



Municipalité de
RUSSELL
Township

Township of Russell

Community Improvement Plan – Villages of Embrun and Russell



Prepared for
Township of Russell
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1.0 Introduction

This document serves as an update to the previous Township of Russell CIP from 2015. The Township has refined the CIP program through thorough review explained in this document. The new CIP program is in effect as of March 1, 2025.

1.1 Background

The Township of Russell is located along the Castor River approximately 30 minutes southeast from Ottawa and approximately 10 minutes south of King's Highway 417 in the National Capital Region in Eastern Ontario. It consists of 4 communities: Embrun, Russell, Limoges, and Marionville. The majority of its population resides in the Villages of Russell (approx. 7,000 residents) and Embrun (approx. 8,000 residents). The community's commercial corridor is mostly concentrated in the Village of Embrun, which offers a wide range of goods and services.

The Community Improvement Plan (CIP) was initiated by the Township of Russell in an effort to revitalize certain areas and attract new businesses. A CIP Project Advisory Committee was established consisting of Township staff, the Mayor, local business owners, and representatives from the United Counties of Prescott and Russell's Economic Development department. By seeking participation of a wide range of key stakeholders in these CIP project areas, the CIP process is granted the best opportunity to ensure real growth at the entrepreneurial level from where true lasting value is derived. This 2024 CIP Update is intended to serve as a replacement for the previous CIP and to provide updates based on feedback and best practices.

The Township of Russell has many assets – and potential opportunities – that will be well-supported by a CIP. As the community cores of Russell and Embrun act as a central hub for residents throughout the various communities, the CIP will enhance existing businesses, and may result in an increased range of services. The CIP will provide direction for improvements within the Community Improvement Project Areas (CIPA), which may attract more businesses, tourists, and visitors to the community. The goals, objectives, design guidelines and implementing tools capitalize on the strong spirit and heritage of the community.

Implementation of the CIP may rely on funding and assistance from Municipal, County, Provincial and/ or other funding programs. The CIP is a shared pathway to success. The Corporation of the Township of Russell treasures the value of risk and reward and recognizes the mutual responsibility of all local stakeholders.

A recent Economic Development Strategic Plan has identified well-planned urban development and growth of local businesses amongst key strategic goals for economic development in Russell Township.

Russell is principally a locally-driven consumer economy that remains operated and owned in large part by local residents. Although national franchises are present and are an integral part of Russell Township's business climate, the economic pulse remains driven by local merchants who are fully invested in their future.

Policy review may be found in Appendix A.

1.2 As We Heard It Report

In 2020, JLR conducted a study by contacting businesses who have filed or were in the process of

submitting applications to the Township of Russell for the Community Improvement Plan (CIP) grant and incentive programs. The purpose of this study was to try and understand what's working and what's not working for businesses who have applied for these grants, or businesses who are currently exploring their grant options within the CIP areas.

The responses gathered from businesses confirm that individual experiences with the grant programs vary based upon the applicant's level of involvement; their administrative experience; whether or not the applicant's file was approved; property location; and the type of grant program(s) the applicant pursued. Generally, most applicants had a positive experience with the Township of Russell's CIP grants and incentive programs. Additionally, many of the surveyed applicants would consider pursuing the Township's grants in the near future. However, while many applicants thought municipal staff were incredibly supportive and resourceful, others discussed some challenges that they faced in applying for the municipal grants, which include:

- ineligibility
- financial costs
- inexperience in project administration
- the complexity of large-scale projects versus small-scale projects
- insufficient access to information prior to the approval and permits phase
- a lack of expertise related to municipal by-laws and the inability to comply to the by-laws

In review of these challenges, six recommendations were put forward in 2020 as options to improve the CIP. The recommendations are as follows:

Recommendation 1: Consider and assess a potential expansion to the boundaries of certain CIP areas.

- Strategies to generate a higher level of interest and involvement in the grant and incentive programs should be explored. In particular, it may be important to look into areas that have received fewer applications from their businesses, or areas where currently ineligible applicants could benefit from the Township's incentives and programs. In this study, there were a couple of applicants who were denied a grant because their property resided immediately outside of a CIP area. For those interested in the grant programs, the Township could explore integrating interested businesses into the CIP areas. Amalgamating the two Russell core areas into one through the expansion of the Community Improvement Plan (CIP).
- In particular, expanding the boundaries of the Russell core areas could generate more interest and activity among business owners. The objective of the grant program should be to ensure that all businesses, regardless of the CIP area, should be benefitting from the available funding streams. Currently, some areas are receiving more grant funds than others. While this may result from a lack of will among business owners, it may also be due to some economic factors. Businesses within the disadvantaged areas may benefit from additional financial support and beautification efforts.

Recommendation 2: Consider the creation of a media campaign, or an outreach program to help advertise and provide necessary information on available grants and incentives.

- Some of the business applicants interviewed in this study brought to our attention the challenges they experienced in accessing information on potential contractors and suppliers, as well as understanding CIP guidelines and by-law requirements. Businesses would benefit from having more information on the following: program intent and eligibility requirements; clarity on the Tax Increment Program; contacts

for local contractors or project administrators (i.e., architects, engineers, builders, etc.); and by-laws. Information on these subject areas could be facilitated through FAQ sessions and in-person meetings.

Recommendation 3: Consider amending the Signage Improvement Program to allow greater flexibility for applicants.

- Some of the applicants noted that the Signage Improvement Program has very specific criteria. Some applicants felt when they used non-local suppliers that these suppliers often develop models that reflect their own local by-law requirements, not the guidelines and by-law requirements of the Township of Russell. According to some participants in this study, the Signage Improvement Program should be one of the easiest grant programs to complete. Also, only roughly 50% of signage programs get approved, as compared to the less popular Architectural/Engineering grant, which should be a more difficult application to process. A more flexible approach to reviewing applications for the Signage Improvement Program is recommended. It would be noted that this grant is intended for the entire sign structure, not only updating content on a sign.

Recommendation 4: Consider the adoption of a smaller grant program that supports businesses with minor repairs, or maintenance issues.

- Not every business can undertake large scale projects. In order to kick-start involvement or to help familiarize businesses with municipal processes, it may be important to offer smaller grant amounts, as some projects can become too complex for small business owners. Due to time and resources, small business owners need to see that a grant application will be worthwhile. One strategy could be as easy as reducing the level of investment or requirements for certain grants.
- For example, the requirements or level of investment required for the Architectural/Engineering Design Grant Program can be reduced when applicants only need to address minor repair and maintenance issues (e.g. new railings, new paint, or a new step). The same goes for the Parking and Landscaping grant, which, to date, has not received one successful grant application. Perhaps, requirements are too stringent, and there may be a need to encourage smaller projects, like planter boxes or new annual planting materials, which could be accomplished at a lower rate of investment.

