



Southwold Economic Development Committee

Agenda

Thursday, November 6, 2025 at 8:00 am
Township Council Chambers – Municipal Office Fingal

1. Call to Order
 - a. Guests/potential member introductions
2. Approval of the Agenda
3. Approval of the October 9, 2025 Minutes
4. Development and Infrastructure Updates:
 - a. Fingal Reconstruction
 - b. Shedden/Fingal Sanitary Servicing
 - c. WWTP Updates for Shedden & Talbotville
 - d. Parks and Trails Master Plan Project Update
5. Elgin County Economic Development and Tourism Update
6. Feedback on Elgincentives Community Improvement Plan Review and Update
7. Feedback on October 15 Cultivating Success: The Fall 2025 Elgin County Business Networking Event
8. New and Other Business
9. Next meeting date, time and location
10. Adjourn



Southwold Economic Development Committee

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, October 9th, 2025 at 8:00 am
Council Chambers/Webex Meeting

Present: Deputy Mayor Justin Pennings
Councillor John Adzija
Steve Bushell
Barry Harrison

Regrets: Michelle Hoffsuemmer

Staff/Resource: Aaron VanOorspronk, Director of Infrastructure and Development
Jeff Carswell, CAO/Clerk
Anne Kleinsteuber, Business Enterprise Facilitator
Tanya Wilson, Elgin Business Resource Centre

1. Call to Order

Deputy Mayor Pennings called the meeting to order at 8:05 am.

2. Approval of Agenda

The Committee approved the agenda for the October 9th, 2025 meeting.

3. Approval of the September 11th, 2025 Minutes

The Committee approved the minutes as drafted from the September 11th, 2025 meeting.

4. Development and Infrastructure Updates

Director of Infrastructure and Development Services, Aaron VanOorspronk reported on the following matters:

- a. Shedden/Fingal Sanitary Servicing – The Shedden Union Road project is nearing completion. The contract awards for the Fingal Pumping Station and the Fingal Reconstruction Project with the County were awarded at the September 22nd Council meeting. Construction schedules and required detours are being developed and will be communicated shortly. Additional consultation with the farming community will be taking place following the harvest to review possible impacts on larger equipment.
- b. WWTP Updates for Shedden & Talbotville – The Shedden WWTP contract has been awarded, with construction to start in the fall.
- c. The draft Parks and Trails Master Plan Project was shared with Council on September 22nd

5. Elgin County Economic Development Update

Anne Kleinsteuber, Business Enterprise Facilitator, provided updates on the following matters:

- The County EDC Department will be looking for Community and stakeholder feedback on the proposed updates to the Elgincentives program to be launched in 2026
- The Business Guide has been launched
- The Economic Development and Tourism Strategy is nearing completion
- A new Economic Development website is planned for launch in November
- The Fall Backroad Elgin Map – Tourism Promotion Initiative
- Local Business Meetings have been taking place, along with several more in the Spotlight Series.

6. Sign Auction

The sign auction is being planned for the new year.

7. Business Networking Events

Anne Kleinsteuber provided an update on the October 15th Cultivating Success Business Networking Event. Staff will check whether the Southwold contribution has been made for both events yet.

8. New Member Recruitment

The committee discussed recruitment of new members. There has been some interest from potential new members. As in the past, inviting potential members to attend a future meeting to learn more about the Southwold EDC may assist with determining their interest and suitability for the committee.

9. New and Other Business

Member Harrison inquired about a Provincial list of high value properties and whether Southwold properties are included. Staff advised there are several property inventories and sources of information and the Township and County regularly provide information.

10. Next Meeting date, time and location

The next meeting was scheduled for November 6th, 2025 at 8:00 am.

11. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 8:26 am.

Chairperson, Justin Pennings

Staff Resource, Jeff Carswell

Village of Fingal Reconstruction Project – Notice of Construction

Dear Fingal Resident,

The Township of Southwold will soon begin major reconstruction work in Fingal. This notice provides important details about the project and how construction may impact you.

Project Details

Project Name: Town of Fingal Reconstruction

Location: Fingal Line, Union Road, Fowler Street, and Millpark Street

Schedule: Tentative start date – November 3rd 2025 (*weather permitting*)

Estimated completion: *June 2027*

Contractor: Bre-Ex Construction Inc.

Scope of Work:

- Localized watermain replacement
- Storm sewer and storm outlet construction
- Sanitary sewer installation (new municipal sanitary system)
- Curb and gutter installation
- Sidewalk installation and improvements
- Pedestrian Crossovers
- Landscape features
- Downtown improvements
- Full road reconstruction and restoration

Important Information for Residents

Sanitary & Storm Connections:

As part of this project, all properties located directly along the reconstruction limits (Fingal Line, Union Road, Fowler Street, and Millpark Street) will receive a sanitary service stub installed to the property line and capped. This will allow for future connection to the new municipal sanitary system once it becomes active.

