

# Background Information Report

## Downtown Community Improvement Plan for the Town of Deep River

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JANUARY 20, 2021

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ENGINEERS • PLANNERS • PROJECT MANAGERS



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**Appendices**

Appendix A	By-law No. 39-2020
Appendix B	Excerpt of Schedule 'A' to the Town of Deep River Official Plan

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# 1.0 Introduction

The Town of Deep River is located in the County of Renfrew along the Ottawa River and the Trans-Canada Highway, approximately mid-way between North Bay and Ottawa. Deep River has a large geographic area (approximately 51 square kilometers) however the southern portion of the Town is owned by Atomic Energy of Canada Limited (AECL) and houses the Chalk River Laboratories. According to the 2016 Census, the Town of Deep River has a total population of 4,109.

The Town of Deep River is preparing a Community Improvement Plan (CIP) which will be used to create a strategy for revitalization and rehabilitation of the Downtown area of Deep River. A CIP is a tool used by municipalities across Ontario to assist with the maintenance, rehabilitation, development, and redevelopment of targeted areas by providing municipal incentives to encourage private sector investment in the community. The CIP includes incentives for both the private sector and the public sector in the form of programs for municipal grants, loans, tax incentives, and rebates.

## 1.1 Purpose of this Report

The purpose of this report is to present background information and data gathered on Deep River and the existing policy framework, to help guide the preparation of the Downtown Community Improvement Plan. This Report is intended to identify the needs and desires of the community and assess the collected data, to determine the programs which are best suited for the Deep River CIP. The Background Report will also form the basis of the CIP program.

This Background Report will:

- ❖ Present a policy framework review for the preparation of the CIP which will include provincial and municipal legislation, policy, and regulations;
- ❖ Review and assess the results of consultation with the community and key stakeholders to gain a better understanding of the needs of the community and identify existing gaps;
- ❖ Present options and guide priorities for programs to be contained in the CIP along with preliminary recommendations regarding CIP administration and implementation; and
- ❖ Provide conclusions made and outline next steps.

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## 1.2 Community Improvement Project Area(s)

Section 6.2.3 of the Town of Deep River Official Plan sets out criteria for selecting the community improvement project area(s). The focus of this Community Improvement Plan will be on the downtown area of the Town. The Project Area for the Downtown Community Improvement Plan is shown on Schedule 'A' to by-law No. 39-2020, attached as Appendix 'A' to this Report.

The Community Improvement Project Area (CIPA) was designated, by by-law No. 39-2020, by Council on October 7, 2020. This by-law contains a map schedule which delineates the boundaries of the CIPA, and will be used in the Community Improvement Plan as the designated improvement area.

## 1.3 Objectives

The Deep River Official Plan outlines the following objectives for municipal improvement:

- ❖ To improve the integration of compatible land uses;
- ❖ To enhance the role of as an area service centre;
- ❖ To promote the business and trade role in the downtown area;
- ❖ To promote and guide visual and functional improvements to the downtown area;
- ❖ To enhance the open space systems in the Town;
- ❖ To promote the safety of pedestrians.

The goals and objectives of the Downtown CIP will be determined based on the needs and desires of the community and recommended goals and objectives will be included in the recommendation section at the end of this Report.

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## 2.0 Policy Framework and Review

### 2.1 Planning Act

The *Planning Act* is provincial legislation that delineates the ground rules for land use planning in Ontario. The *Act* sets out how land uses may be controlled and who may control them. Additionally, Section 28 of the *Planning Act* outlines the powers that can be exercised through a Community Improvement Plan.

Section 28(1) of the *Planning Act* defines community improvement as:

*“the planning or replanning, design or redesign, resubdivision, clearance, development or redevelopment, construction, reconstruction and rehabilitation, improvement of energy efficiency, or any of them, of a community improvement project area, and the provision of such residential, commercial, industrial, public, recreational, institutional, religious, charitable or other uses, buildings, structures, works, improvements or facilities, or spaces therefor, as may be appropriate or necessary”*

Section 28(2) allows municipalities which have provisions relating to community improvement in their Official Plans to designate, by by-law, any part of the planning area of the municipality as a community improvement project area and prepare a Community Improvement Plan for the project area.

Section 28(5) outlines the public consultation requirements of the Community Improvement Plan which states that the relevant policies of Section 17 apply. The relevant Section 17 policies refer to the notification requirements, sets out the public consultation process, and identifies the appeal process.

Once a CIP is in effect, the municipality may:

- ❖ Acquire land, hold land acquired, clear, grade, or otherwise prepare land for the purpose of community improvement;
- ❖ Construct, repair, rehabilitate, or improve buildings on land acquired or held by it in the project area in conformity with the Community Improvement Plan;
- ❖ Sell, lease, or otherwise dispose of any land acquired or held by it in conformity with the Community Improvement Plan; and
- ❖ Make grants or loans in conformity with the Community Improvement Plan for the purpose of carrying out the plan to owners or tenants to pay for the whole or part of the eligible costs of the Community Improvement Plan.

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Section 28 (7.1) specifies that for the purpose of subsection (7), the eligible costs of a Community Improvement Plan may include costs related to environmental site assessment, environmental remediation, development, redevelopment, construction, and reconstruction of lands and buildings for rehabilitation purposes, or for the provision of energy efficient uses, buildings, structures, works, improvements, or facilities.

Section 28(7.3) specifies that the total grants and loans made in respect to particular lands and buildings under subsections (7) and (7.2) and the tax assistance as defined in section 365.1 of the *Municipal Act*, 2001 in respect of the lands and buildings shall not exceed the eligible cost of the Community Improvement Plan with respect to those lands and buildings.

Section 28(11) provides provisions for the municipality to enter into an agreement under section (7) or (10) and allow the municipality to register the agreement against the title of the land.

Section 28(13) states that when the council is satisfied that the Community Improvement Plan has been carried out, the council may, by by-law, dissolve the community improvement project area.

In addition to Section 28, Section 69 of the Planning Act allows for the municipality to reduce or waive planning application fees where it feels payment is unreasonable or as a financial incentive.

## 2.2 Municipal Act

The *Municipal Act* sets out the rules for the governance of Ontario municipalities, save for the City of Toronto, and recognizes them as a responsible and accountable level of government. The *Act* gives them broad powers to pass bylaws and govern within their jurisdiction.

Section 106(1) prohibits municipalities from directly or indirectly assisting any manufacturing business or other industrial or commercial enterprise through the granting of bonuses for that purpose. Section 106(2) specifies that the municipality shall not grant assistance by,

- ❖ giving or lending any property of the municipality, including money;
- ❖ guaranteeing borrowing;

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- ❖ leasing or selling any property of the municipality at below fair market value; or
  - ❖ giving a total or partial exemption from any levy, charge, or fee.

Section 106(3) however provides an exception to subsection (2) where a municipality may exercise powers under Section 28(6), (7) or (7.2) of the *Planning Act* or Section 365.1 of the *Municipal Act*. This exception provides the municipality with the power and tools for community improvement, including tools relating to the remediation and redevelopment of brownfield properties.

Brownfield properties are vacant or underutilized properties where the past industrial or commercial uses may have left contamination behind. Examples of brownfield properties include factories and gas stations. Brownfields can pose health and safety risks and be costly to remediate. However, with proper remediation, the lands can be redeveloped to meet health, safety, and environmental standards. Section 365.1 of the *Municipal Act* specifies that a municipality may reduce or cancel the municipal portion of property taxes for the duration of the rehabilitation and/or development period on eligible brownfield properties.

Municipalities may also apply to the Minister of Finance to match the municipal tax rebate with the education portion of the property tax through the Brownfields Financial Tax Incentive Program (BFTIP). The program allows the Province to cancel all or a portion of the education portion of the property taxes for a property, for up to three years.

Section 107 provides a municipality with the power to make grants to any person, group, or body, including a fund, within or outside the boundaries of the municipality, for any purpose that council considers to be in the interests of the municipality. The power to make a grant includes the power to:

- ❖ guarantee a loan and to make a grant by way of loan, and to charge interest on the loan;
- ❖ sell or lease land for nominal consideration or to make a grant of land;
- ❖ provide for the use by any person of land owned or occupied by the municipality upon such terms as may be fixed by council;
- ❖ provide for the use by any person of officers, employees, or agents of the municipality upon such terms as may be fixed by council;



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- ❖ sell, lease, or otherwise dispose of at a nominal price, or make a grant of, any personal property of the municipality or to provide for the use of the personal property on such terms as may be fixed by council; and
  - ❖ make donations of foodstuffs and merchandise purchased by the municipality for that purpose.

