



INFORMATION REPORT

TO: Mayor and Members General Issues Committee	WARD(S) AFFECTED: WARDS 1, 2, 3 9, 11, 12, 13 and 15
COMMITTEE DATE: April 18, 2012	
SUBJECT/REPORT NO: Expansion of Community Improvement Initiatives to Former Municipalities' Downtowns and, Piers 5, 6, 7 and 8 (PED12065) (WARDS 1, 2, 3, 9, 11, 12, 13 and 15)	
SUBMITTED BY: Tim McCabe General Manager Planning and Economic Development Department	PREPARED BY: Hazel Milsome 905-546-2424 Ext. 2755
SIGNATURE: 	

Council Direction:

City Council, at its meeting held November 16, 2011 approved an updated Downtown and Community Renewal Community Improvement Plan, program amendments, and amendments to the associated Community Improvement Project Areas. Council then provided further direction that:

“Staff collaborate with former municipalities’ BIA’s, and in the absence of a BIA, the Glanbrook Chamber of Commerce, to look at the possibility of future expansions of this project in the former municipalities’ downtowns;” and, “That staff be directed to investigate adding Piers 5, 6, 7 and 8 as part of an expanded community improvement area”.

Further to the above, City Council, at its meeting held February 22, 2012, directed that:

“Staff investigate the feasibility of including the area on the west side of Emerald Street North to Barton Street East, and the east side of Victoria Avenue North below Barton Street to the CNR tracks, in the Downtown Hamilton Community Improvement Project Area and bring a report back to the General Issues Committee”.

Information:

The Urban Renewal Section has included the aforementioned in its 2012 Work Plan. The following action steps explain the process staff will undertake in developing recommendations related to the potential expansion of community improvement initiatives:

Scheduling of Meetings:

Involvement of the public is critical to building consensus and garnering community support. It is also important to ensure proposed changes and actions are reflective of community opinion and goals. Staff will therefore schedule meetings with relevant Business Improvement Areas (BIAs), property owners, developers and Ward Councillors for the purpose of discussing existing conditions of an area, barriers to development, local needs, priorities and circumstances. All meetings will be held prior to mid-July 2012.

Assessment of Areas:

Data will be collected on each area and shared at the aforementioned meetings. The data may include: building permit activity; potential development sites; zoning; development applications; percentage of tax arrears to taxes billed; assessed value of properties; vacancy rates in BIAs; Places to Grow density targets; employment data; capital improvements designed and project managed by Urban Renewal that have been undertaken or are proposed; and, the take-up of existing financial incentive programs offered in Community Downtowns and BIAs. The financial incentive programs currently offered are:

- *Business Improvement Areas:* Commercial Property Improvement Grant Program; Commercial Corridor Housing Loan and Grant Program; Hamilton Heritage Property Grant Program; Hamilton Community Heritage Fund Loan Program; and, ERASE Programs.
- *Community Downtowns:* Commercial Corridor Housing Loan and Grant Program; Hamilton Community Heritage Fund Loan Program; and, ERASE Programs.

Potential Financial Incentive Programs/Initiatives:

The following programs and initiatives will be considered for expansion to Community Downtowns: Tax Grant (based on the Hamilton Property Improvement Grant Program); relief of development charges; Office Tenancy Assistance Program; Façade Improvement Program (outside of a BIA); the creation of other financial assistance programs/initiatives that meet the needs of the area; and, the expansion or creation of a BIA.

Schedule for Reporting back to Committee and Council:

Initial Report

Staff will report back to the September 6, 2012 meeting of the General Issues Committee on recommendations related to the potential expansion of community improvement initiatives. Upon approval by Committee and Council, the appropriate budgetary submissions would be included in the 2013 Capital and Operating Budgets for consideration during the 2013 budget deliberations.

Amendment to the Downtown and Community Renewal Community Improvement Plan and Project Area:

Section 28 of the Planning Act and Sections 106 and 365.1 of the Municipal Act, 2001 provide the legislative basis for community improvement planning. Expanding community improvement initiatives will require an amendment to the Downtown and Community Improvement Plan and Project Area. Based on the expanded community improvement initiatives that might be approved by City Council in September, staff would forward a recommendation regarding such an amendment for consideration at a formal public meeting of the Planning Committee scheduled for October 16, 2012.

Amendment to the Development Charges By-law:

Staff from Urban Renewal would work with Corporate Services staff to amend the Development Charges By-law should one of the outcomes of the review be the relief of development charges.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, based on the aforementioned action steps, if there are no appeals filed on the amendment to the Downtown and Community Renewal Community Improvement Plan and Project Area, administration of expanded community improvement initiatives would commence in Q1/13 dependent upon the required funding being approved as part of the 2013 budget deliberations. The exception would be a tax grant program and relief of development charges as these two (2) initiatives do not require funding for the purposes of implementation.

Urban Renewal staff would market the expanded community improvement initiatives in order to raise interest in and stimulate uptake.

HM/dw