Property owners within the construction limits who wish to receive a storm service stub must contact the Township by October 31, 2025 to confirm participation. It is not too late to sign up for a storm connection if your property is included within the reconstruction area.

How Construction May Impact You

- **Traffic:** Roads in Fingal will be closed to through traffic at certain times. Local traffic, including business traffic, emergency services, and municipal vehicles will still have access.
- **Property Access:** Driveway access will be maintained as much as possible. However, there will be times when access will be temporarily unavailable. In advance of these instances, you will receive notice and direction as to where to park.
- **Water Service:** Water will remain available, but short service disruptions may occur when connections are made. Some properties may also be placed on temporary service. You will be notified in advance of any changes.
- **Sanitary and Storm Services:** New municipal connections will be installed by the Township of Southwold. Contractors will coordinate directly with property owners as this work takes place.
- **Vibration:** Construction equipment may cause vibrations. Please protect fragile or valuable items inside your home.
- **Landscaping and Property Items:** Please remove decorations, plants, sprinklers, fencing, and other personal items from Township or County property that you wish to keep. Work will take place up to the property line, and the Township and County are not responsible for items left on public property.
- **Sod:** New sod will be maintained and watered by the contractor for 60 days after planting. After this period, maintenance responsibilities revert back to pre-construction conditions.
- **Garbage and Recycling:** Contractors will collect your garbage and recycling on pickup days by moving containers to a location that can be accessed by collection vehicles. Containers will be returned afterward. Please label your containers with your municipal address.
- **Safety:** For your safety, please avoid the construction area and keep a safe distance from vehicles and equipment.
- **Mail Delivery:** Canada Post has been consulted throughout the project design phase. Temporary community mailboxes will be installed, and directions along with access information will be communicated by Canada Post.
- **Internet / Phone:** Should you lose internet or phone service, please contact your service provider. Should the Contractor come in contact with telecommunications lines they will notify the service provider, but additional repairs may be required on private property which may fall under a separate department.

Social Media Updates

For updates and information regarding the Village of Fingal Reconstruction, please visit:
<https://engageelgin.ca/fingal>

Sincerely,

Aaron VanOorspronk, L.E.T.

Director of Infrastructure and Development Services

Township of Southwold

Tel: 519-769-2010 | Email: development@southwold.ca

35663 Fingal Line, Fingal, Ontario N0L 1K0



ELGIN COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

Elgin County's Economic Development Department continues to play a central role in strengthening the regional economy, supporting business growth, and promoting long-term prosperity across all seven Municipalities. Through collaboration, research, and direct engagement with local business owners and partners, the department ensures that every part of the County benefits from coordinated efforts to attract investment, create opportunities, and support community vitality.

The following provides an overview of key achievements and initiatives throughout the last several months.

PLANNING FOR ELGIN COUNTY'S ECONOMIC FUTURE

Elgin County is developing a new **Economic Development and Tourism Strategy Action Plan** to guide the region's growth over the next several years. The plan is being created with input from local businesses, community leaders, and Municipal partners to ensure that it reflects both shared priorities and the unique strengths of each community.

This year, the department gathered feedback through business surveys, focus groups, and interviews, culminating in an Action Planning Session held in the fall. This process generated valuable insights that will inform a focused, measurable plan designed to grow key industries, strengthen tourism, and enhance Elgin's reputation as a place to live, work, and invest.

The completed Strategy will be presented to County Council in **December 2025**, providing a clear framework for action and collaboration across the region.



UPDATING THE ELGINCENTIVES - COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Elgin County is working with **Re:Public Urbanism**, a consulting firm specializing in community planning and revitalization, to update the **Elgincntives Community Improvement Plan (CIP)**. This program supports economic development across the County by offering financial incentives for property improvements, downtown revitalization, and redevelopment projects.

The updated plan will reflect new economic priorities, community feedback, and opportunities that have emerged since the program was first launched in 2015. Background research and stakeholder consultations have been completed, and the department is now reviewing a **Recommendations Brief** that outlines proposed updates to the program.

Each local Municipality will have an opportunity to participate in this process. A **webinar** will be hosted to explain how Community Improvement Plans work and to highlight the benefits of the Elgincntives program. In addition, representatives from **Re:Public Urbanism** will attend upcoming Municipal council meetings to present the draft plan and gather local input.

Residents and business owners can learn more or share feedback by visiting engageelgin.ca/elgincntives and completing a short questionnaire.

CELEBRATING THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY - CULTIVATING SUCCESS 2025

In October, Elgin County hosted the Cultivating Success Business Networking Event at the Elgin International Club in West Lorne, drawing more than 150 business owners, entrepreneurs, and community leaders from across the County.