Community Improvement Plans generally focus on commercial and industrial properties, however the *Planning Act* does provide for CIP funding programs to include residential, public, recreational, institutional, religious, charitable, or other uses, in addition to commercial and industrial uses.

## 2.3 Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) sets out province-wide accessibility standards that public, private, and non-profit sectors are required to follow to make Ontario accessible for all Ontarians. This Act guides the design of buildings through the Ontario Building Code, as well as “new development” or significant re-development or revitalization of public spaces. Some CIPs have programs to assist with revitalization and redevelopment related to accessibility and meeting the AODA standards.

## 2.4 Provincial Policy Statement, 2020

The Provincial Policy Statement, 2020 (PPS) is a land use policy document that provides provincial policy direction on key land use planning issues in communities across Ontario. Land use planning and development must be consistent with the policies of the PPS. The PPS does not directly reference community improvement plans however many policies do support the redevelopment and revitalization of urban areas.

Section 1.3.1 of the PPS states that planning authorities shall promote economic development and competitiveness by:

- ❖ facilitating the conditions for economic investment by identifying strategic sites for investment, monitoring the availability and suitability of employment sites, including market-ready sites, and seeking to address potential barriers to investment (1.3.1(c)); and
- ❖ ensuring the necessary infrastructure is provided to support current and projected needs (1.3.1(e)).

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Therefore, the PPS supports investments into redevelopment and improvements which will further economic development and competitiveness.

Long-term economic prosperity is promoted by Section 1.7.1 which supports *maintaining and enhancing the vitality and viability of downtowns and mainstreets* (1.7.1 (d)) and *promoting the redevelopment of brownfields* (1.7.1 (f)).

Therefore, the 2020 PPS supports the revitalization and redevelopment of the Town of Deep River which will be facilitated through the new Community Improvement Plan. The Community Improvement Plan will be prepared to be consistent with the policies of the PPS.

## 2.5 County of Renfrew Official Plan

The Town of Deep River is a lower-tier municipality within the County of Renfrew. The Deep River Community Improvement Plan must conform with both the Local and County Official Plan.

Section 3.0 of the County Official Plan outlines the policies for the four (4) towns within the County which are designated as Urban Community on Schedule 'A' to the County Official Plan. Subsection 3.2(6) states that an objective of the designation is "*to encourage economically viable and physically attractive central business districts*". Section 17.4 of the Plan outlines the policies regarding Community Improvement Plans. It designates the entire County of Renfrew as a Community Improvement Area for which detailed Community Improvement Plans can be prepared.

## 2.6 Town of Deep River Official Plan

The Town of Deep River Official Plan was adopted by Town Council in May 2017 and was approved by the County in October 2017. The policies relevant to Community Improvement Plans are summarized below.

### 2.6.1 Community Improvement Policies (Section 6.2)

Section 6.2 of the Deep River Official Plan outlines the Community Improvement Policies for the Town. These policies are intended to assist the Town with identifying deficiencies and commit the Town to a strategy of rehabilitation and revitalization of the community improvement project areas designated on Schedule 'D' to the Town's Official Plan.

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Section 6.2.2 outlines the objectives of the Community Improvement Plan which include promoting “*the business and trade role of the Town Centre*” (6.2.2(c)) and promoting “*visual and functional improvements to the Town Centre*” (6.2.2(d)). Section 6.2.2 also encourages enhancing the Town’s role as an area service centre (6.2.2(b)).

Section 6.2.3 sets out the following criteria for selecting a project area:

- ❖ The building stock suffers from poor maintenance or lacks architectural integrity;
- ❖ Parking areas are inadequate;
- ❖ There is poor accessibility and protection from the elements and from traffic for pedestrians visiting commercial buildings;
- ❖ Streetscapes require aesthetic improvements, e.g. underground wiring, landscaping, signs;
- ❖ Buildings are poorly arranged or oriented;
- ❖ There is inefficient use of available space;
- ❖ Municipal services are inadequate.

Based on this criterion, Council has determined the downtown core, Keys Centre, and economic sector of the highway corridor to be community improvement project areas.

The policies also state that among other things, the Municipality, subject to the approval of the Minister of Finance, may cancel taxes, reduce taxes, and provide assistance to rehabilitate “brownfields” sites.

## **2.6.2 Land Use Policies**

The lands included in this Community Improvement Project Area are designated as Town Centre, Town Centre – Exception, Open Space, and Institutional on Schedule ‘A’ to the Deep River Official Plan.

The intent of the *Town Centre* designation is to provide flexibility for land use change that will enhance the function and economic health of the central area. The designation is intended to have a mix of commercial, institutional, and residential uses. The role of the town centre is to serve as a place where residents would go to purchase goods and services without needing to drive.

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The intent of the *Town Centre - Exception One* designation is to allow a broader range of uses than in the Town Centre designation, including light industrial.

The intent of the *Town Centre - Exception Two* designation is to allow for residential use on the first floor.

The *Open Space* designation comprises of the majority of the Town's parks and open space system as well as designates the lands that house the Town's recreation facilities.

The intention of the *Institutional* designation is to contain the major facilities and associated lands that are used by a number of people for a public purpose.

Schedule 'A' to the Town of Deep River Official Plan showing the designations is attached in Appendix 'B'.

## 2.7 Town of Deep River Comprehensive Zoning By-law

The current Town of Deep River Comprehensive Zoning By-law No 20-2020 was approved in April 2020. The Zoning By-law regulates the use of land and development across the entire Municipality, with the exception of the federal lands in the southern portion of the Town. The Zoning By-law can be used as a tool to help implement policies set out in the Community Improvement Plan. Additionally, redevelopment through the CIP program shall conform with the provisions of the Zoning By-law,

## 2.8 Town of Deep River Asset Management Plan

The Town of Deep River prepared an Asset Management Plan (AMP) in October 2016 which provides a basis for short-term and long-term public capital asset planning and development in the community. The AMP established a detailed strategy and financial plan for the replacement of services including, but not limited to, water, sewer, storm, and roads over a ten-year period through to 2026. The AMP identifies a repair/replacement schedule for public infrastructure, including within the CIP area, representing a large part of the public investment into public lands component of the CIP.

Due to the design and development of Deep River, there is little variation in age of the Town's buried assets such as water, sewer, and storm mains. The AMP

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(2016) states that the water and sewer mains have another 15-35 years expected useful life and an inspection of sewers identified areas of potential issue that should be monitored and, if necessary, replaced. Where sewers are replaced, water mains should be replaced alongside at the same time.

Some stormwater mains have been identified as only being adequate for a two (2)-year storm event, where adequacy for a five (5)-year storm event is recommended. However, the AMP states that this is not pressing and should be replaced as funds allow. The public investment component of the CIP could be useful in upgrading the identified storm mains.

An inspection of fire hydrants identified a number of hydrants that need replacement along with two valves.

The streetlights have recently been changed to LED lights.

Within the Town, over 20% of signs were identified as not meeting legal requirements for reflectivity and will require replacement.

Roads will be replaced periodically, likely in conjunction with the sewer and water mains.

## 2.9 Town By-laws

### 2.9.1 Parking By-law

The Town of Deep River Parking By-law No. 28-2018 regulates the parking of vehicles on roads, municipal lands, and private parking lots. By-law No. 41-2018 imposes fees if a vehicle contravenes the parking and stopping regulations set out in by-law 28-2018.

### 2.9.2 Sign By-law

The Town's Sign By-law, No. 25-2015, regulates the maintenance, removal, and storage of signage within the Municipality. Additional provisions related to signage are included in the Town's Zoning By-law. Programs relating to signage are common in CIPs; any programs relating to signage would be required to conform with the signage standards set out in this By-law and the Zoning By-law.