Recommendation 5: Consider tracking the potential for new grant applicants by reaching out to business in the pre-approval stages.

- It appears as though many of the applicants discussed in this study sought out grant applications while they were already in the process of obtaining permits. In order to ensure that applicants follow CIP guidelines or meet by-law requirements, it may be important for the Township of Russell to inform businesses before they begin the process of obtaining permits and approvals for their projects.
- When applicants are informed of their options later in the process there is a chance that they will have to spend money on reworking their applications to fit the established criteria. If there are too many barriers applicants will be less likely to continue their project. To ensure that grant applicants follow CIP guidelines, it is advised that the Township of Russell anticipate projects well in advance of the project implementation stage, or communicate with project administrators and potential applicants early in the planning process.

Recommendation 6: Continue to monitor and evaluate received applications to establish yearly program targets and explore potential amendments to CIP guidelines to facilitate more inclusivity.

- To date, the Township of Russell has been able to track applicant progress and project details. However, the Township may want to start highlighting the various compliance issues that applicants

encounter, as well as take into consideration the potential for uneven, or inequitable development between CIP areas. If the Township of Russell finds that most businesses have difficulties meeting certain by-law requirements, or CIP guidelines, there may be a need to evaluate or amend these guidelines or by-laws to simplify the application process for business owners. This review should take place more regularly than once every five years.

- Also, there appears to be a handful of grants that have received fewer applications than expected; in particular the Residential Conversion to Commercial Use Grant Program and the Tax Increment Grant Program. As such, the Township could further study the municipal budget and the public demand for the grants concurrently in order to determine whether funds should be redistributed to programs currently in higher demand.

1.3 CIP Success Stories

The Community Improvement Plan (CIP) is one of the key tools for supporting local businesses and encouraging revitalization and private sector investments. The original CIP (created in 2015) included a variety of financial incentives to eligible projects within the Community Improvement Project Areas (CIPAs) as described in section 1.4 of this document.

In winter 2024, the Township undertook a review to update this tool. The 2024 CIP builds on the original CIP’s strengths and successes and expands the CIPAs and funding programs to stimulate broader community involvement and further improve the core areas of Russell and Embrun.

The CIP has had many success stories thus far, from local businesses in the CIPAs utilizing their grants to improve their properties. Some examples of these success stories are highlighted below:



2. APPLICANT

Qualified for



BEFORE

ROYAL LEPAGE

Façade Improvement Grant, Signage Improvement Grant, Municipal Application/Permit Fees Rebate



AFTER

3. APPLICANT

Qualified for





BEFORE

ENCORE AUDIOLOGY

Façade Improvement Grant, Accessibility Improvement Grant, Parking Area and Landscaping Improvement Grant, Architectural/Engineering Design Grant, Municipal Application/Permit Fees Rebate



AFTER

4. APPLICANT	RUSSELL IDA PHARMACY
Qualified for	Façade Improvement Grant, Signage Improvement Grant, Accessibility Improvement Grant, Parking Area and Landscaping Improvement Grant, Architectural/Engineering Design Grant, Municipal Application/Permit Fees Rebate, Tax Increment Grant Program
	
BEFORE	AFTER

1.4 Community Consultation

The following sections expand on the community consultation methods carried out for the CIP Update. The As We Heard It Report (2020) provided significant background information on the opinion of the CIP, which greatly influenced this update. To further gauge the current awareness and opinion on the program, a community survey was shared in April 2024 to those within the CIPAs on the CIP incentives and process.

1.4.1 Community Survey

The Township, in collaboration with JLR, shared a survey to addresses within the new CIPAs, in order to gauge interest in the program and get feedback on the expansion of the CIPAs into their areas.

The survey provided feedback similar to that found in the previous As We Heard It Report. In general, the survey results showed that respondents would like more information on the program, to better understand how it works and the possibilities for participating. Respondents shared their level of interest in the various incentives.

The incentives with the most interest were:

- Façade Improvement Grant
- Parking and Landscaping Improvement Grant
- Tax Increment Grant

The incentives with the least interest were:

- Accessibility Improvement Grant
- Residential to Commercial Improvement Grant
- Architectural/Engineering Design Grant

From the survey, the Township has decided to improve awareness and the process of the CIP program by providing additional details on a [website landing page](#). This page will have a step-by-step guide for applying to the program, similar to the language within this document itself.

Further, in order to improve uptake of the program, applicants will now be able to apply to the general program, and if approved, can use the maximum of \$20,000 for whichever incentive they'd like, in combination with other incentives or programs.

1.5 Community Improvement Project Areas

The Community Improvement Project Areas (CIPAs) were revisited with Township Staff as part of this update and consist in large part key Core Areas within the Village of Russell and Village of Embrun. A main goal of updating the CIP was to expand the CIPAs to increase eligibility of participation. The CIPA maps have been updated to include more properties. The CIPAs are largely the same, comprising of four distinct areas:

- Village of Russell Commercial Corridor;
- Village of Russell Village Core;
- Village of Embrun Commercial Corridor;
- Village of Embrun Village Core.

The first CIPA consists of the Commercial Corridor of the Village of Russell. The total area comprises 7 lots (460 metres of road). This area is predominantly commercial with residential land uses intermixed.

The second CIPA consists of a section of the Village of Russell's Village Core area. The area comprises a 3 block area (210 metres of road). This area is predominantly commercial with residential land uses intermixed. This Project Area currently has approximately 20 existing businesses.

The third CIPA comprises two areas designated Commercial within the Village of Embrun. The western most area comprises 11 lots while the eastern area comprises 12. These areas include most of the industrial/commercial service businesses and the big box retail/service commercial businesses which include a grocery store, bank, restaurant, liquor stores, hardware store and various fast food establishments.

The fourth CIPA comprises 2 separate areas designated Village Core within the Village of Embrun. The western most area comprises 21 residential or vacant lots along Notre Dame Street. The eastern most area comprises 33 residential, institutional, industrial or vacant lots along Notre Dame Street in the east end of Embrun.