This successful event celebrated innovation, collaboration, and the entrepreneurial spirit that drives Elgin County's economy. The County extends thanks to the Economic Development Committees of Dutton Dunwich, Southwold, and West Elgin for helping make this regional celebration possible.

Planning is already underway for next spring's event, which will continue to foster connections and share success stories from across the County. Stay tuned!



SUPPORTING AND SHOWCASING LOCAL BUSINESSES

Elgin County's Business Enterprise Facilitator meets regularly with entrepreneurs and business owners in every Municipality, providing one-on-one support, identifying funding opportunities, and helping connect businesses with the tools they need to succeed.

These visits not only strengthen relationships with local business operators but also allow the department to highlight community success stories. Recent business spotlights have included:

- [The Yarmouth Group Inc.](#) (Central Elgin): A trusted name in fabrication, craning, and heavy equipment services for more than 60 years.
- [NovoMar Construction & Renovations](#) (West Elgin): A growing business known for quality craftsmanship and community pride.
- [Campbells II](#) (Aylmer): A locally owned lifestyle shop offering thoughtful gifts and home décor with personalized service.

These stories are shared through the County's social media channels, helping to promote local businesses and build community pride throughout the region.



CELEBRATING LOCAL SUCCESS AT BRIDGES TO BETTER BUSINESS

Elgin County and the City of St. Thomas once again partnered for the 16th Annual Bridges to Better Business Event, hosted by the St. Thomas Elgin Small Business Enterprise Centre. Held at the Elgin County Railway Museum. This signature event brought together business owners, industry partners, and community leaders from across the region, fostering valuable connections and highlighting the resources available to help businesses grow and thrive.

Each year, it provides a platform to recognize the achievements of local entrepreneurs whose work strengthened the economy across Elgin County and St. Thomas. The evening also featured the TASTE Food Showcase, highlighting culinary and beverage businesses from across the County, and celebrated local entrepreneurship and innovation.

Elgin County was proud to present the Economic Development Award to Platinum Foodz of Aylmer, a new business recognized for its innovative, locally sourced "Not Ordinary" chips and strong commitment to giving back to the community.

Congratulations also go to:

- Pepper Tree Spice Co. Inc. – Small Business Award
- Maximum Diesel – Starter Company Plus Award

SHARING KNOWLEDGE AND RESOURCES

The Elgin County Economic Development Newsletter continues to serve as a valuable communication tool for Council members, Municipal staff, and community partners. Issued quarterly, it provides updates on regional economic activity, funding programs, tourism initiatives, and business development news.

You can sign up for the [quarterly newsletter here](#), and read the [Fall 2025 Edition here](#).

STAFF ENGAGEMENT AND REGIONAL COLLABORATION

Our team has been busy connecting with the community! Over the past few months, we've attended several local events to meet with business owners, learn about their work, and share resources that support growth and innovation.

Here's where we've been:

- St. Thomas & District Chamber of Commerce Business After 5 (August)
- Aylmer & Area Chamber of Commerce Business After 5 (September)
- Young Entrepreneurs' Initiative Event in St. Thomas (August)
- Canada's Outdoor Farm Show with Malahide's Community Relations Manager and the Elgin Federation of Agriculture President (September)
- Aylmer & Area Chamber of Commerce and Mainstreet Aylmer AGM (October)

These visits help us stay connected, inform our programming, and ensure local businesses know about available supports, from grants and funding to training and mentorship.

NOMINATE A BUSINESS FOR THE IMPACT AWARDS!

Do you know a business in Elgin County that deserves to be recognized? The St. Thomas & District Chamber of Commerce Impact Awards are now open for nominations!

While many members are based in Central Elgin and Southwold, several eligible businesses operate in other parts of Elgin County. Help us celebrate the hardworking entrepreneurs who make our community thrive.

More information and nomination forms are available [here](#).