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### **2.9.3 Property Standards By-law**

By-law No. 28-2016 outlines the Town of Deep River's standards for the maintenance and occupancy of property within the Municipal boundaries. The By-law outlines the minimum property standards, prohibits occupancy of any property that does not meet the minimum standards, and outlines the requirements of maintenance and repair to bring these properties to meet or exceed the minimum standards.

## **2.10 Town of Deep River Strategic Plan 2019-2022**

The Town of Deep River Strategic Plan 2019-2022 was completed in June 2019 and "*identifies strategic priority areas where Council and Staff must place a focus in order for Deep River to move forward and improve*" (p. 2). The Strategic Plan is intended to guide priorities over the four-year time period of 2019 to 2022.

The Strategic Plan contains six (6) desired outcomes: Increased Population; Transparent, Fair & Effective Governance; Engaged Population Enjoying Diverse Recreational & Cultural Opportunities; Quality, Reliable & Sustainable Infrastructure; Vibrant & Increased Business & Commercial Sectors; and Strong Collaboration with Community, Businesses, & Neighbours.

The creation of a Community Improvement Plan is explicitly mentioned as an action to be undertaken in the Strategic Plan under the desired outcome of a "Vibrant & Increased Business & Commercial Sectors". It is identified as a "high" priority.

## 3.0 Consultation

Consultation and feedback are integral when developing a Community Improvement Plan. As such, multiple methods of consultation were undertaken with various stakeholders to gather background data for this Report and subsequently the Community Improvement Plan. With the Covid-19 pandemic, the approach to collecting public consultation had to be adapted to fit the current climate. The following stakeholders have been consulted:

- ❖ **Business Owners** – a business owners survey was distributed to the business owners, tenants, and property owners within the Downtown Community Improvement Project Area.
- ❖ **The Community** – members of the public were invited to participate in an online survey which looked to assess the existing features of the downtown core.
- ❖ **Council** – individual interviews were held with various members of Council to gain their input on the downtown.
- ❖ **Town Staff** – individual interviews with various members of Town staff were conducted in person and over the phone.

### 3.1 Business Owner’s Survey

A survey was distributed to the various business and property owners within the designated community improvement project area. We received nineteen (19) responses from the businesses in the downtown area. As part of the survey, we conducted a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis. The results are summarized below:

Strengths	Weaknesses/Challenges/Barriers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Centrally located (services too)</li> <li>- The view of the river &amp; mountains</li> <li>- Aesthetically pleasing</li> <li>- Compact/concentrated</li> <li>- Walkable</li> <li>- Greenspace and landscaping</li> <li>- Easy to navigate/ get around</li> <li>- Lighting, well lit (safe)</li> <li>- Diverse amenities/businesses</li> <li>- Clean and well maintained</li> <li>- Friendly/personable</li> <li>- Close by parking/can park in front of stores</li> <li>- The essential businesses drawing people downtown</li> <li>- Good business practices and customer service</li> <li>- Farmers market attracts shoppers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Dated look/needs a facelift</li> <li>- High local taxes (disincentive to being downtown)</li> <li>- Reluctant/absentee landlords</li> <li>- Home-based businesses</li> <li>- Poor signage</li> <li>- Less and less businesses (vacancy)</li> <li>- Disconnect caused by park beside GT</li> <li>- Not accessible even with ramps</li> <li>- Parking (hard to see backing out)</li> <li>- Lacks color and vegetation</li> <li>- Poor recycling and garbage pickup locations</li> <li>- Bend in storefront causes dangerous ice buildup</li> <li>- Crossing at Glendale/Champlain</li> <li>- Too old buildings</li> <li>- Snow removal causes parking issues</li> <li>- Backlog of traffic due to deliveries</li> <li>- Limited parking lots for large stores</li> </ul>

<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Threats</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Façade improvements/paint</li> <li>- Sidewalk improvements</li> <li>- More crosswalks (flashing lights)</li> <li>- Street furnishings (improve existing and get more)</li> <li>- Revitalized Chamber of Commerce</li> <li>- Minimum façade/signage standards (uniformity/cohesion)</li> <li>- Notice/flyer board</li> <li>- Filling vacancies/make affordable</li> <li>- Adopt-a-street program</li> <li>- Improved signage (draw to downtown)</li> <li>- More garbage cans</li> <li>- Promotions/incentives to buy local/ downtown events (post-COVID)</li> <li>- Welcoming area for visitors</li> <li>- Expand the downtown (mixed use residential commercial/more comm.)</li> <li>- New businesses to draw people</li> <li>- Enhance waterfront</li> <li>- “entrepreneur-in-residence”</li> <li>- Public place/co-workspace for home-based businesses downtown</li> <li>- More parking lots for the stores on Ridge Road</li> <li>- Replace burnt out lights in the Giant Tiger/Dollar King canopy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Home-based businesses (do not pay commercial taxes – makes it hard to have competitive prices)</li> <li>- High taxes</li> <li>- Absent landlords Lack of visibility/signage bringing people from the highway downtown</li> <li>- Business moving online</li> <li>- Lack of highspeed internet</li> <li>- Survival of CNL/CRL</li> <li>- CRL/CNL buildings moving back to the main CRL campus</li> <li>- Unkept building with outdated accessibility</li> </ul>

Business owners and tenants were also asked what they believed some key priorities were for improving the downtown. There were a number of suggestions, including:

- Storefront revitalization
- Sidewalk improvements
- Lower business taxes (especially in this current time)
- Improve pedestrian safety and access
- Signage/marketing – draw people to the downtown and Glendale businesses
- Expand commercial zone/downtown
- Holding downtown events to drive traffic into the downtown
- Design guidelines for consistent, cohesive downtown appearance
- More seating and lighting
- More parking
- Improve the existing parking
- Attracting new, diverse businesses (i.e. food trucks)
- Repair existing buildings or build new buildings
- Developing support systems and connections for downtown businesses



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When asked about incentive programs, the Signage Improvement Program was the most popular, both with 17 of the 20 business respondents indicating they were ‘somewhat likely’ or ‘very likely’ to use the program. The next most popular was the Accessibility Improvement Program (16), then the Building Improvement/Energy Efficiency Program (13), the Building Façade Improvement Program (12), and finally, the Landscaping program with 10 business respondents likely to use the program.

## 3.2 Community Survey

An online community survey was made available to the public for two (2) weeks from October 21, 2020 to November 4, 2020 and resulted in 104 responses. The majority of the respondents (92%) were residents of Deep River.

Over three quarters of the respondents (79%) believe there is a need to improve the look and feel of the downtown.

When asked on what they liked about downtown Deep River, there were numerous answers and included items such as:

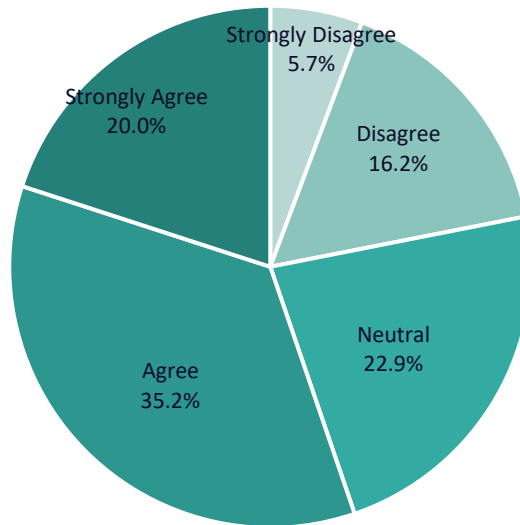
- The view (river, mountains)
- Walkable
- Compact (everything close by)
- Friendly/welcoming
- Free parking
- Accessible
- Safe/nearby emergency services
- Flower beds/trees/landscaping
- Christmas decorations
- Green space/open space
- Central location in the Town

There were also numerous responses when asked on ways to improve the downtown including:

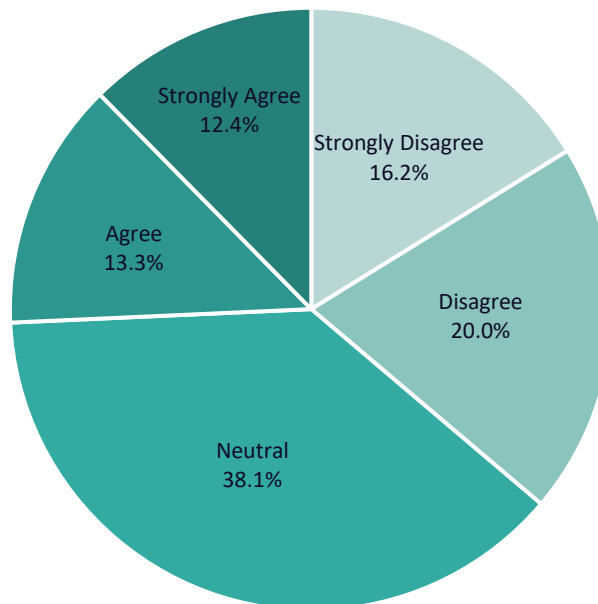
- Renovating storefronts
- Create consistent look
- Repair sidewalks
- Add more garbage cans/recycling
- Street furnishings (i.e. benches)
- Crosswalk at Deep River Road and Glendale
- Shade trees
- Events/notice board; town map
- Paint fire hydrants
- Repair Canopies/awnings
- More outside gathering areas
- More activities/things to do
- Bike racks

Question 4 of the community survey asked respondents to state how much they agreed or disagreed with various statements. The results were as follows.