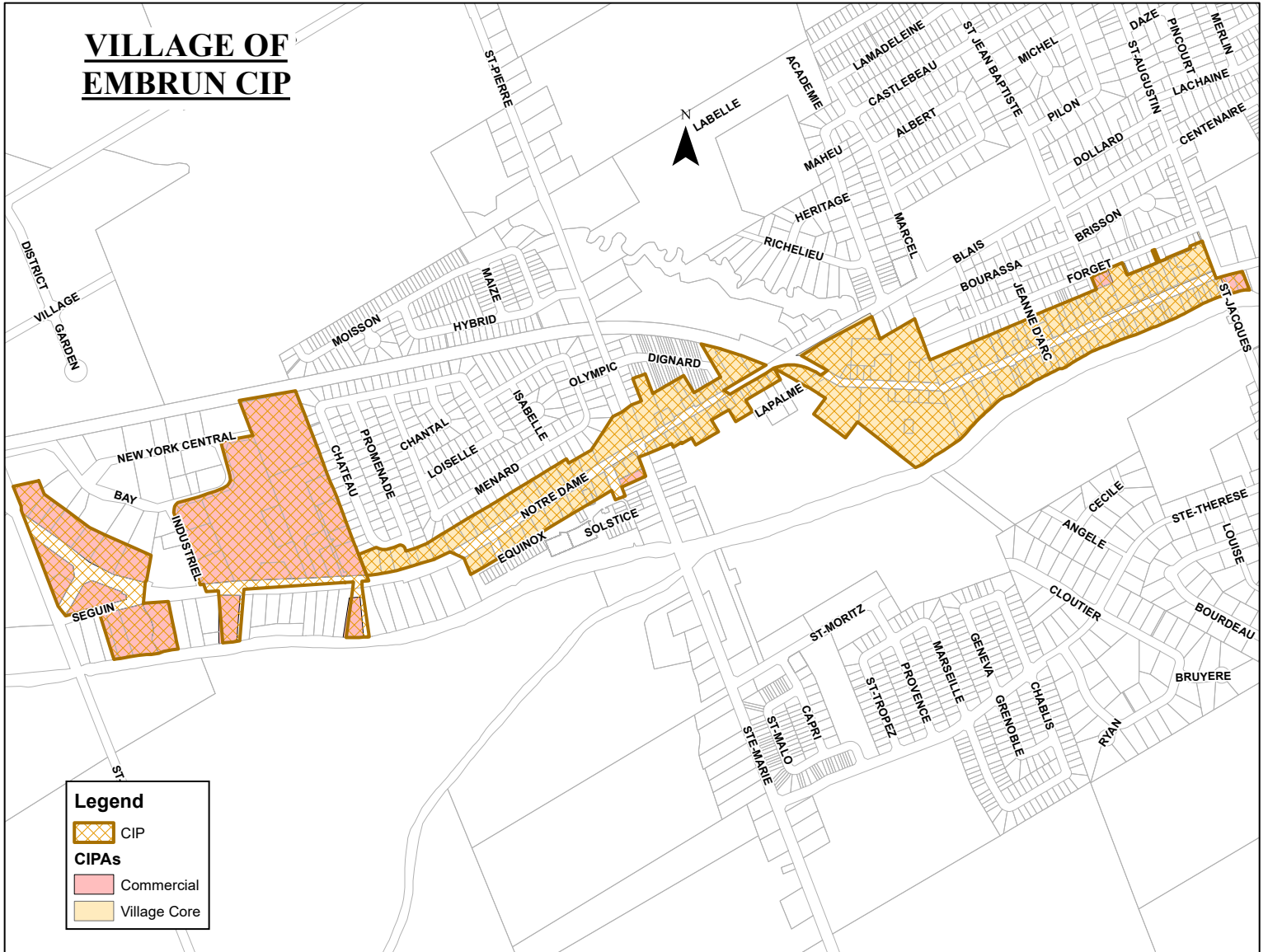


Figure 1 Village of Embrun CIPs

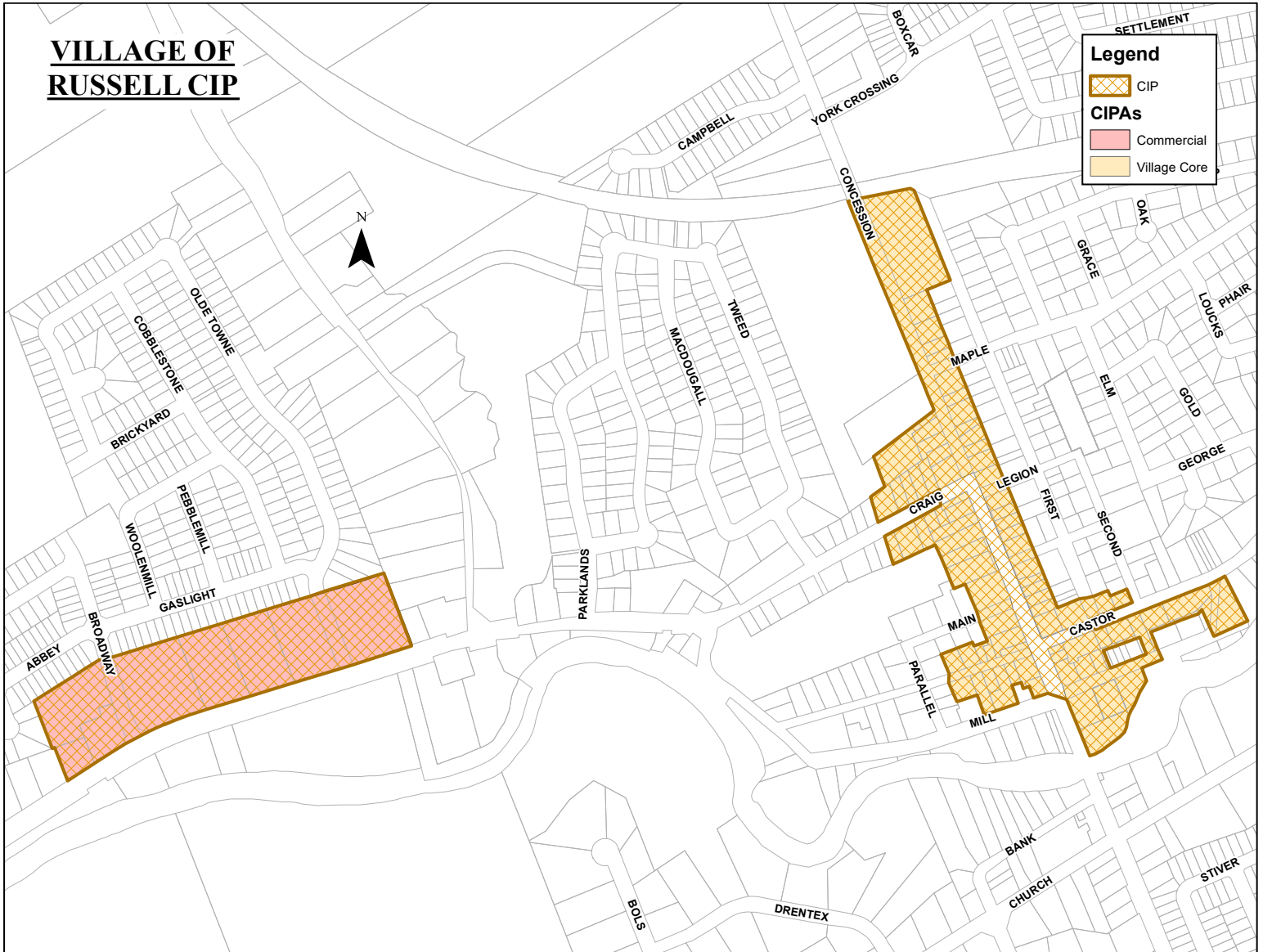


Figure 2 Village of Russell CIPs

2.0 CIP Design Guidelines

2.1. Parking Area and Landscaping Improvements

The intent of these guidelines is to provide ways to improve the appearance of parking areas while increasing safety and security for users. Screening and streetscape treatments need to balance between blocking views to parked vehicles, while allowing sufficient sightlines for pedestrian safety to ensure efficient movement of vehicles and people.