MEET THE TEAM - CONTACT US FOR SUPPORT



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FALL 2025

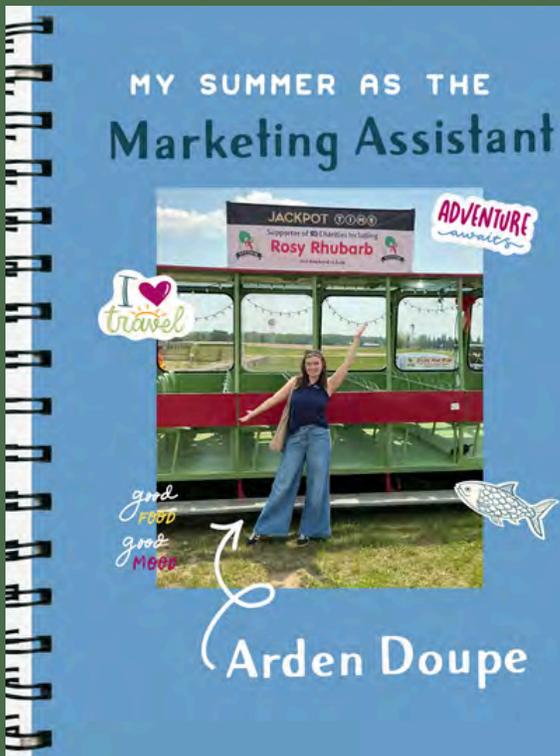
ELGIN COUNTY TOURISM UPDATE



Elgin County Tourism is responsible for promoting the County as a year-round destination, supporting local tourism businesses, and strengthening the visitor economy across all seven municipalities. Through marketing, partnership development, and visitor services, the department works to attract visitors, increase spending at local businesses, and showcase the unique character and experiences found throughout the region.

The following information provides an overview of key initiatives and outcomes from summer 2025, along with early fall highlights.

SHOWCASING THE ENTIRE REGION



Throughout the summer, Elgin County Tourism focused on promoting the full range of experiences available across the County. From our lakeshore communities and rural landscapes to heritage towns and family attractions, the department’s marketing efforts emphasized that every corner of Elgin offers something special for visitors to discover.

Marketing Assistant **Arden Doupe** joined the team for the summer season, supporting the promotion of more than **100 local businesses** through photography, video storytelling, and digital content. These efforts captured authentic local experiences such as farm visits, outdoor recreation, dining, and arts and culture, helping to inspire new visitors and encourage exploration across all municipalities.

This initiative also underscored the importance of student employment in building local capacity for tourism marketing and developing future talent within Elgin County. To read **Arden’s** recap of her summer experience and how she helped promote the region, click [here](#).



WELCOMING VISITORS ACROSS THE COUNTY

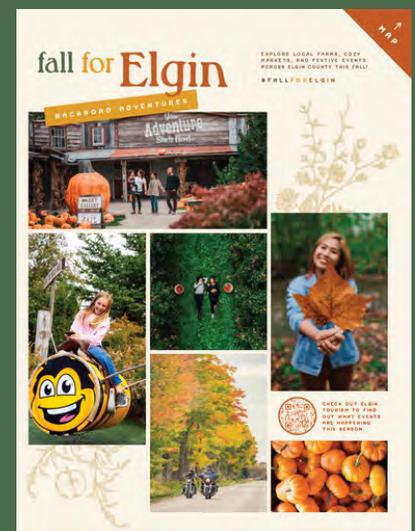
The **Port Stanley Visitor Centre** served as a regional gateway once again this summer, welcoming **6,726 visitors in 2025**, compared to **6,231 in 2024**. Guests arrived from across Ontario and Canada, as well as internationally from countries such as Germany, Australia, and the United States.

Visitor Centre staff provided information about businesses, attractions, and events throughout the County, helping travelers discover destinations beyond the lakeshore and encouraging them to explore more of Elgin's communities.

ENCOURAGING LOCAL EXPLORATION THROUGH #FALLFORELGIN

As summer transitioned into fall, the **#FallforElgin Backroad Adventures Map** encouraged residents and visitors to experience autumn in Elgin County. The campaign featured farms, markets, and seasonal events that highlighted the County's agricultural roots and rural charm.

Working with **Ontario's Southwest** (the non-profit Regional Tourism Organization (RTO) for our region, funded by the provincial Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming) and the **Culinary Tourism Alliance**, the department extended the campaign's reach beyond local audiences to attract visitors from across the region. The map was available online, through the Visitor Centre, and at participating businesses, helping to drive foot traffic and local spending during the fall season.



PROMOTING ELGIN COUNTY IN TORONTO

In November, Elgin County Tourism will promote the region at the **National Women's Show in Toronto**, Canada's largest consumer show for women. This major event provides a platform to showcase the County's culinary, shopping, and leisure experiences to thousands of potential visitors.

Participation in high-profile events like this ensures Elgin County's destinations remain visible in competitive markets and builds awareness among key audiences.



CULINARY TOURISM LEADERSHIP

Elgin County is a member of the **Culinary Tourism Alliance**, which promotes local food and beverage experiences across Ontario. This year, **Two Forks in Port Stanley** achieved **Feast On certification**, recognizing their commitment to using Ontario-grown ingredients and supporting local suppliers. This achievement reinforces Elgin's growing reputation for authentic, locally sourced culinary experiences.

SUPPORTING LOCAL BUSINESSES THROUGH #SHOPELGIN

In addition to summer and fall initiatives, Elgin County Tourism is preparing the **Shop Elgin holiday campaign**. This program encourages residents and visitors to shop locally during the holiday season, highlighting unique gifts, artisan products, and local services across all municipalities.

The campaign provides a platform to celebrate and promote businesses throughout the County, helping to drive holiday spending and showcase the variety of local offerings to both residents and visitors.