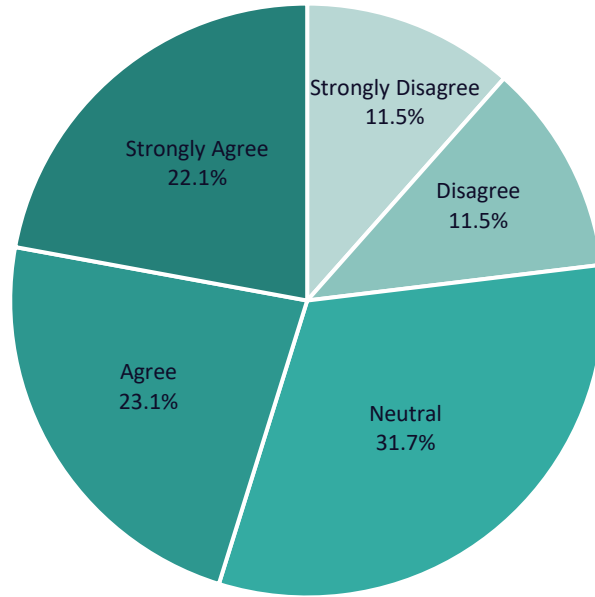
The downtown is easily accessible (i.e. easy to get around/maneuver, ramps where needed).



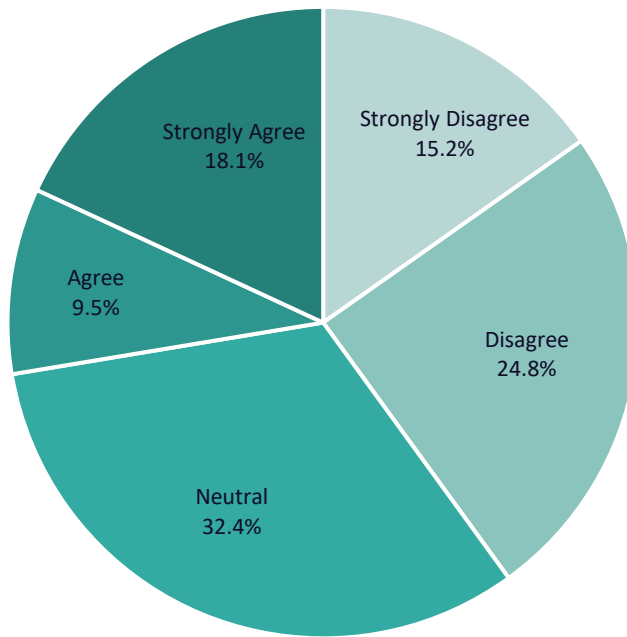
I would be more likely to walk around downtown if it were more accessible.



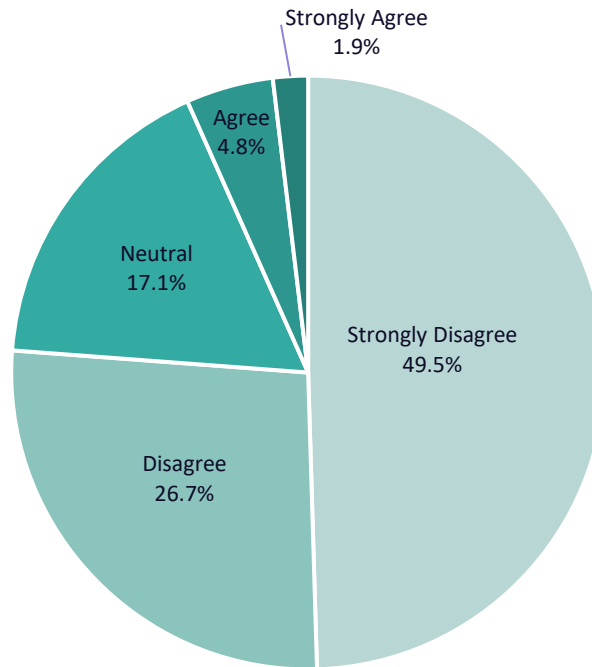
New and improved signage in the downtown is needed.



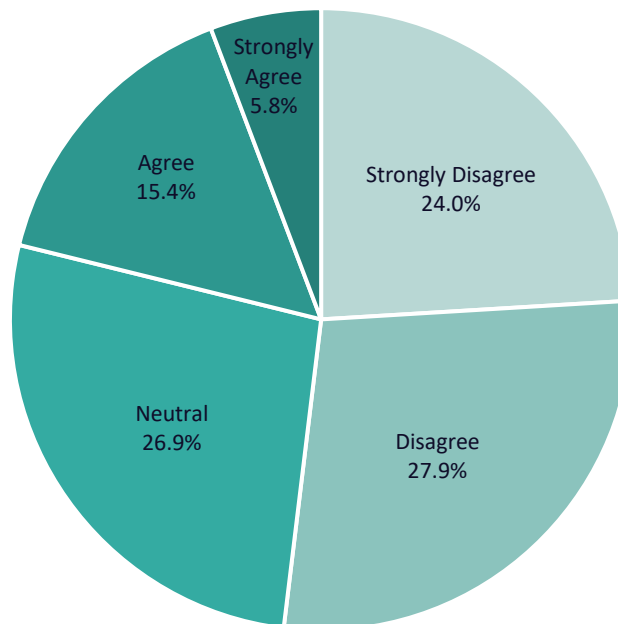
Improved parking in the downtown is needed.



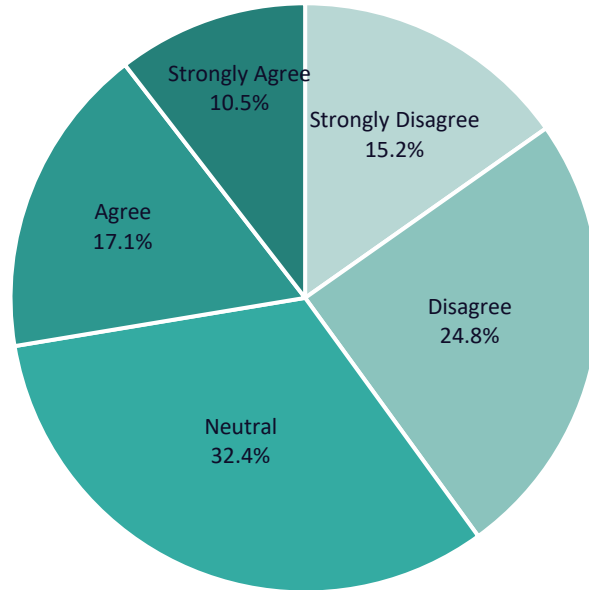
The building storefronts/facades in the downtown are visually appealing.



There are sufficient seating areas in the downtown.



