approved projects will be eligible for grants.
- 4.3 Grants would be available to a property owner or business owner occupying an assessed building in the Community Improvement Area upon satisfactory completion of the project. Assistance granted under any of the financial incentive programs to a particular property is not transferable to any other property.
- 4.4 Building façade grants will be granted based on a primary grant for the building façade that forms the primary entrance to the building, and a secondary grant for a building side that faces the street.

Where the primary building entrance is deemed by the Committee to comply with the objectives of this Community Improvement Plan, and no previous Façade Improvement Grants have been given, the primary grant may be approved for improvements to the rear of a building facing the street.

Where a building has more than two building faces abutting a street the City may consider a further secondary grant based on funding availability.

Building Façade grants will only be provided to the building owner.

- 4.5 The building owner or business owner and the City will be required to enter into an agreement specifying the amount to be paid and the payment period. Where the agreement is between a business owner and the City, the building owner must consent to the agreement.
- 4.6 Properties and buildings shall not have any tax arrears, outstanding utility charges or any other legal claim, lien or order that may affect the title of the land. Appropriate building permits shall be in place, and there shall be no outstanding work orders against the property.

- 4.7 The grant programs outlined in Section 6.0 may be combined in a manner that will permit more than one grant per property. Where this is done, the total grant amount shall be based on the amounts listed in Section 6.0, however, the expenditure on each element of the grant shall be flexible, subject to the approval of the City. However, in no instance shall grants exceed the cost of rehabilitation. In no case shall the total grant money provided exceed \$5,000 in one year.
- 4.8 Grants will be available to business or property owners on the basis of one grant or combined grant (for example Planning and Design, Improved signage and Façade Improvement) per assessed building per year.
- 4.9 Façade Improvement grants will only be available for entire building faces. Partial improvements to a portion of a building face will not be eligible. However, one façade may be improved on buildings that have side or rear facades that are also eligible for grants.
- 4.10 The Property Tax Increment Grant will only be available where the property and building improvements undertaken result in an increase in the municipal share of the increased taxes and exceeds \$200 per year. The actual costs associated with an individual application may be subject to an independent audit at the request of the City and at the expense of the property owner.
- 4.11 The owner will be required to register a site plan agreement on the title of the lands guaranteeing all of the improvements where grants have been provided.

5.0 STAGING OF COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENTS

- 5.1 All of the grant programs outlined in Section 5.0 shall be available to property and /or business owners in the Downtown, immediately upon approval of this Plan subject to the requirements of the Planning Act and the requirements of each grant program. No retroactivity of the program prior to its approval by Council.
- 5.2 Council may, by resolution, direct the Committee to give priorities to specific grant programs based on limits to available funding.
- 5.3 Development in the Community Improvement Area should be staged so that improvements to infrastructure and private lands occurs in a comprehensive manner. Major investments in lands and buildings should not be undertaken until public infrastructure works are under way or completed to the satisfaction of the City in consultation with the property owners.

Property owners should coordinate a planning and design study of this area on a comprehensive basis. Planning & Design and Improved Signage grants for this area under sections 6.1 and 6.3 of the Community Improvement Plan will be available for this purpose immediately upon approval of this Plan by Council. When considering applications for financial assistance, the City shall give preferential consideration to applications that are within the areas where concurrent municipal public realm improvements are being undertaken.

Applications for financial incentives for single buildings or businesses will be considered in the context of the proposed improvements impact on a coordinated rehabilitation plan for the entire area.

6.0 IMPLEMENTATION

6.1 ADMINISTRATION

This Community Improvement Plan will be administered by the City of Dryden as part of the implementation of the Community Improvement Policies of the City's Official Plan.

6.2 FINANCING OF IMPROVEMENTS

Council will establish an annual budget for grants related to Community Improvement projects. Funds will be allocated to public works outlined in this report and the related reports identified herein as well as incentive programs. A Committee will be appointed by and accountable to Council to implement the Community Improvement Plan and will be responsible for reviewing and approving applications and allocating funds based on area priorities and in accordance with this Plan.

6.3 OFFICIAL PLAN AND ZONING BY-LAW

This Community Improvement Plan has been prepared in accordance with the Community Improvement policies of the Official Plan for the City of Dryden. The City may consider amendments to the Official plan and Zoning By-law to implement provisions of Bill 51, Amendments to the Planning Act that will enable the City to require that development and redevelopment within the Community Improvement Area comply with guidelines outlined in the Downtown Revitalization Study, Community Improvement Plan and subsequent Urban Design Guidelines.

6.4 SIGN BY-LAW

The City will update the Sign By-law, to reflect this Community Improvement Plan.

6.5 MONITORING AND AMENDMENTS

Council will conduct periodic reviews of the programs and activities relating to Community Improvement to determine their effectiveness. Council may amend this Plan as is necessary to ensure that the Objectives outlined in this Plan are achieved. Any increase in program financing permitted under Section 28 will require an amendment to this Plan.

It is intended that the grant programs outlined will be made available to property and business owners until December 31, 2011 Council may extend this date by by-law without requiring an amendment to this Plan.

7.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

In order to implement the financial incentives outlined in the Community Improvement Plan Council will approve funding on a yearly basis. Funding for public works that would be undertaken as part of the Downtown Revitalization Study and Community Improvement Plan would be approved separately as capital budget items.

The financial incentive package provided for through the Community Improvement Plan can provide significant financial incentives. A single landowner may apply for any combination of the following provided the total amount received in one calendar year does not exceed \$5,000.00

i)	landscape design/architect	\$500.00
ii)	façade improvement	\$5,000.00
iii)	parking area/landscaping	\$5,000.00
iii)	signage	\$2,000.00
iv)	assessment rebate	\$500.00
v)	permits/fees	\$1,500.00

The City has committed sufficient funds for private land improvements to enable properties to take full advantage of all of the financial incentives available. This would result in a significant improvement to the appearance of the community and undoubtedly encourage further investment in the lands and buildings in the community. In addition to improvement on private lands previously completed studies and the Background Report to this Community Improvement Plan document improvements on City owned lands including, street tree planting, bike paths, entry features and sidewalks. As both the private and public realms increase their investment in Community Improvement the overall impact will be significant.

8.0 CONCLUSION

The proposed Community Improvement Plan provides clear direction for Council staff and landowners with regard to public and private investment initiatives in the Downtown Core and Highway 17 Corridor of the City of Dryden.

The City of Dryden is encouraged to coordinate the municipal improvements, such as boulevard works, strategically with private landowners. For example where contracts can be combined, cost savings can be realized.

It is anticipated that the

The document has been prepared with regard to the requirements of Section 28 of the Planning Act and is consistent with Provincial Policy Statement. It also implements the Community Improvement Policies of the Official Plan for the City of Dryden.