SUPPORTING BUSINESS GROWTH AND EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT

Elgin County Tourism continued its work supporting local tourism businesses in developing authentic visitor experiences. Two local businesses, **Misty Glen Creamery** and **Evelyn's Sausage Kitchen**, participated in the **Idea to Experience: Experience Development Course** offered through Ontario's Southwest.

This seven-week program helped participants design market-ready visitor experiences, creating new opportunities to attract guests and diversify the region's tourism offerings. Supporting innovation and entrepreneurship remains a key focus for the department as tourism continues to evolve.



STRENGTHENING COLLABORATION AND INDUSTRY LEARNING



Elgin County continues to participate in tourism networks and learning opportunities that benefit the region as a whole. Staff and local businesses will attend the **Southern Ontario Tourism Conference** in March 2026 to connect with peers, learn best practices, and share insights. These opportunities help strengthen the regional tourism economy and encourage collaboration between partners.

Municipal councils can help support these efforts by sharing information about the conference with tourism-related businesses in their communities that may benefit from attending.

STAYING CONNECTED WITH LOCAL INSIGHT

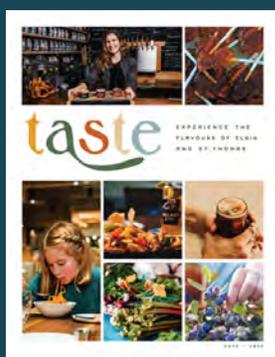
Elgin County Tourism values the strong partnerships it has with municipal staff and councils across the County. Local insights are an important part of tourism development. If your municipality is aware of new tourism-related businesses, attractions, or projects, please connect with the tourism team. This helps ensure that new operators are supported and included in regional marketing and visitor promotion efforts.

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2026

Planning is now underway for the **2026 Elgin County Visitor's Guide** and **Taste Guide**, which highlight experiences and businesses across all municipalities. Both guides continue to be key marketing tools for promoting Elgin County.

Due to strong demand, additional copies of the 2025 editions were printed and distributed through the Port Stanley Visitor Centre, local businesses, and regional events.

The 2026 editions will be shared at next year's consumer shows including the **2026 National Women's Show** and the **2026 London Wine and Food Show**, helping to attract more visitors to the County. Municipalities are encouraged to share event dates and new tourism-related developments for possible inclusion in future guides.



If you have a major event planned for 2026, please send your dates to tourism@elgin.ca for possible inclusion in the Visitor's Guide.

Haven't seen this year's guides yet?

Check them out here:

- [Visitor's Guide](#)
- [Taste Guide](#)

MEET THE TEAM - CONTACT US FOR SUPPORT



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About the Project

Elgin County is updating “Elgincntives”, our county-wide Community Improvement Plan (CIP). First introduced in 2015, this Plan supports community improvement projects and economic development across the County’s seven local municipalities by offering financial incentives that encourage business investment, property improvements, downtown revitalization, and the redevelopment of vacant or underused sites.

Following a background review completed earlier in 2025, the County is now in the early stages of preparing draft updates to the Plan to reflect new community priorities, legislative changes, and shifts in economic conditions. The update will help ensure that the CIP remains effective and relevant for for the next ten years.

What is a Community Improvement Plan (CIP)?

A CIP is a planning and economic development tool that helps municipalities guide and encourage investment, development, and revitalization in key areas of the community. CIPs typically provide a catalogue of financial incentive programs specially tailored to encourage property or building owners to undertake improvement projects that are aligned with the vision of the plan, such as enhancing main streets, improving public spaces, promoting redevelopment, or encouraging housing options.

Recommendations Brief

Before we start updating the CIP, we need to make sure we’re going in the right direction with changes being considered. To help identify and prioritize key changes and updates for the Plan, a Recommendations Brief has been prepared. This document presents a series of recommendations to help the County test ideas and gather feedback on specific topics before updating the document.

Key topics covered in the Recommendations Brief include:

- Updating the CIPs vision and expanding on the goals and objectives guiding the plan’s implementation and review of funding applications
- Streamlining and updating the grant catalogue, reducing the number of programs from 12 to 8 while introducing new incentives to address housing and sustainability.
- Updating funding structures, including considerations for higher grant maximums and simplified application processes to improve clarity and participation.



- Introducing municipal leadership initiatives, such as streetscape strategies, a land inventory analysis, and climate resiliency investments to be led by the County and local municipal partners.
- Enhancing administration and accessibility, through clearer branding, improved online tools, and easier access to information.

How to Get Involved and Provide Feedback

We're interested in hearing your thoughts on the recommendations being considered – are we on the mark? Is there anything else we need to consider? **Use your smartphone camera to scan the QR code** on the right or visit engageelgin.ca/elgincenives to learn more about the project and access the Recommendations Brief.