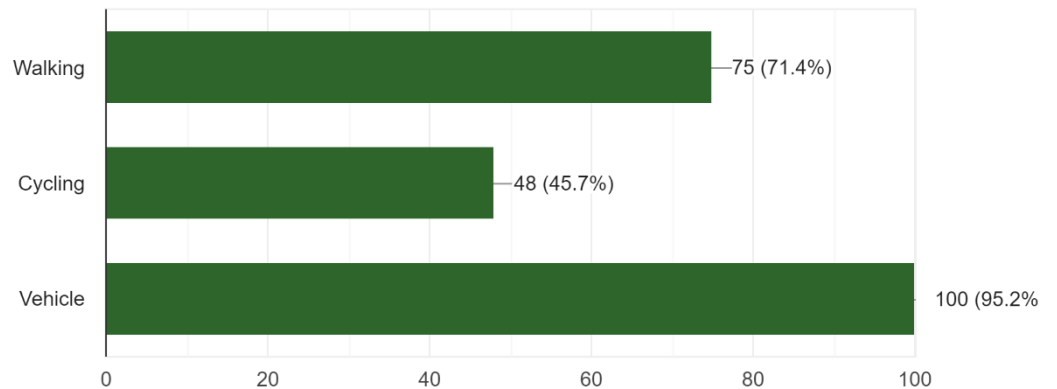
The downtown would benefit from more open space/parks.



The majority of respondents use multiple methods of transportation to access the downtown with vehicular access being the most popular (95%), followed by walking (71%) then cycling (46%).

5. What modes of transportation do you use to reach the downtown? (check all that apply):

105 responses



Almost 80% of respondents felt safe as a pedestrian when walking downtown, however less than 60% of respondents felt safe as a cyclist in the downtown. The angled parking, drivers not paying attention/not allowing enough space, and

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intersections at the post office and Glendale Plaza were all cited as reasons that many cyclists felt unsafe. Some suggestions for improving cycling in the downtown included bike lanes, bike racks, and bicycle paths. Suggested improvements for pedestrian safety include more crosswalks, especially along Deep River Road, flashing lights at crosswalks; repair the sidewalks that are cracking; crosswalk in the middle of Champlain Street; speed bumps; and more sidewalks/pathways especially across from Giant Tiger on the opposite side of Ridge Road.

When asked what would improve their experiences as a pedestrian, respondents had many suggestions including:

- Flashing lights at crosswalks
- Four-way stop at post office
- Crosswalks across Deep River Road
- Outdoor gathering spaces
- Repaired sidewalks
- Speed bumps
- Crosswalk halfway down Champlain Street
- Bicycle racks
- Improved accessibility
- Benches
- Public toilets
- Food trucks/street vendors

When asked about features they would like to see added to the downtown, refurbished canopies were the most popular item (67%), followed by street furnishings (59%), landscaping (55%), additional crosswalks (43%), and more bicycle racks (39%). Other items included:

- Outdoor patios
- Façade improvements
- Improved sidewalks
- Stop light at post office
- Flashing crossing lights
- Garbage cans/recycling bins
- Sidewalk ramps for accessibility
- Sidewalk on the northern side of Ridge Road

When asked about the streets in downtown which they believed would benefit from streetscaping (i.e. landscaping, sidewalk improvements, furnishings, aesthetic improvements) Champlain Street had the most votes (67%), followed closely by Ridge Road (63%) and Deep River Road (60%), with only about one third of respondents believing Glendale Avenue would benefit from streetscaping (33%). Other streets noted as benefitting from streetscaping include Algonquin Street, Brockhouse Way, and the start of Deep River Road at Highway 17. Other responses noted that sidewalks in general were needed more across the Town as well as in specific areas, including the area of Laurier Street and Alder Crescent.

### 3.3 Council Consultation

Individual meetings were held with multiple members of Council to gather their input on the downtown. During the interviews, a SWOT analysis was conducted. The results of the SWOT analysis are as follows:

<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Compact</li> <li>- Walkable</li> <li>- “Hub” for the Town (centered)</li> <li>- Very little vacancy</li> <li>- Christmas decorations</li> <li>- The view (water, mountains)</li> <li>- Good traffic flow</li> <li>- Nearby emergency services</li> </ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Aging buildings and infrastructure</li> <li>- Cracking and sloped sidewalks</li> <li>- Constrained by surrounding land use (little opportunity to expand)</li> <li>- Lack of or unsafe pedestrian crossings (especially Deep River Road)</li> <li>- Angled parking</li> <li>- Canopies</li> <li>- Separation of the Glendale Plaza from the rest of downtown</li> <li>- Post office location and parking</li> </ul>
<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Open space</li> <li>- Canopies</li> <li>- Landscaping along streets</li> <li>- Renewed lighting and furniture</li> <li>- Improved facades</li> <li>- Signage/Wayfinding</li> <li>- Draw people from highway into the downtown</li> <li>- Improve cycling access &amp; pedestrian flow</li> <li>- Create connection of Glendale Plaza to the rest of downtown</li> <li>- Central notice board</li> <li>- Sidewalks</li> <li>- Community Centre</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Highway commercial</li> <li>- Accessibility</li> <li>- Lack of variety</li> <li>- Easy commute to Pembroke and Ottawa</li> <li>- Dead trees along Deep River Road</li> <li>- Big box stores</li> <li>- Hesitance for property owners to improve their lands before public land improvements</li> <li>- Business owners renting instead of owning the property</li> <li>- Lose snowmobilers’ income due to not being allowed in the downtown</li> </ul>

### 3.4 Town Staff Consultation

A series of interviews were conducted with various members of the Town Staff. The purpose of these meetings was to gather input on areas of improvement on public lands and identify opportunities within the downtown.

During these interviews, the following items were mentioned a number of times as areas of improvement within the downtown:

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- Canopies
  - Sidewalks
  - Signage at the highway traffic lights
  - Revitalizing the Water Tower
  - Splash pad
  - Re-use of the GT park
  - Increased trees and shade

Some specific ideas of improvement that were mentioned include:

- Champlain Street as a one-way street
- Electronic sign at the highway advertising events
- Cobblestone instead of asphalt for Champlain Street
- Encourage food trucks/vendors and ice cream trucks
- Single entrance to Glendale Plaza with well-defined crosswalk
- Median down Champlain Street

Interviews were also held with members of the Deep River Police to discuss safety and other improvement opportunities, and to identify issues they have encounter in the Downtown.

### 3.5 Summary and Analysis

As a result of the consultation, there were a number of areas identified as key areas in need of improvement. These areas include:

- Canopies
- Sidewalks
- Building Façades
- Pedestrian and Cyclist Safety
- Building Accessibility
- Signage along the highway
- Parking
- Seating and Landscaping
- Garbage and Recycling receptacles

These areas should be key points of focus when developing the financial incentive programs and municipal leadership strategy.



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## 4.0 Community Improvement Plan Framework & Improvement Programs

### 4.1 Literature Review

A review of Community Improvement Plans for similar communities was undertaken over the course of this Background Report. A number of communities' CIPs were reviewed including, but not limited to: Town of Renfrew, City of Pembroke, Township of Laurentian Valley, Town of Perth, Town of Arnprior, Municipality of North Grenville, and City of Ottawa.

Community Improvement Plans are commonly implemented and can be set up many ways. Some CIPs provide a wide range of programs whereas other CIPs provide a very specific set of programs targeted to a specific issue, such as brownfield redevelopment or affordable housing.

A review of community improvement programs from similar communities saw a number of commonly included programs. These include signage improvement grants, façade improvement grants, accessibility improvement grants, landscaping and parking grants, brownfield incentive programs, and tax incentive programs. Additional grant programs that may be of interest to Town, Council, and the community, such as affordable housing and building improvement/energy efficiency programs, are included below.

The Community Improvement Planning Handbook by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs was also reviewed. The purpose of this document is to guide municipalities through the development of their community improvement policies and plans. The Deep River CIP process is loosely based on the three-stage process outlined in the document. This Report falls within 'Stage 2: Preparing Your Plan'.

### 4.2 Financial Incentive Grant Programs

The following incentives and tools are a comprehensive list of program options that could be used to promote improvements in the Community Improvement Area. The CIP can implement a suite of these programs to promote improvements. Additionally, some programs may be combined with similar programs to reduce the overall number of incentive programs.

#### 4.2.1 Façade Improvement Grant

The purpose of this grant is to stimulate private investment into the existing buildings by providing incentives to revitalize façades within the CIP area. Any

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improvements must be consistent with the intent of the CIP. Eligible costs can include costs relating to the restoration, repair, replacement, or addition of exterior walls, architectural features (e.g. cornices), windows, doors, signage, awnings, canopies, marquees, and exterior lighting.