The following guidelines are recommended for parking and landscaping improvements:

- Ensure adequate barrier-free parking and access to accessible entranceways through improvements to parking areas.
- Encourage property owners to landscape the front of their property with native materials, preferably contained within a raised curb or planter, effectively defining the edge of the Highway Commercial Corridor.
- Reduce commercial entrance widths to operational minimum. This can be enforced through site plan approval for new developments or redevelopments.
- Promote permeable paving for parking lots as part of a sustainability strategy for on-site stormwater management for new developments, as well as redevelopments.
- Landscape the area in front of a building wall.
- Provide direct, safe, continuous and clearly defined pedestrian access from public sidewalks to building entrances.
- Provide a consistent width of landscape and pedestrian areas across the front of the site.
- Trees species should be appropriate for Eastern Ontario, and could include a mixture of Maple, Oak, White Spruce and White Pine, for example, which are indigenous to the region and are robust by nature. MNR's Tree Atlas may be consulted for other examples of native trees.
- Planting materials should be hardy perennial species, which are appropriate for the Eastern Ontario climate. The Township of Russell is located in plant hardiness zone 5a, and plants that are hardy to Zone 5 or lower should be selected.

2.2 Built Form Improvements

Development should incorporate architectural elements, massing, and height so as to make it more a cohesive identity for the Commercial Core.

The following guidelines are recommended for built form improvements:

- New developments or redevelopments along this Corridor, although some existing are set far back, are encouraged to respect the setback of adjacent buildings wherever possible. In addition, they should provide a 'front' to the street or highway, complete with shopfront and entrance, as described in the

Entrances section.

- When located at major transition points between the Commercial Corridor and abutting residential, the building should be located closer to the street and occupy the majority of the lot frontage to match the existing residential built line.
- Where commercial buildings are set back significantly from the highway, it is the treatment of the driveway and front edge of the property that becomes the de facto 'face' to the highway and, therefore, should be properly landscaped, as described in the Parking and Landscaping section.
- New commercial developments should be commercial in appearance and avoid residential-style structures that are not appropriate.
- Orient the front façade to face the public street and locate front doors to be visible, and directly accessible, from the public street.

2.3 Entrance Improvements

The following guidelines are recommended for entrance improvements:

- Entrances should express individuality as well as maintain continuity with the area.
- The shopfront should be a single system in what appears to be a single opening in the building.
- The entrance should occupy a minimum of 1/3 of the entire width and height of a ground floor, where possible, creating a higher degree of transparency, enhancing the connection between inside and outside activity.
- Small, individual windows on the ground floor should be avoided as they relate to a residential character, creating a sense of privacy that is inappropriate for commercial building façades. Glazing and entrance system should use large panes of glass as much as possible.
- Entrances should take advantage of opportunities for marketing and promoting themselves, but should avoid being filled with merchandise or obsolete signage and displays. Any displays or signage on the window should obscure views as little as possible and be of proportion and scale that is appropriate to the window and shopfront.
- Roof overhangs are appropriate and encouraged. Aside from providing further moisture protection to the building itself, overhangs protect pedestrians from the elements as they enter and exit the building, making it more inviting and approachable.

2.4 Building Façade Improvements

Future developments and façade improvements could create new character to develop cohesion throughout the CIPAs without modifying existing building typologies. It is recommended that future developments adhere to a building height standard (maximum one to two stories) that will gradually establish a consistent scale for the streetscape.

The façade improvement program contains guidelines that apply to all building types, based on basic design principles related to the following façade elements:

- Rather than limit the range of colours as a form of standardization, it is recommended that the approach be based on basic colour design principles as recommended below:
 - Consider colour not only within a scheme for a single façade or building but also as part of the street context.
 - It is important to limit the number of colours to two - one dominant and one complementary. Shades and tints of a colour are not considered an additional colour and can add depth to a colour scheme but should be subtle and not diminish the simplicity of a colour scheme.
 - The façade material may count as one colour if it is strong enough, in which case it should be an integral part of colour selection.
- Entrances should be composed of materials of enduring quality and considered detailing.
- The use of quality materials and workmanship should be considered as one of the standards for approval.
- Use projections, recesses, arcades, awnings, colour and texture to reduce the visual size of any unglazed walls.
- The use of vinyl siding or low-grade wood siding is discouraged especially on street facing façades.
- Industrial metal siding should be avoided.
- Use clear windows and doors to make the pedestrian level façade of walls, facing the street, highly transparent.

2.5 Shopfront Improvements

A commercial shopfront and its various elements can have an enormous impact on unifying a street. To reinforce the sense of place on a main street, building fronts should act as a continuous 'face', and as an extension of the streetscape with spaces that will activate and energize the street. This goal is also appropriate for rear courtyards and mid-block linkages. Where development occurs on vacant lots, continuous façades should be introduced that maintain the setbacks of the adjacent buildings. Where this is unlikely to occur, the voids should be treated to support street vitality and complement the public realm.

The following guidelines are recommended for shopfronts and entrances:

- Shopfronts should express individuality as well as maintain continuity with the area.
- Shopfronts and entrances should be well proportioned, of human scale, and oriented to the pedestrian.
- The shopfront should be a single system in what appears to be a single opening in the building.
- The shopfront should occupy the entire width and height of a ground floor, where possible, creating a higher degree of transparency, enhancing the connection between inside and outside activity.
- Small, individual windows on the ground floor should be avoided as they relate to a residential character, creating a sense of privacy that is inappropriate for commercial building façades. Glazing and entrance system should use large panes of glass as much as possible.

