

# Town of Prescott

By-law # 12-2009

## Community Improvement Plan Historic Downtown Area

July 2009



## ***Title and Components***

Upon approval by the Council of the Town of Prescott, this Plan shall be known as the “Prescott Community Improvement Plan - Historic Downtown Area.”

This plan applies to the lands shown on the attached Schedule ‘A’ and as described in Section 4 of this plan.

The following text and attached Schedule ‘A’ constitute the Prescott Community Improvement Plan - Historic Downtown Area adopted as By-law #12-2009 of the Corporation of the Town of Prescott.



*An outlook to the future*

## ***Community Improvement Plan (CIP) for Historic Downtown Prescott***

### **1. Purpose**

This Community Improvement Plan (CIP) and defined project areas for the Historic Downtown Area establishes a framework for the Town's support and implementation of various programs of financial incentives to encourage the rehabilitation and revitalization of the historic downtown district.

### **2. The Official Plan**

The current Official Plan for the Town of Prescott was developed through a very open and inclusive public process. The Official Plan was adopted by the Council of the Corporation of the Town of Prescott in June 2006 and approved by the Minister in October 2006, and came into full force and effect as of June 5, 2006.

The Official Plan focuses on our heritage, the waterfront and the importance of the downtown. The Community Vision for Prescott is identified in Section 1.7 through the concepts of 'Consolidate, Concentrate and Connect'. The Primary Principles are laid out in Section 1.8 and include:

- to preserve Prescott's Quality of Life
- to recognize the Importance of a Healthy and Vibrant Downtown
- to recognize Prescott's History and Protect Heritage Buildings
- to promote tourism as a key component of the local economy
- to pursue Economic development and economic opportunities
- to facilitate population growth
- to adopt sustainable practices

Section 3.1 addresses Economic Development and Section 3.4 addresses Heritage Conservation and Preservation while Section 3.6 speaks to the use of Community Improvement programs to achieve the goals set out in the plan. The purpose of this CIP is to provide the detailed direction, tools and incentives to implement the vision of the Official Plan.



### **3. Prescott Downtown Design & Urban Design Guidelines**

As part of the public process that developed the Official Plan, a series of workshops and open houses were conducted with stakeholders and the general public to discuss the specific vision for the downtown and waterfront. The result of that consultation was the Prescott Downtown Design & Urban Design Guidelines adopted by Council in December 2005

Also known as the 'Downtown Plan', this is a supporting document to the Official Plan and will serve as the design criteria for any applications made under this CIP.

### **4. Location**

The lands subject to the CIP and referred to as the Prescott Historic Downtown Area (the Community Improvement Area) shall be the same as the area designated as "Downtown Core" in the Town of Prescott Official Plan, October 2006, more specifically defined on Schedule 'A' to the Official Plan.

For the purposes of indentifying community priorities, this overall Community Improvement Area will be further subdivided into subzones as follows:

- Subzone 1: Properties with King Street frontage between West Street and Vankoughnet Street
- Subzone 2: Properties with frontage on West Street, George Street, Centre Street and Edward Street.
- Subzone 3: Properties with frontage on Water Street that are east of the Canadian Coast Guard facility
- Subzone 4: Properties with frontage on King Street, Water Street or Corrine Street that are west of West Street
- Subzone 5: Properties with frontage on East Street or Vankoughnet Street
- Subzone 6: Properties with frontage on Henry Street

The CIP area and priority subzones are identified further as Schedule 'A' to this plan.

## 5. Authority

This CIP is prepared in accordance with the requirements of *Section 28 of the Planning Act, RSO.1990* as amended that allow for the use of Community Improvement as well as *Sections 106 and 365.1 of the Municipal Act, RSO 2001* that authorize the use of certain incentives. The use of Community Improvement tools are also identified in Section 3.6 of the Town of Prescott's *Official Plan, October 2006* and the *Prescott Downtown Design & Urban Design Guidelines, December 2005*.

Section 28 (1) of the *Planning Act* which defines "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 development reason." Section 28 (2) allows the designation of a Community Improvement Project Area, while Section 28 (4) allows for the adoption of a Community Improvement Plan. Section 28 (7) authorizes the municipality to enter into agreements which may be registered against the land to which it applies.