Building façade improvements were identified during the consultation period as a key priority. This program would be applicable to those improvements.

#### **4.2.2 Signage Improvement Grant**

The purpose of this grant is to improve the signage within the community improvement areas by providing assistance with the eligible costs. Any work done must conform to the relevant policies of the sign by-law. Eligible costs generally include costs relating to the improvement of signage, including sign lighting, or any other related work as approved by the Town.

The majority of respondents to the business survey stated that they would be likely to use the signage grant and as such would be a good program to include.

#### **4.2.3 Accessibility Improvement Grant**

The intent of this grant is to encourage businesses to make improvements that will enhance accessibility within the Community Improvement Area. Accessibility Improvements can include installation of wheelchair ramps and/or automatic doors, and additional upgrades that improve the accessibility of the building.

Accessibility issues were identified within the different groups consulted. Offering an accessibility grant program could help to improve those issues.

#### **4.2.4 Landscaping and Parking Area Improvement Grant**

This grant is to promote a 'greener' streetscape by encouraging private investment into providing vegetation and greenspace. Additionally, this grant can be used to improve parking space surface materials and improve access and safety. Eligible costs could include landscaping materials, professional services, and labor relating to landscape development, resurfacing, and any other work approved by the Town.

Landscaping and parking were both issues that surfaced during the consultation period. However, many of the comments were based on the public lands.

#### **4.2.5 Brownfield Rehabilitation Programs**

The purpose of brownfield programs are to encourage and assist with remediation, rehabilitation, and adaptive re-use of brownfields by providing grants

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and other financial incentives to help with the “clean-up” costs normally associated with redeveloping brownfields. For grants, eligible costs generally include partial cost (50%) of Environmental Site Assessments (ESA) and environmental remediation costs (i.e. reduction of contaminants on the property). Other financial incentives include the cancellation (whole or part) of municipal property tax for up to three (3) years and rebates for portion of the municipal property tax increase for up to five (5) years.

There are very few properties that would likely be considered brownfields within the CIPA and may not be a beneficial program for the Downtown CIP.

#### **4.2.6 Tax Incentive Grant**

The purpose of this grant is to assist with increased property taxes that result from an investment in the rehabilitation or redevelopment of a building or site. This program provides grants to offset the municipal tax increase and allow for a gradual/phased in tax increase, generally over a specified period of time (i.e. five (5) years). This program could also be used to defer the increase in the municipal portion of property tax for a fixed amount of time (i.e. five (5) years). Such grants only cover the municipal portion of property taxes.

This grant would be helpful if a property owner, or tenant, wanted to take on a larger renovation that would increase their assessment value. Due to many of the properties being multi-unit buildings and in single ownership, this grant may be desirable.

#### **4.2.7 Municipal Application/Permit Fees Grant**

The purpose of this grant is to stimulate private investment in the community by assisting with the cost of development and redevelopment. This grant can cover part of or the entire cost of municipal applications relating to development or redevelopment and can be applied to: building permit fees (relating to improvement), planning application fees (i.e. zoning by-law amendment), and signage permit fees. It is worth noting that this is a grant to cover the cost of the applications and not a waving of the application fees.

This grant is typically bundled with other grants such as façade or accessibility where a building permit or planning approval is necessary.

#### **4.2.8 Building Improvement/Energy Efficiency Grant**

This grant would look to provide assistance with repairing, restoring, or rehabilitating any building within the improvement area to bring them into compliance with building code or fire code standards. This could also include

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eligible costs to increase energy efficiency or sustainability through structural building improvements (windows, insulation).

Based on the responses from the business survey, there is interest in this grant as many of the buildings are aging and may require renovations.

#### **4.2.9 Affordable Housing Programs**

Affordable housing programs can provide financial incentives to encourage private investment for improvements to, or creation of, affordable housing in the CIP area. For housing to be considered affordable, it must be no more than 30 percent of the gross annual house income. For grants, the eligible costs normally include development, redevelopment, repair, or rehabilitation of existing residential properties. The City of Pembroke offers a grant to cover a portion of studies (e.g. environmental study or design drawings) required to support development of four (4) or more affordable housing units. Kenora offered a similar grant except it was focused on the provision of senior's housing. Other financial incentives can include tax incentive grants and development charge reductions.

Affordable housing within the Downtown area was not identified as an issue during the consultation period.

### **4.3 Eligibility Requirements**

The selected incentive programs need to be supported by policies outlining the eligibility criteria. The eligibility criteria will be outlined in depth in the CIP. The eligibility criteria will set out the basics (i.e. who can apply – owner, tenant with owner's permission) as well as provide the specific eligibility for each program which will be tailored to the purpose of the program. Additionally, the programs can be allocated to a specific community improvement area or land use (i.e. the affordable housing grant is only eligible within the downtown improvement area).

### **4.4 Municipal Leadership Strategy**

A Municipal Leadership Strategy is a series of actions, projects, programs, and tools that have identified opportunities for the Municipality to improve the community through improvements to public lands. This can include streetscaping initiatives, inground infrastructure capital repair/replacement, gateway/wayfinding, parking improvements, and design guidelines. The Municipal Leadership Strategy is a vital component of the Community Improvement Plan as the investment into public land acts as a catalyst to private investments into the project area.

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Ongoing interviews with Municipal Staff and Council have identified specific areas that could be targeted for the municipal leadership strategy. These areas include:

- ❖ **Repair of the Canopies** – it was noted numerous times through the consultation process that the existing canopies along Champlain Street, Ridge Road, and Deep River Road are in disrepair and should be revitalized. It has been confirmed that the canopies along Champlain and Ridge Road are owned by the Town and as such could be a project undertaken as part of the CIP.
- ❖ **Streetscaping** – The Town can undertake streetscaping initiatives to improve the aesthetic of the streets. This can include improvements such as: sidewalk improvements, furnishings, landscaping (i.e. planter boxes, trees), improving pedestrian mobility, and street lighting. Additionally, items such as a Wi-Fi bubble, notice board, and map of the community were all ideas that members of Staff and Council were interested in pursuing.
- ❖ **Community Centre Property** – this property and the other town-owned lands that are currently used as greenspace were mentioned as having potential for improvements. Some ideas included building expansion, permanent shade structures, splash pad, and landscaping/parkette plans.
- ❖ **Urban design guidelines** – it was noted both in discussions with Town Staff and Council, as well as through the businesses and community survey, that a consistency in the appearance of the downtown façades would improve the look of the downtown. An option to accomplish this is to establish design guidelines to guide façade improvements, signage, and streetscaping to provide a consistent and cohesive appearance. Given that the Town owns the canopies, the Town could commission architectural renderings of updated facades to show examples of cohesiveness and guide redevelopment.
- ❖ **Gateway and Wayfinding** – signage at the highway directing visitors to the downtown was a common idea across all groups in the consultation period. This could include a plan for establishing signage along the highway and advertising the downtown area and downtown businesses.

The consultation section outlined a number of elements within the Downtown area that the community, businesses, Town staff, and Council all identified as areas of improvement. These elements include parking, street crossings, the canopies, the sidewalks, and more. To address these elements and provide for a guide for redevelopment of public lands within the Downtown Community

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Improvement Project Area, the development of a downtown streetscaping concept plan could also be an initiative, or included as a component of another initiative like streetscaping, undertaken as part of the Municipal Leadership Strategy.

## 4.5 Budget

The CIP budget is difficult to estimate at this stage. The CIP budget will be established by Council on a yearly basis. There will be two (2) parts to the budget: the grant program fund for investment into private property, and the capital improvements fund which will invest funds into public lands to improve the CIPA. Funding varies largely by Municipality and by the financial incentive programs offered. A portion of Council's annual budget will be allocated to the financial incentive programs and the amount will be left to the discretion of Council. The programs budget is normally a set amount (i.e. \$20,000) and once it is gone, Council can decide to top up the funds or wait until the next fiscal year. For the capital improvement part of the budget, the fund allocation is typically in the five-year capital budget or as a "public works" project in the annual budget. These funds are separate from the CIP incentive programs funds, although the CIP can be identified as the reason the capital project is given such a high priority in the budget.