- Hospitality establishments, such as restaurants and cafés, are encouraged to have sliding doors to ‘open up’ to the street during the summer months.
- There should be express mixed uses – public at grade and private uses above.
- Shopfronts should take advantage of opportunities for marketing and promoting themselves, but should avoid being filled with merchandise or obsolete signage and displays. Any displays or signage on the window should obscure views as little as possible and be of proportion and scale that is appropriate to the window and shopfront.
- Shopfronts should be composed of materials of enduring quality and considered detailing.

2.6 Accessibility Improvements

Accessibility in the context of buildings and streetscapes is defined as the ease with which all individuals, including those who are disabled, can safely access or move within buildings and the public realm.

All new development is reviewed for accessibility under the Ontario Building Code (OBC) and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disability Act.

Many of the existing buildings were built during a time when their relationship to the street and accessibility was not a priority. As a result, the height of the ground floor in relationship to the current sidewalk varies from building to building, which poses a challenge for accessibility. This condition cannot be remedied with one solution for all cases and, therefore, should be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. The addition of ramps and other accessibility features may require a building permit.

The following guidelines are recommended accessibility improvements:

- Where the distance between the ground floor and the sidewalk is one step or less, the difference in height could be accommodated in the form of a ramp within the building’s entrance area, depending on the setback of the door from the sidewalk. In the case where the door is not set back, the entrance may be reconfigured to allow for a setback of the door.
- Where the difference is two to three steps, a more complex modification to the storefront and entrance would be required, increasing the cost significantly. This condition may require a ramp that is parallel to the sidewalk in order to minimize the impact to the interior space, provided the storefront is wide enough.
- Some of the ground floors are four or five steps higher than the sidewalk, making the problem difficult to deal with in a standard way. These cases would likely require a portion of the height difference to be accommodated outside of the building, on the sidewalk, in the form of a front porch with a ramp, as well as a portion similar to the less extreme cases. The portion outside depends entirely on the ability for the sidewalk to accommodate it, and is likely not realistic without significant modification to the streetscape.
- Where a building has a side or rear door, or has the potential to introduce a side or rear door, an owner may elect to provide a ramp on the side of their building from the door to the sidewalk.



- In all cases, adequate barrier-free parking and access to accessible entranceways through improvements to parking areas and accessibility measures are recommended.

2.7 Upper Floor Improvements

Generally, upper floors feel more private than ground floors, but should still consist of windows regardless of their use. The number of windows, their size, proportion, and location should be considered in relation to the width, height, and proportion of the exterior wall, all of which contribute to a balanced façade.

Recommendations for upper floor openings and details include:

Russell's Community Core Areas:

- A cornice on a façade consistent with the existing façade of the Village Core is encouraged in Russell's Community Core Area.
- In Russell's Community Core, both pitched and flat roofs are encouraged and shed roofs should slope towards the back so that the highest point is at the front.

Embrun's Community Core Areas:

- Although a cornice on a façade is more appropriate on buildings in the Community Core of Russell, roof overhangs are appropriate and encouraged on commercial buildings in the Community Core of Embrun. Aside from providing further moisture protection to the building itself, overhangs protect pedestrians from the elements as they enter and exit the building, making it more inviting and approachable.
- New single-storey developments should consider a façade with a tall parapet that extends partially towards the average 2-storey building height, complete with a strong cornice line at the top.
- As a measure to maintain unity in Embrun's Community Core, flat roofs are preferred, pitched roofs are discouraged and shed roofs should slope towards the back so that the highest point is at the front.

2.8 New Developments

The following guidelines are recommended for new developments:

- Displays and spill-out activities, such as cafés, should complement sidewalk movement, such as walking and shopping.
- All boulevard elements should be integrated into the design of any new building to avoid the impression of an 'add-on'.
- New developments requiring accessibility ramps should consider them to be integral to the building design and should occupy the full width of a façade where appropriate and technically feasible, in accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act and the Ontario Building Code.
- All boulevard elements shall comply with all relevant building codes, By-laws and standards.
- Coordinate all work that is beyond the property line with public works.

- The quality and character of any boulevard element should be consistent with that of the building to which it is associated.

2.9 Boulevard Elements

Seating, planters, and landscaping attract pedestrians by reducing the barrier between interior space and exterior space. They animate the street, breathing life into the public realm. When seating and landscaping are integrated with a shopfront's façade, they extend the activities from within the building to the outside, making the street more inviting and alive.

Trees and plantings are important in creating a successful streetscape. People are naturally attracted to tree-lined streets because of the protection and ambiance they offer, making them essential for a street where walking, shopping, dining, and relaxing are desired and encouraged. Trees impact the pedestrian experience by providing protection from weather (wind, sun, rain, and snow), and the provision of cleaner air.

Salt and snow removal are hazards to tree growth and survival and should be a consideration in selecting the location and species of trees. Where possible, the use of local and salt tolerant plant species should be selected.

The following guidelines are recommended for boulevard elements:

- Displays and spill-out activities, such as sidewalk cafés, should respect space for pedestrian movement.
- Boulevard elements should be integrated into the design of any new building to avoid the impression of an 'add-on'.
- Boulevard elements shall comply with all relevant building codes, By-laws, and standards.
- All work that is beyond the property line should be coordinated with the Township of Russell or the United Counties of Prescott and Russell, and any necessary permits should be obtained.
- The quality and character of boulevard elements should be consistent with that of the building to which they are associated.
- Introduction of a row of trees in the zone between the sidewalk and the street curb where the right-of-way allows is encouraged. Increased sidewalk widths provide better tree planting conditions, which promote better canopy growth.
- Property owners should be encouraged to plant a tree at the street edge of their property to help "green" the Township.
- Planter type and design should complement the quality and character of other street furnishings and optimize sidewalk space. Planters could incorporate a seat or perch for casual stops and informal conversations.

2.10 Public Art

The inclusion of public art within a Township is a strategy that helps boost local culture while at the same time, encourages visitors to stop and spend time within the community. Some Townships have successfully incorporated public art within their Townships and main streets including Huntsville, Ontario (Group of

Seven murals); and Hope, B.C. (chainsaw carvings), for example. Large blank walls could easily become surfaces to permanently display public art. Fences, often an unsightly element in the urban character of a Township, could be readily transformed into works of art.

The following guidelines are recommended for the display of public art:

- The Township, local businesses, and arts groups should look for funding opportunities through arts funding agencies and/or partnerships with art institutions.
- Public art should be related to a single theme to provide consistency and a unifying theme throughout the Village Core areas and Commercial Corridors.
- Public art should tie into existing themes and local history. Themes could relate to the area's cultural heritage.
- Public art projects should be combined with successful community events that already exist.
- Infrastructure should be put in place to protect public art (i.e. small overhangs, selection of materials, etc.)
- Lighting should be provided for public art pieces.
- Marketing materials could be produced that indicate the location and description of public art works throughout the Township.