We'd love to hear your thoughts. There will be a short questionnaire on the Recommendations Brief, found on the project page at the QR code.



Scan me!

If you have any questions or would like more information on the project, please contact:

Carolyn Krahn

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Recommendations Brief Questionnaire

Elgin County is seeking feedback on the Elgincentives Community Improvement Plan (CIP) Recommendations Brief, which outlines proposed directions for updating and modernizing the County's CIP. The purpose of this questionnaire is to gather input from municipal partners, businesses, members of the development community, and the public on the draft recommendations.

Your feedback will help refine the recommendations being considered for the update.

Please review the Recommendations Brief and share your thoughts on the following three areas.

0% answered



1. Vision, Goals, & Objectives

Does the updated vision and set of goals and objectives reflect the right priorities for Elgin County over the next ten years? What, if anything, do you feel should be added, refined, or emphasized to better capture the County's future direction for community improvement? Read about the Vision, Goals & Objectives on p. 6 of the [Recommendations Brief](#).

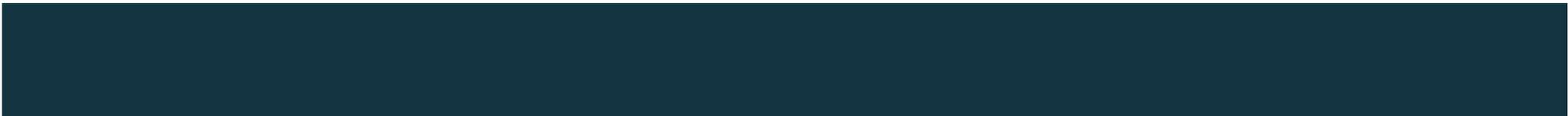
2. Financial Incentives (Programs & Themes)

Do the proposed financial incentive programs align with the types of investment and improvement projects that should be supported through Elgincentives? Are there specific project types, grant structures, or funding levels that you believe should be adjusted or added? Read about the financial incentive programs on p. 11 of the [Recommendations Brief](#).

3. **Municipal Leadership Initiatives**

What are your thoughts on the Municipal Leadership initiatives being considered? How can the County and Local Municipal Partners best demonstrate leadership through public projects and partnerships that complement private investment? Read about the Municipal Leadership initiatives on p. 21 of the [Recommendations Brief](#).