## 4.6 Implementation & Administration

To implement the CIP, an administrator will need to be designated. This will likely be a municipal staff member or a group of staff members, and they will be in charge of facilitating and implementing the plan and programs, as well as accepting and reviewing applications prior to going to Council. Additionally, Council may choose to establish a CIP grant committee which will review the CIP program applications and present a report to council with recommendations.

The Community Improvement Plan will include a section which outlines how to implement the Plan. The implementation section will set out general eligibility criteria, the budget, application process, and implementation period. Application forms will be required for the CIP programs which will be prepared alongside the CIP. A Financial Incentive Program Agreement will also need to be prepared. The plan will be implemented by the administrator or administrative group who will be in charge of the applications and providing recommendations to Council.

It is recommended that the Town create a 'Review Team' to handle the application process and appoint a Plan Administrator to oversee the Review Team and handle the management of the Downtown Community Improvement Plan.

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## 5.0 Recommendations

This section will outline recommendations for the Financial Incentive Programs and the Municipal Leadership Strategy. These recommendations are based on the results of the consultation with business owners, the public, the Town, and Council. These recommendations are suggestions based on the feedback from the community, and Council may choose to amend the programs and incentives that will be offered in the Downtown Community Plan.

### **Recommendation #1: Financial Incentive Programs**

The recommendations for financial incentive programs were largely based on the input of the business owners and the property owners and tenants. Part of the business survey was directed at what incentives they would be likely to use. These results were instrumental in determining what programs to offer. Therefore, the recommended financial incentive programs are:

- ❖ Façade Improvement Grant Program;
- ❖ Signage Improvement Grant Program;
- ❖ Building Improvement/Energy Efficiency Grant Program;
- ❖ Accessibility Improvement Grant Program;
- ❖ Tax Deferral Program (for 5 years); and
- ❖ Municipal Application/Permit Fees Grant.

In reviewing the results of the business survey, there was several mentions of existing accessibility issues being a challenge. Also mentioned was concerns over the age of the buildings and necessary repairs (i.e. leaking roof). The inclusion of the tax deferral program, which would defer the increase in the municipal portion of property tax for a span of five (5) years upon significant building improvement, was included based on the recognition that some of the aging buildings may require major renovations in the near future.

### **Recommendation #2: Municipal Leadership Strategy**

Recommendations for the Municipal Leadership strategy were developed with input from Town Staff and Council and incorporated the input gathered from the public consultation community survey and the business survey.

The results of the consultation process identified a number of areas and opportunities for improvement within the downtown. The identified areas include: crosswalks; canopies; sidewalks; parking; cyclist access and use; landscaping/furnishings; gathering places.

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One opportunity that was reoccurring was the potential of better utilizing the parcel of land beside the Giant Tiger. Ideas for the property included expanding on existing furnishings (i.e. adding more furnishings and/or shade), redeveloping for commercial use, and temporary commercial uses (i.e. pop-up stands/food trucks).

As a result of the consultation process, the following programs, initiatives, and strategies are recommended to be included in the Downtown Community Improvement Plan as the Municipal Leadership Strategy:

- ❖ **Streetscaping Plan** – The Plan would provide a guide to improving the public lands within the Downtown Community Improvement Area. The Plan would provide a concept plan of the overall vision for revitalization and identify the actions to take to reach the vision.
- ❖ **Canopy Re-development** – The improvement/replacement of the canopies is a high priority as it was a key topic of discussion and identified as a priority in all four groups of consultation. Due to the poles supporting the canopies being embedded in the sidewalk, this would also include the replacement of the sidewalks.
- ❖ **Infrastructure** – Downtown Deep River was established as part of the planned community in the 1950s and as such the water and sanitary systems are reaching their end of life. By beginning to replace the water and sanitary systems now, it will help to stagger the replacement of the pipes. The replacement of these pipes within the downtown area could be done concurrently with the canopies and sidewalks to accomplish it all at once and create a cohesive appearance. There is also the option to include improvements to other public assets that were identified in the Asset Management Plan as needing improvement, such as signage.
- ❖ **Gateway and Wayfinding** – Developing signage to draw those on the highway into the downtown was mentioned frequently during the consultation stage and identified as a key priority. Also mentioned during the consultation period was the creation of a Town map board which would emphasize the attractions within the Town.

It should be noted that both Deep River Road and Ridge Road are owned by the County of Renfrew. Any development works (e.g. road improvements, curbs, storm sewers) will need to be lobbied to the County.



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## 6.0 Conclusion and Next Steps

This report provides preliminary recommendations and options to consider for the preparation of the Community Improvement Plan. These recommendations and options were based on legislative and policy review, municipal input, and public and stakeholder consultation.

A number of financial incentive programs were described in Section 4.0 for consideration by Staff and Council including façade, signage, accessibility, landscaping, parking design improvements, brownfield rehabilitation grants, building improvement incentives, municipal application and permit fees rebate incentives, and affordable housing incentives. Careful consideration should be given to which programs are chosen based on the needs of the improvement area and the community as a whole.

A review of the Town's Asset Management Plan and Strategic Plan were also undertaken. This review, along with public and stakeholder consultation, identified the need for additional improvement tools that the Municipality can use to further promote revitalization. Therefore, it is recommended that consideration be given to the inclusion of a Municipal Leadership Strategy to further support improvement within the community.

In conclusion, a Community Improvement Plan is a tool that can prove to be useful in the revitalization of the Town of Deep River and offers many benefits including encouraging private investment into the community. The financial incentive programs offer owners and tenants assistance with improving the physical characteristics of the economic areas of town, and a municipal leadership strategy would further assist with the revitalization of the community.

Based on the acceptance of this report by Council, the next step in the process is the preparation of the actual CIP Program and supporting documentation for Council's consideration. The supporting documentation includes the application form for the financial incentive programs and the financial incentive program agreement which will be used as part of the application process.

**Appendix 'A' – By-law No. 39-2020**

**THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF DEEP RIVER**  
**BY-LAW NUMBER 39-2020**

**BEING A BY-LAW TO DESIGNATE A COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT PROJECT AREA (CIPA)  
FOR THE TOWN OF DEEP RIVER COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN (CIP)**

**WHEREAS** Section 28(2) of the *Planning Act, R.S.O., 1990*, as amended, states that “where there is an official plan in effect in a local municipality or in a prescribed upper-tier municipality that contains provisions relating to community improvement in the municipality, the council may, by by-law, designate the whole or any part of an area covered by such an official plan as a community improvement project area.”;

**AND WHEREAS** Section 28(1) of the *Planning Act, R.S.O., 1990*, as amended, defines a Community Improvement Project Area as “a municipality or an area within a municipality, the community improvement of which in the opinion of the council is desirable because of age, dilapidation, overcrowding, faulty arrangement, unsuitability of buildings or for any other environmental, social or community economic development reason”;

**AND WHEREAS** the Official Plan for the County of Renfrew contains policies enabling the Council of the Corporation of the Town of Deep River to designate a Community Improvement Project Area by by-law for the purpose of preparing a Community Improvement Plan;

**AND WHEREAS** the Official Plan for the Town of Deep River also contains policies regarding Community Improvement Plans;

**NOW THEREFORE THE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL OF THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF DEEP RIVER ENACTS AS FOLLOWS:**