3.0 CIP Incentives

The general and program specific requirements contained in this CIP are not necessarily exhaustive and the Township reserves the right to include other requirements and conditions as necessary on a property specific basis. All of the financial incentive programs contained in this CIP are subject to the following general requirements, as well as the individual requirements specified under each program.

- a. The Township reserves the right to audit the cost of project feasibility studies, environmental studies, environmental remediation works, and/or rehabilitation works that have been approved under any of the financial incentive programs, at the expense of the applicant;
- b. The Township is not responsible for any costs incurred by an applicant in relation to any of the programs, including, without limitation, costs incurred in anticipation of a grant and/or tax assistance;
- c. If the applicant is in default of any of the general or program specific requirements, or any other requirements of the Township, the Township may delay, reduce or cancel the approved grant and/or tax assistance;
- d. The Township may discontinue any of the programs at any time, but applicants with approved grants and/or tax assistance will still receive said grant and/or tax assistance, subject to meeting the general and program specific requirements;
- e. All proposed works approved under the incentive programs and associated improvements to buildings and/or land shall conform to all Municipal By-laws, policies, procedures, standards, guidelines, including applicable Official Plan and Zoning requirements and approvals;
- f. The improvements made to buildings and/or land shall be made pursuant to a Building Permit and/or other required permits, and constructed in accordance with the Ontario Building Code and/or other municipal requirements;

- g. Outstanding charges from the Township (including tax arrears), work orders, and/or orders or requests to comply must be satisfactorily addressed prior to application processing and grant and/or tax assistance payment;
- h. Township staff, officials, and/or agents of the Township may inspect any property that is the subject of an application for any of the financial incentive programs offered by the Township;
- i. The total of all grants (excluding tax assistance) provided in respect of the lands and buildings of an applicant under the programs contained in this CIP shall not exceed 50% of the cost of rehabilitating said lands and buildings, up to \$20,000 (excluding the StopGap Ramp at 100% of the costs);
- j. In all cases, if the applicant is not the owner of the property, the applicant must provide written consent from the owner of the property to make the application and undertake the works;
- k. Proposed building and/or site improvements shall have regard to the CIP design guidelines and must not have commenced prior to approvals;
- l. Applicants may be required to enter into a maintenance agreement with the Township and shall undertake to keep the property and specifically those parts of the property subject to the CIP improvement project in good condition; and,
- m. Projects must be completed within one year of approval, but recipients may apply for a grant extension.

Council retains the right, in its sole and absolute discretion, to extend, revise, or alter this CIP beyond the five-year horizon, at any time during the five-year operational period of the Plan, subject to the objectives of Council and the satisfactory performance of the Plan in the opinion of Council.

The following programs are available to the Township during this next five-year period of the CIP (2025-2029). However, Council will review its municipal budget on a yearly basis and decide on which programs are in effect on a yearly basis.

Building and Site Improvement Programs

- 1. Façade Improvement Grant Program
- 2. Signage Improvement Grant Program
- 3. Accessibility Improvement Grant Program
- 4. Residential to Commercial Use Grant Program
- 5. Parking Area and Landscaping Improvement Grant Program
- 6. Architectural / Engineering Design Grant Program

Municipal Fee Reduction & Tax Increment Grant Programs

- 7. Municipal Application / Permit Fees Rebate
- 8. Tax Increment Grant Program

The following table presents a summary of the CIP programs:

Program	Grant Amount
Façade Improvement Grant Program	50% of eligible costs up to a total of \$20,000 per property.
Signage Improvement Grant Program	50% of eligible costs up to a total of \$20,000 per property.
Accessibility Improvement Grant Program	50% of eligible costs up to a total of \$20,000 per property.
Residential to Commercial Use Grant Program	50% of eligible costs up to a total of \$20,000 per property.
Parking Area and Landscaping Improvement Grant Program	50% of eligible costs up to a total of \$20,000 per property.
Architectural / Engineering Design Grant Program	50% of eligible costs up to a total of \$20,000 per property.
Municipal Application/Permit Fees Rebate	Building Permit Fees and Demolition Permit Fees: up to 100% reduction in building permit fees; up to a maximum of \$1,000. Planning Application Fees: up to 100% reduction in fees up to a maximum of \$500 for each type of fee. Signage fees may be included where applicable.
Tax Increment Grant Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 75% in year 1 after MPAC re-assessment. • 50% in year 2 after MPAC re-assessment. • 25% in year 3 after MPAC re-assessment.
Total amount per Property (combined)	\$20,000 per property (excluding municipal application/ permit fees rebate and tax increment grant).

3.1 Façade Improvement Grant

Purpose	To stimulate private investment in the built-up areas of the Community Improvement Plan Project Areas and to promote the undertaking of building façade improvements in accordance with the CIP Design Guidelines.
Grant Amount & Disbursement	Matching grant of up to a maximum of 50% of eligible costs up to a maximum grant of \$20,000, per property; The Grant will be disbursed as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% on Final Completion
Eligible Costs	Improvements to the Front or Corner Side Façades designed specifically to enhance the look and appearance of these elevations of the property including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restoration of the brickwork or cladding, including exterior painting; • Replacement or repair of cornices, eaves, parapets, windows, doors, and other significant architectural details; • Repair, replacement, or addition of awnings, marquees, and canopies; • Repair, replacement, or addition of exterior lighting; • Street furniture related to the façade; • Modifications to the entranceway; and • Any other work as approved by the Township.

Applicable Project Areas	All businesses located within the following CIPAs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Village of Russell Commercial Corridor • Village of Russell Village Core • Village of Embrun Commercial Corridor • Village of Embrun Village Core
Additional Requirements	Applicants will submit design drawings, architectural/engineering plans, and a work plan indicating proposed improvements, and a cost estimate for the works. The grant will be paid based on the actual cost of the work, up to the amount approved in the application. All completed drawings/plans must comply with the description of the work plan as provided in the grant application form.

3.2 Signage Improvement Grant

Purpose	To promote the undertaking of signage improvements and appearance.
Grant Amount & Disbursement	Matching grant of up to a maximum of 50% of eligible costs up to a maximum grant of \$20,000, per property; The Grant will be disbursed as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% on Final Completion
Eligible Costs	The grant is intended for new or updated sign structures, and not just content on a sign. Visual and functional improvements above only changing the text on a sign.
Applicable Project Areas	All businesses located within the following CIPAs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Village of Russell Commercial Corridor • Village of Russell Village Core • Village of Embrun Commercial Corridor • Village of Embrun Village Core
Additional Requirements	Applicants will submit details on the proposed signage (materials, location, text, lighting, etc.). The grant will be paid based on the actual cost of the work, up to the amount approved in the application. Signage must comply with the description of the work shown on approved plans and drawings provided in the grant application form. Must review the sign by-law through the By-Law Department.