4. Any Other Comments you'd like to share?

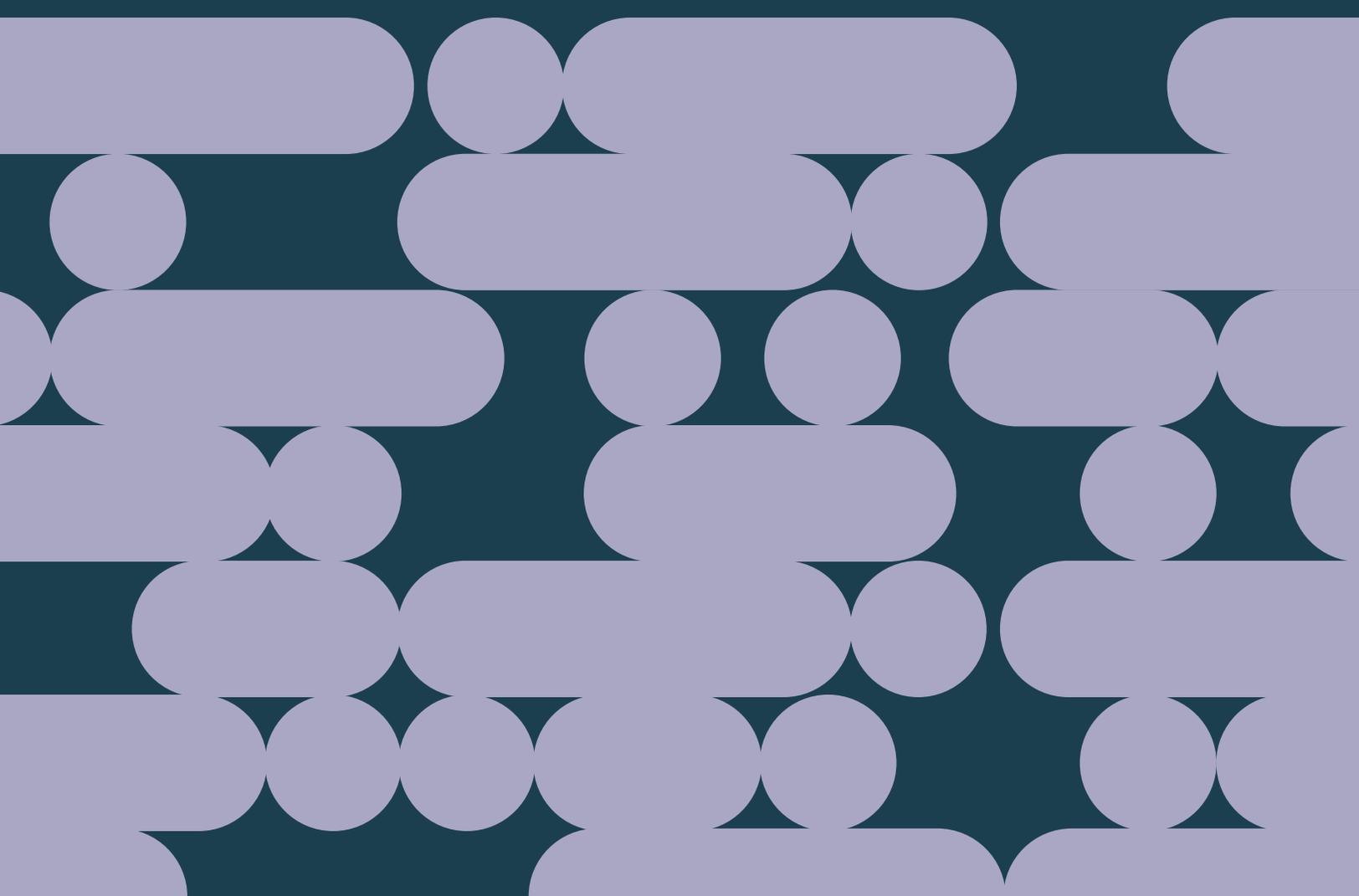


Elgin County

Elgincentives Community Improvement Plan

Recommendations Brief

Draft.V2 | October 2025



Design

Strategy

Community Planning

Urbanism

Elgin County
**Elgincentives Community
Improvement Plan**
Recommendations Brief



October 2025

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Prepared for: The County of Elgin
Prepared by: Re:Public Urbanism

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1.0 | Introduction & Purpose

Elgin County is undertaking a comprehensive review and update of its county-wide Community Improvement Plan (CIP), 'Elgincentives'. This initiative, originally launched in 2015, is designed to support economic development across the County's seven constituent municipalities by offering a range of financial incentives aimed at stimulating business investment, encouraging property improvements, downtown revitalization, fostering job creation, and promoting the redevelopment of underutilized or vacant properties.

Following the completion of the background review of the existing Elgincentives CIP in May 2025, County Council directed that an updated CIP be prepared to reflect and address the many changes and challenges that have arisen since its adoption 10 years ago. As the County continues to grow and evolve, balancing agricultural heritage, tourism appeal, and a diversifying economy, an updated CIP is an important opportunity to ensure that community improvement financial incentives and programming align with current priorities, emerging opportunities, and the long-term vision of the County and its local municipalities.

This Recommendations Brief is intended to identify specific actions to be considered as part of the Elgincentives update, helping to test ideas and build consensus among the County and Local Municipal Partners prior to initiating any draft updates. To this end, the recommendations in this document will seek to address the following:

- **Modernization & Policy Alignment:** Ensuring that the CIP reflects current planning frameworks, economic development strategies, and County-wide policy goals, while integrating relevant changes in provincial planning direction and best practices since the CIP was last developed.
- **Administration in a Two-Tier System:** Recognizing the importance of coordination between the County and its local municipalities, a CIP must carefully consider how financial incentives and other CIP programming can be scaled or tailored across differing local contexts: urban, rural, waterfront, and agricultural, while maintaining consistency and fairness.

- **Balanced Incentive Toolbox:** The updated CIP will provide a refreshed suite of financial incentive programs and other programming that are practical, targeted, and capable of addressing priority issues such as downtown revitalization, housing renewal, adaptive reuse, tourism infrastructure, and rural business development.
- **Implementation Readiness:** The final CIP must be a user-friendly, technically sound, accessible, and professionally produced CIP that not only meets legislative requirements, but is structured for easy administration, measurable outcomes, and future adaptability.

As a next step, this brief will be presented to County Council, each local council, as well as the broader community for input and validation, prior to finalizing the direction for any updates to Elgincentives.

1.1 Background Review Summary

A comprehensive review of Elgincentives was undertaken in late 2024 and 2025, comprising a diagnostic analysis of the existing CIP and an assessment of the County's needs with respect to community improvement planning in the future. This exercise was undertaken as a precursor to the update and provides a strong foundation for the recommendations being considered.