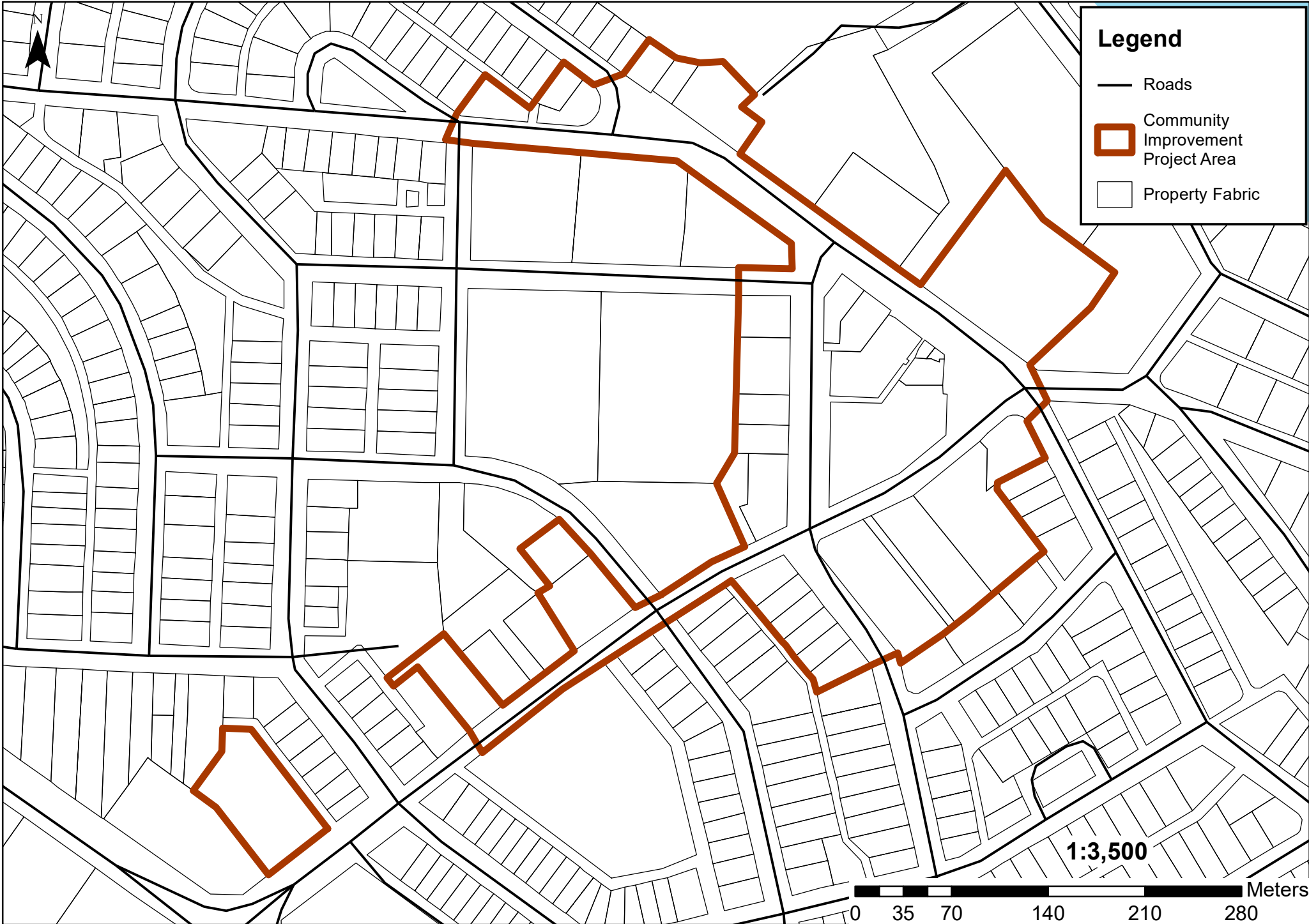
1. The areas illustrated on Schedule “A” attached to and forming part of this By-law, are hereby designated as the Community Improvement Project Area.
2. This By-law shall come into force and take effect upon the date of the final passing thereof.

**READ A FIRST, SECOND, AND THIRD TIME, AND FINALLY PASSED THIS 7TH DAY  
OF OCTOBER, 2020.**

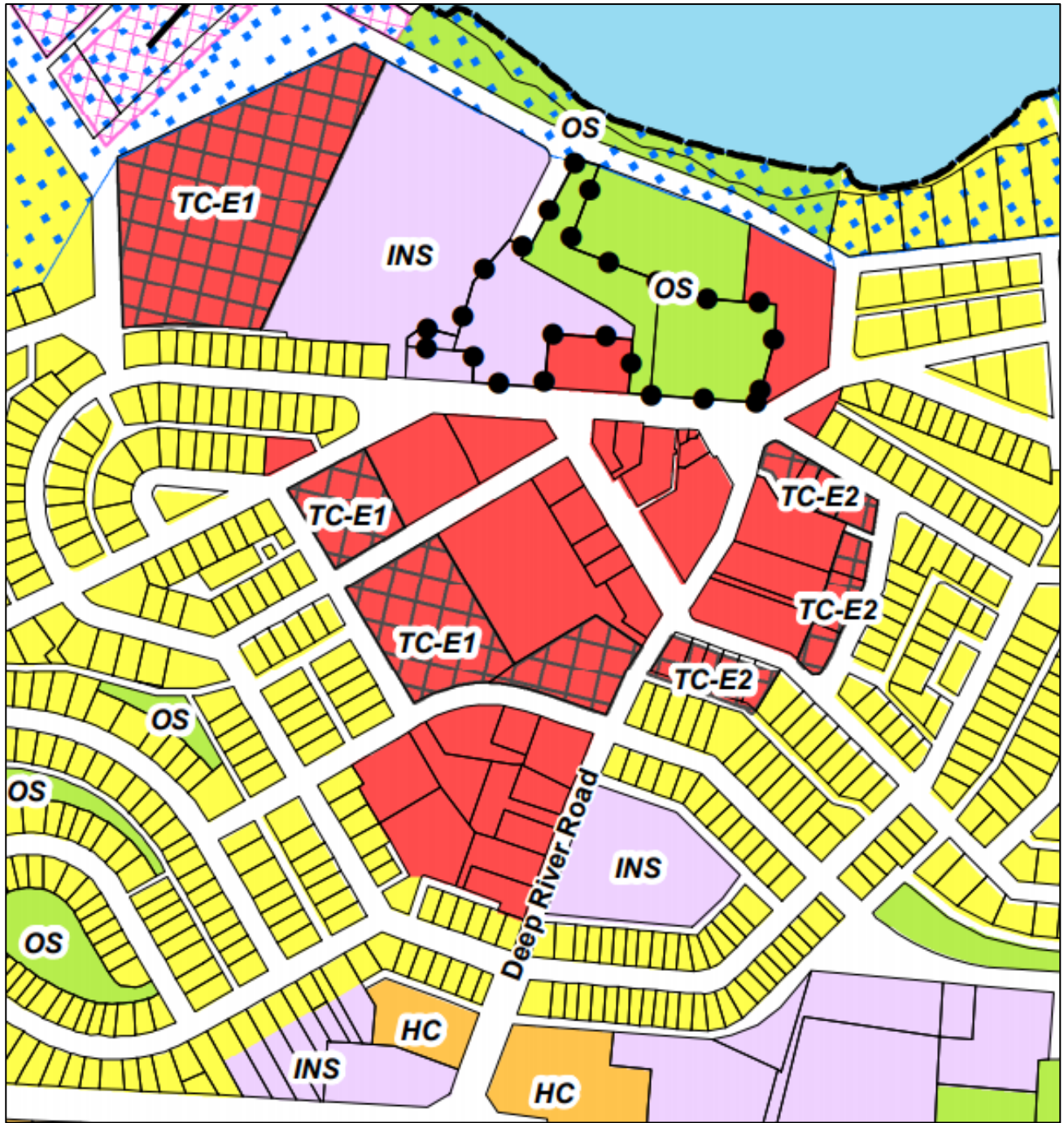
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Suzanne D'Eon, Mayor

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Jackie Mellon, Clerk




The Corporation of the Town of Deep River  
Schedule "A" to By-law 39-2020



**Appendix 'B' – Excerpt of Schedule "A" to the Town of Deep River  
Official Plan**



**Legend**

-  Municipal Boundary
-  Property Fabric
-  Waterbody
-  Watercourse
-  Campus
-  Hazardous, Unstable and Steep Slope
-  Town Centre
-  Town Centre - Exception X (TC-EX)
-  Residential
-  Residential - Exception X (R-EX)
-  Rural (RU)
-  Rural - Exception X (RU-EX)
-  Development (D)
-  Institutional (INS)
-  Highway Commercial (HC)
-  Open Space & Recreation
-  Open Space & Recreation - Exception X (OS-EX)
-  Environmental Protection (EP)
-  Waste Disposal
-  Waterfront Overlay
-  Waterfront Site Specific Policies
-  Lands Owned by AECL