3.3 Accessibility Improvement Grant

Purpose	To promote the undertaking of building accessibility improvements in Community Improvement Project Areas in accordance with CIP design guidelines.
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Grant Amount & Disbursement	<p>Matching grant of up to a maximum of 50% of eligible costs up to a maximum grant of \$20,000, per property;</p> <p>The Grant will be disbursed as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% on Final Completion
Eligible Costs	<p>Provision of accessibility improvements, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Installation of wheelchair ramps; • Installation of automatic doors; • Installation of other accessibility improvements external to the building; • Costs associated with the purchase of a StopGap Ramp (100% of the StopGap Ramp Costs are eligible); and • Any other related work as approved by the Township.
Applicable Project Areas	<p>All businesses located within the following CIPAs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Village of Russell Commercial Corridor • Village of Russell Village Core • Village of Embrun Commercial Corridor • Village of Embrun Village Core
Additional Requirements	<p>Applicants will submit design drawings, architectural/engineering plans, a work plan indicating proposed improvements, and a cost estimate for the works.</p> <p>The grant will be paid based on the actual cost of the work, up to the amount approved in the application.</p> <p>All completed drawings/plans must comply with the description of the work plan as provided in the grant application form.</p>

3.4 Residential to Commercial Use Grant Program

Purpose	To promote residential conversion to commercial use in accordance with CIP Design Guidelines.
Grant Amount & Disbursement	<p>Matching grant of up to a maximum of 50% of eligible costs up to a maximum grant of \$20,000, per property;</p> <p>The Grant will be disbursed as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% on Final Completion

Eligible Costs	<p>Site improvement works/materials, including the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building modifications; • Restoration of the brickwork or cladding, including exterior painting; • Replacement or repair of cornices, eaves, parapets, windows, doors, and other significant architectural details; • Repair, replace, or addition of awnings, marquees, and canopies; • Repair, replacement, or addition of exterior lighting; • Street furniture related to the façade; • Modifications to the entranceway and parking; • Landscaping; • Signage • Any other related work as approved by the Township.
Applicable Project Areas	<p>All residential uses which are converting to an approved commercial use located within the CIPAs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Village of Russell Commercial Corridor • Village of Russell Village Core • Village of Embrun Commercial Corridor • Village of Embrun Village Core
Additional Requirements	<p>Applicants will submit a rezoning and site plan application (if required) including design drawings, landscaping/site plans, a work plan indicating proposed improvements, and/or a cost estimate for the works, as determined through pre-consultation for such application and the development application process.</p> <p>The grant will be paid based on the actual cost of the work, up to the amount approved in the application.</p> <p>All completed drawings/plans must comply with the description of the work plan as provided in the grant application form.</p> <p>The Township reserves the right to request additional plans or studies, such as lot grading plans, drainage plans, and stormwater management plans.</p>

3.5 Parking Area and Landscaping Improvement Grant

Purpose	<p>To promote a greener and more aesthetically pleasing streetscape by providing for landscaping and parking area improvements in accordance with CIP Design Guidelines.</p>
Grant Amount & Disbursement	<p>Matching grant of up to a maximum of 50% of eligible costs up to a maximum grant of \$20,000, per property;</p> <p>The Grant will be disbursed as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% on Final Completion

Eligible Costs	<p>Site improvement works/materials, including the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resurfacing and line painting; • Street furniture for the parking area or landscaped areas; • Landscaping (landscape islands, planter beds, etc.); • Improvements to existing barrier-free parking spaces (including signs); • Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure (note: amount of parking spaces must continue to meet the minimum requirements); and • Any other related work as approved by the Township.
Applicable Project Areas	<p>All businesses located within the CIPAs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Village of Russell Commercial Corridor • Village of Russell Village Core • Village of Embrun Commercial Corridor • Village of Embrun Village Core
Additional Requirements	<p>Applicants will submit design drawings, landscaping/site plans, a work plan indicating proposed improvements, and a cost estimate for the works. The grant will be paid based on the actual cost of the work, up to the amount approved in the application.</p> <p>All completed drawings/plans must comply with the description of the work plan as provided in the grant application form.</p> <p>The Township reserves the right to request additional plans or studies, such as lot grading plans, drainage plans, and stormwater management plans.</p>

3.6 Architectural/Engineering Design Grant

Purpose	<p>To promote the undertaking of planning concepts, urban design drawings, and architectural plans, and/or engineering studies for site development and building façade improvements in preparation for site/building redevelopment and improvement in accordance with the CIP design guidelines.</p>
Grant Amount & Disbursement	<p>Matching grant of up to a maximum of 50% of eligible costs up to a maximum grant of \$20,000, per property;</p> <p>The Grant will be disbursed as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% on Final Completion of the CIP project improvement.
Eligible Costs	<p>May include the following professional fees:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Architectural services, engineering consulting services, and/or planning consulting services; • Concept plans; • Design drawings; • Building façade plans; • Any other related study as approved by the Township.

Applicable Project Areas	All businesses located within the CIPAs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Village of Russell Commercial Corridor • Village of Russell Village Core • Village of Embrun Commercial Corridor • Village of Embrun Village Core
Additional Requirements	<p>This grant will apply to a maximum of one study per property. Applicants will submit a work plan for the study indicating proposed improvements and a cost estimate for the study from a qualified consultant.</p> <p>The grant will be paid based on the actual cost of the study, up to the amount approved in the application.</p> <p>All completed drawings/plans must comply with the description of the work plan as provided in the grant application form.</p> <p>Since this grant is disbursed only upon completion of the related works, it may be used in combination with another CIP incentive program.</p>

3.7 Municipal Application/Permit Fees Rebate

Purpose	To stimulate private investment in properties in the Community Improvement Project Areas by reducing applicable municipal fees related to a CIP improvement project which improves the façade, signage, accessibility, parking areas and/or landscaping or facilitates the addition of residential units.
Grant Amount & Disbursement	<p>Building Permit Fees and Demolition Permit Fees: up to 100% reduction in fees; up to a maximum of \$1,000.</p> <p>Planning Application Fees: up to 100% reduction in fees; up to a maximum of \$500 for each type of fee. Signage fees may be included where applicable.</p> <p>The grant will be distributed as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% on final completion of the CIP project improvements.
Eligible Costs	<p>Grant applies to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building permit fees for improvements related to a CIP improvement • Demolition permit fees for demolitions related to CIP improvements • Planning application fees for certain applications related to a CIP improvement
Applicable Project Areas	All businesses located within the CIPAs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Village of Russell Commercial Corridor • Village of Russell Village Core • Village of Embrun Commercial Corridor • Village of Embrun Village Core
Additional Requirements	None.