Section 3.6 of the *Official Plan* for the Town of Prescott contains provisions regarding Community Improvement. The Official Plan designates the entire town as a Community Improvement Area and establishes policies for the identification of Community Improvement Project Areas and the development of a Community Improvement Plan to be applied to each Project Area.



*"Friends... I give you myself... one of the most beautiful rivers in the world."*

*(Lee McKnight)*

## 6. Background

### ***The Historic Downtown***

The Historic Downtown area consists of approximately 76% locally-owned buildings with the remainder of property owners based mainly in Eastern Ontario with a few in Toronto or Montreal. There are 94 commercial properties within the study area (members of the Business Improvement Area), comprising 152 businesses. Of those 94 properties, 71 are now locally-owned. It is agreed that the downtown will benefit from more diverse business types. New owners of key buildings are most enthusiastic about new ventures such as a bookstore and flower shop/gift shop in strategic downtown locations.

The CIP area is the commercial centre for not just Prescott, but for South Grenville with a population of more than 18,000 as well as for annual visitors to the harbour (1,500), Fort Wellington (approximately 15,000), the Shakespeare Festival (3,000), Prescott Loyalist Days (2,000) and numerous other sports, recreational and cultural programs. A large draw for Prescott is the annual Major Midget AA/AAA hockey tournament in March, which attracts international talent scouts, close to 5,000 local enthusiasts and up to 700 visitors. As well, the Prescott Golf Club attracts close to 6,000 green fees per season, in addition to 460 adult memberships.

The magnificent buildings of King Street have often been admired by architects and planners and the streetscape has been praised for the “good bones” of these buildings. The Water Street streetscape is undergoing a significant transformation with a new luxury 28-unit condominium building, the Mariner’s Club, an anticipated hotel and the potential of several other unique buildings.

There is however, a great need to reinvest in the downtown core and waterfront lands through creative new infill buildings, effective restoration and revitalization elements in commercial heritage design, public spaces and streetscape elements such as lighting, signage, green spaces and street furnishings.



*~ an architectural gem at King and Centre Streets ~*

## ***Efforts to Date***

The first CIP initiative of the Town was the undertaking of a Downtown Revitalization Plan funded by Industry Canada through the Eastern Ontario Development Fund.

IBI Consulting of Ottawa prepared the *Prescott Downtown Design & Urban Design Guidelines* in December 2005 setting out design guidelines for the downtown and became the basis for this CIP.

Redevelopment began in earnest in the early 1970s with the removal of several industrial areas and structures of a blighting nature and the introduction of the following planning instruments:

- a municipal study of the downtown and waterfront identifying the need for revitalization, 1973
- a Norwich Plan for the downtown, 1974
- Neighbourhood Improvement Plan, 1977 (Jack Diamond, consultant)
- Secondary Plan for the downtown waterfront area, 1977 (J.L. Richards Consultants)
- *Tourism Strategy and Action Plan for the Town of Prescott*, Economic Planning Group of Canada, January, 1984, which highlights opportunities and challenges, and presents an action plan to direct the future development of the tourism industry in Prescott.

More recent efforts include:

- *Prescott Downtown Design & Urban Design Guidelines*, 2005
- *Official Plan*, 2006
- Comprehensive Zoning By-law, 2009
- Waterfront Concept design Report, April 2009

## ***Tourism***

Tourism has become increasingly important to the town. Many assets provide a unique perspective for an emphasis on tourism including but not limited to:

- Fort Wellington National Historic Site
  - home to the Prescott Loyalist Days Festival
- the 18-hole Prescott Golf Club
  - home to many regional golf tournaments
- the Sandra S. Lawn Harbour with its marina and park
  - home to the Harbour Days Festival
- the Kinsmen outdoor amphitheatre/stage
  - home to the St. Lawrence Shakespeare Festival
- historic downtown commercial buildings of significance
  - home to many more community festivals and events

The community's location at the intersection of two major four-lane highways and the St. Lawrence Seaway contributes to its rich heritage tourism opportunities. The St. Lawrence Shakespeare Theatrical Company, provides an enriched cultural tourism opportunity while the Prescott Loyalist Days celebrates our rich history.

## **7. Goals and Objectives of this CIP**

The Goals and objectives of this CIP are consistent with, and build upon the General Principles and Policies established for Community Improvement Areas in the Town of Prescott Official Plan, 2006, Section 3.6.