3.8 Tax Increment Grant

Purpose	To stimulate private investment in the CIP Project Areas and to promote the undertaking of building improvements and development on vacant land in accordance with the CIP Design Guidelines.
Grant Amount & Disbursement	<p>The total amount of the grant provided will not exceed the value of the work that resulted in the reassessment.</p> <p>This grant excludes the education and County portion of the tax bill. The Township is only able to rebate the municipal portion of the tax bill.</p> <p>The grant is provided over 3 years, where the tax increase is paid back to the applicant:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 75% rebate in year 1 • 50% rebate in year 2 • 25% rebate in year 3 <p>The owner is paying taxes based on the full assessed amount in year 4. The Township will collect the full amount of property taxes owed for each of the years of the program's applicability and will issue the grant to the approved applicant after final tax bills for each year have been collected. If the tax bill is not paid in full, the Township will cancel all future grants and collect past grants made as part of this program.</p>
Eligible Costs	Any improvements to properties/buildings in the CIP project areas which meet the CIP goals, objectives, and design guidelines.
Applicable Project Areas	<p>All commercial or vacant properties located within the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Village of Russell Commercial Corridor • Village of Russell Village Core • Village of Embrun Commercial Corridor • Village of Embrun Village Core

Additional Requirements

Minimum increase in assessment: \$25,000, directly related to a building permit for CIP improvements.

The Tax Increment Grant may be received by a property owner and/or assignee in combination with any other incentive program offered by the CIP.

Projects are required to follow the Township's other By-laws and policies, including zoning and building regulations.

The subject property shall not be in a position of tax arrears or any other financial obligation towards the Township.

This program does not exempt property owners from an increase in municipal taxes due to a general tax rate increase or a change in assessment for any other reason after the property has been improved, except by reason of an assessment appeal.

The calculation of the grant amounts for Year 2 and Year 3 will be based on the increase in municipal taxes from Year 1.

The grant will be forfeited and repaid to the Township if the owner makes the decision to demolish or alter the property in a manner that does not comply with the CIP Design Guidelines before the grant period elapses.

If the property is sold prior to completion of the project and receipt of the grant, subsequent owners may re-apply to the Township to be eligible to receive the grant.

If the property is sold after completion of the project, and while the tax increment grant is being received, the grant expires upon transfer of ownership. Subsequent owners are not eligible to continue receiving the grant for the tax increase associated with the project which has already been completed.

The grant amount will be established after the final inspection of the improvements in accordance with the Ontario Building Code, and the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC) has established a new assessment value based on the building permit for the CIP project.

4.0 Implementation

4.1 Application Review Process

Applications for the CIP incentive programs will be processed as follows:

1. Voluntary pre-application consultation with the Township.
2. Completion of application forms and submissions of any supporting documentation.
3. Screening of applications by the Township to ensure compliance with minimum eligibility requirements and design guidelines outlined in the CIP.
4. Evaluation by the Township.
5. The Township may require the signing of an agreement for certain programs which outline terms and conditions.
6. Prior to release of funds, the Township will require proof of all costs submitted by the applicant.

Evaluation of applications will be coordinated by municipal staff.

Applications that require annual funding under the following programs will be accepted, evaluated, and determined on a ‘first-come first-served’ basis:

- Façade Improvement Grant Program
- Signage Improvement Grant Program
- Accessibility Improvement Grant Program
- Residential to Commercial Conversions Grant Program
- Parking Area and Landscaping Improvement Grant Program
- Architectural / Engineering Design Grant Program
- Municipal Application / Permit Fees Rebate

For the above programs, all funds allocated during a calendar year will be taken from the annual budget for the CIP during the year of approval for funding, even where funds are disbursed in the following calendar year. Projects must be completed within one year of approval, but recipients may apply for a grant extension. Application intake for budgeted programs will occur until annual budgets are exhausted. These programs will be “closed” until the following year’s municipal budget is approved.

There is no annual cap on the following programs, and application intake will occur on an ongoing basis, however applications will still need to be reviewed and approved by the Township:

- Tax Increment Grant Program

Applications are encouraged for projects which are eligible for funding under more than one program, up to the maximum of \$20,000 per property (excluding the Tax Increment Grant and Municipal Rebates).

Council reserves the right to limit access to funding from multiple programs if, in its determination, there is a degree of overlap of funding that is not an appropriate use of scarce resources, or the value of individual project funding is deemed to unduly limit the availability of community improvement funding to other projects in the Township.

At all times, the principle of matched funding necessitates that Council will not fund more than 50% of eligible costs or stated maximums, whichever is less.

Council may extend, revise, or alter this CIP during or beyond the initial five-year horizon subject to funding, the objectives of Council, and the performance of the CIP.

4.1 Administration and Financial Implications

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

For a CIP to be successful, it requires support from the business community and support from the Township in the form of funding and implementation. It is recommended that the Township allocate a minimum of \$100,000 per year towards grant incentive programs during the initial years of the CIP.

In addition, the Township will be expected to aid via foregone revenues (municipal tax increases). This would result in a significant improvement to the appearance of CIPAs and is meant to encourage further investments in properties and buildings in the township. As the private and public sectors increase their investment in the community, with the assistance of the CIP, the overall benefits will be significant.

The recommended funding is based on the anticipated level of development interest in the Community Improvement Project Areas, recognition of the likely limitations on capital funds available to the Township, and scale of funding of incentives programs in comparable communities. It is not possible to accurately predict the number and scale of applications in advance of implementing the Plan.

The recommended funds are minimums that should be approved in order to meet the goals of the Plan over the five-year term. These funding levels can then be evaluated and adjusted in future years of the Plan.

Funding allocations contained in this Plan are subject to review and approval by Township Council. Financial incentives proposed in this CIP are subject to the Township's fiscal situation and will be determined on a yearly basis during Council's annual budget allocation.

4.2 Monitoring and Amendments

Township Staff will conduct periodic reviews of the CIP programs and activities relating to Community Improvement to determine their effectiveness and provide an update to Council. Council may amend this Plan as is necessary to ensure that the goals and objectives outlined in this Plan are achieved. Any increase in program financing permitted under Section 28 of the Planning Act will require an amendment to this Plan. The CIP will be monitored by the Township by reviewing the following performance measures:

- total amount of funding committed annually
- uptake of each program (applications submitted, applications granted, amount of funding provided)
- total value of private sector investments related to CIP programs
- vacant lands in the Township
- property assessments
- applicant satisfaction with application process and other materials

Following the first year of the program, the Township should evaluate the effectiveness of the organizational and funding structure of the CIP process, the evaluation process, and the amount of staff resources and other resources to administer, monitor, and market the Plan.