The following goals and objectives from the Official Plan apply directly to this Community Improvement Plan:

1. to maintain, rehabilitate and revitalize the physical environment in the Town as a means of improving the quality of life for residents, workers, shoppers and visitors in the Town;
2. to consider community improvement as an important part of the Town's commitment to local economic development and support for tourism, culture, commerce and industry in Prescott; this goal further recognizes the downtown as the focal point for public gatherings, festive and civic occasions, cultural events and tourism;
3. to recognize the importance of a healthy and vibrant downtown and identification of the downtown as the preferred location for new commercial and residential activities and the primary economic generator in the community;
4. to support the high-quality preservation and re-use of existing heritage buildings downtown while encouraging appropriate infill development and diverse mixed-use new buildings to maintain and enhance the historic character, which is critical to cultivating and preserving an active and prosperous downtown;
5. to emphasize the preservation and further development of the waterfront area and strengthen the link between it and the downtown core through visual and physical connections, signage etc., as a recognition that the waterfront is a contributor to the economic success of downtown businesses.



*King Street*

## **8. Community Improvement Incentive Plan Programs**

This CIP focuses on four major themes:

1. Municipal projects such as waterfront improvements; public streetscape such as street furnishings, plantings, lighting, public art; public parks and buildings and other architectural elements such as benches, planters, waste receptacles and banners and flags; These may be on municipal property or in partnership with private landowners
2. Façade improvement of private and public buildings in keeping with the Prescott Downtown Design and Urban Design Guidelines and includes support of heritage signs.
3. Filling of vacant spaces with new, diverse commercial and professional spaces and improvements to existing upper floors for residential accommodations or commercial use.
4. Infill of vacant lots in keeping with the Prescott Downtown Design and Urban Design Guidelines.

To achieve these goals, the Council offers the following grants be established through this Community Improvement Plan:

### **8.1 Tax Increment Equivalent Grant Program**

The Town may provide a grant to owners of lands and/or buildings who undertake improvements or redevelopment that would result in an increased property assessment. The amount of the grant provided would depend on the amount of the municipal portion (not the education portion) of property taxes that has increased as a result of the improvements. The Tax Increment Equivalent Grant Program offers a grant of 100% of the increase in municipal realty taxes paid annually for a maximum period of five years. The increase in realty taxes paid represents the annual municipal realty tax in each year following improvement or redevelopment of lands and buildings over and above municipal realty tax prior to improvement or redevelopment of the lands in question. (The amount of the grant cannot be greater than the total of eligible costs reported by the applicant.)

Participation in the Tax Increment Equivalent Grant Program does not exempt property owners from an increase/decrease in municipal taxes due to a general rate increase/decrease or a change in assessment for any other reason. The Tax Increment Equivalent Grant program does not exempt property owners from paying the education portion of the property tax.

### **8.2 Architectural Design Grant**

The Town may provide a grant for owners of existing buildings to acquire an architectural design for a facade improvement. The grant will pay up to 50% of the

cost for architectural design renderings for approved applicants to a maximum of \$1,000. It is hoped that other agencies or government programs may assist with more of the costs, but ensuring that the building owner does make a nominal contribution to reflect genuine interest in proceeding with improvements.

### **8.3 Improvement Construction Grant**

The Town may provide a grant for owners of existing buildings to carry out construction toward facade improvement, or revitalization of vacant commercial space or the revitalization of upper floors. The grant will pay up to 50% of the eligible costs to a maximum of \$5,000. Again, it is hoped that other agencies or government programs may assist with more of the costs.

### **8.4 Heritage Sign Grant**

The Town will provide a grant to owners or tenants of buildings (new or existing) who purchase or construct a “heritage” sign in keeping with the *Prescott Downtown Design and Urban Design Guidelines*. Consideration will also be given to storefront awnings. The grant will provide up to 50% of the cost of an approved sign to a maximum of \$2,000.

**Note:**

Further details of these grant programs are outlined in Schedule ‘B’ of this CIP.



*A symbol of strength  
from the past meets  
the present.... and builds  
into the future.*

## 9.0 Eligibility Criteria

All applications will be judged on their individual merits as to how the improvements support the vision for the Town of Prescott as articulated in the Official Plan and the Prescott Downtown Design and Urban Design Guidelines.

Any properties to be considered must be within the Community Improvement Project Area as defined in Section 2 of this CIP and attached as Schedule 'A' to this CIP. At the start of each program year, the Council may place greater priority on specific subzones and restrict grants to properties in a particular subzone or subzones or fund all projects in the identified subzones prior to projects in the other subzones.

Any proposals to be approved for grants must be deemed to adhere to the Downtown Design & Urban Design Guidelines Report, December 2005.

Each of the grants provided under this CIP are subject to the Municipal Act , RSO 2001 and the Planning Act, RSO 1990.

Eligible costs shall be in accordance with Section 28 of the Planning Act, RSO 1990, that states that any grants provided shall not exceed the cost of rehabilitating the lands and buildings. In other words, none of the grants provided through this CIP, either singularly or collectively, shall exceed the total value of the rehabilitation project.

The grants may be combined in a manner that will permit more than one grant and/or loan per property. Where this is done, the total grant amount shall be based on the amounts listed. The total of the grants, however, made in respect of particular land and buildings under this CIP shall in no instance exceed the eligible cost of rehabilitation of the applicable lands and building.

Programs funded from other sources including, but not limited to the federal or provincial governments or the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, shall be in keeping with the goals and objectives of this Community Improvement Plan.

All projects must comply with the Town of Prescott Official Plan, Zoning By-law, the Ontario Building Code and any other relevant legislation.

Unless approved by Council, no grant or incentive shall be offered retroactively. Only costs incurred after the approval of the project shall be eligible for a specific grant. Assistance granted to one property is not transferable to another property.

In order to qualify for any grant program, eligible properties must not be in tax arrears, shall not have any outstanding work orders or water and sewer charges, and all required planning and building fees must be paid in full.

Payment of any grant will be based upon the review and satisfaction of the Treasurer of the Town of Prescott. All reports will be submitted to the Treasurer prior to submission to Council for final approval.

## 10. Application and Approval Process

### 10.1 Annual Priorities and budget

Each year, the Town Council shall determine priorities and set a budget for each of the CIP grant program by February 28<sup>th</sup> and applications for each year will be received as of March 1<sup>st</sup>.

### 10.2 Use of Application Form

Applications must be received on the “Town of Prescott CIP Application Form” attached as Schedule ‘C’ to this CIP and the form must be completed including cost estimates.

### 10.3 Staff Review

All applications are first reviewed by the CAO/Clerk or designate to ensure completeness of the application and to comment on adherence to the eligibility requirements and the goals of the CIP.

All applications are then reviewed by the Treasurer to confirm all taxes and any other municipal charges are in order and to provide financial comments.

### 10.4 Council Review and Approval

Council, meeting as Council or as a Committee, will receive the applications with staff comments and approve or deny each application giving consideration to the priorities and budget set out by Council at the start of each program year.

Eligible projects will generally be approved on a first come first served basis, however, Council may identify priority subzones or programs over others at the start of each program year.

### 10.5 Final Payment

Final Payment or implementation of any grant program will be made following submission of the “Town of Prescott CIP Final Report Form” (attached as Schedule ‘D’) and approval by the Treasurer.



*Sign of the times*

## **Implementation**

Programs under this Community Improvement Plan may be offered at the discretion of Council, and may be rescinded without an amendment to the Community Improvement Plan.

The contents of this Community Improvement Plan shall not limit the right of the Corporation of the Town of Prescott to undertake any other initiatives identified in the Town's Official Plan and the Downtown Design & Urban Design Guidelines.

Town Council will determine the amount of funding to make available for CIP programs and other community improvement efforts during the preparation of the annual budget and announce these by February 28<sup>th</sup> each year.

Town Council may identify priority programs or subzones that may receive funding prior to others.

The Town will communicate these programs, the priorities and the associated budgets each year to the Prescott Business Improvement Area, the Prescott & District Chamber of Commerce, the local media and the general public.

The CIP programs will be evaluated annually prior to the implementation of the next year's budget.



*~ Sandra S. Lawn Harbour ~ a premier boating facility ~*
















# Town of Prescott Official Plan

Schedule A:  
Official Plan Map

LEGEND

	Residential
	General Commercial
	Highway Commercial
	Downtown Core
	Industrial
	Institutional
	Parks & Open Space
	Other
	Town Limit
	Schools
	Potential Environmental Significant Area