The background review confirmed that Elgincentives has played an important role in fostering economic development, property enhancement, and business investment across Elgin County. Over the last decade, 287 grants

1.0 | Introduction & Purpose

totaling more than \$1.56 million have been approved under Elgincentives, supporting an estimated \$9.44 million private investment in community improvement projects across the County. Some of the most popular programs over the last ten years included:

- Building Improvement/Restoration / 149 grants totaling ~\$773,000
- Façade Improvement / 93 grants totaling ~\$333,000
- Signage Improvement / 89 grants totaling ~\$160,000
- Property Improvement / 61 grants totaling ~\$153,000
- Building Conversion & Expansion / 15 grants totaling ~\$76,000

While the CIP remains a valuable tool for driving investment, the review confirmed that some modifications are needed to ensure it continues to meet the needs of the County and its local municipalities. More specifically, with input from stakeholder feedback, comparative analysis, and an analysis of program data, the review identified the following key conclusions:

- Incentive programming should broaden scope of improvement projects to address key priorities such as affordable housing and agritourism and rural economic development
- funding amounts need to be reviewed and updated to reflect 2025 costs
- the CIP should be updated to be more accessible to staff and applicants
- a document refresh and update will help to breathe new life into the program

For more information on the background review and findings summarized above, the full report can be viewed [here](#).

1.2 Consultation and Engagement Summary

A concurrent engagement program was conducted during the 2024/2025 background review, highlighting strong overall support for the Elgincentives Community Improvement Plan (CIP), while identifying clear opportunities for improvement. Across a community workshop, one-on-one interviews with local municipal partners, and a broader online public survey, participants emphasized the need for increased program flexibility, including more adaptable application periods, funding levels, and eligibility criteria to better serve the diverse needs of Elgin County's communities. There was consistent feedback calling for a simplified application and approval process to reduce barriers for applicants—particularly small businesses and entrepreneurs—and to improve administrative efficiency. Enhanced communication and marketing efforts were also identified as critical to raising awareness of the program, its eligibility requirements, and its benefits.

Feedback across all engagement activities emphasized the importance of strategic focus areas, with strong interest in affordable housing, public space improvements, agritourism, sustainability initiatives, and accessibility enhancements. Calls for higher and more impactful grant amounts were widespread, along with suggestions to expand eligible project types to include a broader range of community-based initiatives. Finally, participants highlighted the value of collaboration between the County, local municipalities, community organizations, and private developers, recommending that these partnerships be leveraged to refine funding priorities and maximize the program's reach and long-term impact.

The feedback gathered through the consultation programme has been referenced alongside the analytical findings from the background review to help shape the recommendations in this document. A full consultation summary is contained in the background review document [here](#).

2.0 | Community Improvement Vision

2.1 Community Improvement Vision

The Elgincincentives CIP was originally developed to align community improvement tools with the County’s economic goals and priorities. To this end, the CIP recognizes the importance of the creative rural economy and aims to support private sector development in the following key areas:

- Downtowns/main street areas;
- The agricultural areas;
- The ports/lakeshore areas;
- Other key tourist and outdoor recreational areas; and
- Employment areas

One of the ultimate goals with Elgincincentives is to ensure community improvement planning is undertaken consistently and effectively across the County – this is why the County has taken the lead in developing and administering the CIP. To provide for a consistent community improvement vision while allowing for flexible local implementation, the CIP was developed as a template for each local municipality to then adopt and implement. This template established the following vision for community improvement in Elgin County in 2015:

“Through the Elgincincentives CIP, Elgin County will provide leadership in community improvement planning by offering incentives to eligible owners and tenants of lands and buildings in key sectors/areas of economic activity, County-wide.

Over the next 10 years, the Elgincincentives CIP will advance the County’s economic goals and priorities; assist with improvement to the built and social environment; and support diversification of the local economic base.”

Ten years later, this vision for a collaborative leadership approach to community improvement is still very relevant; however, there may be some opportunities to refine it to better scope the vision statement to address/respond to:



prioritizing more affordable and attainable housing options;



support for agri-tourism, rural economic development and diversification



climate change adaptation and sustainability



priorities identified in the upcoming Five-Year Economic Development and Tourism Strategy.

Key Recommendations

Maintain the vision as-is, but elaborate on the County’s goals for improvements to economic, social, and natural environments through the CIPs themselves. It will be important to review and ensure the Vision of the CIP is aligned with the Five-Year Economic Development and Tourism Strategy (currently under development).

2.0 | Community Improvement Vision

2.2 Existing Goals and Objectives

Supporting the vision, the Elgincentives CIP is guided by a set of goals that define the intended benefits of the program. Supporting objectives outline the tangible action and results that contribute to these goals. Together, the goals and objectives provide a framework to guide projects funded through the CIP and help track their alignment with the program’s priorities. This approach also helps with implementation and key performance indicator (KPI) monitoring.

The existing goals and objectives of the CIP program continue to align well with current priorities. At the same time, emerging priorities in the County such as affordable housing, rural economic development, and development sustainability offer an opportunity to expand the CIP’s focus. As shown in the recommendations below, the County should seek to maintain the existing goal-objective framework but expanding to address the emerging priorities.



Figure 1: Existing Goals

Objectives

Goal A: To stimulate economic growth and diversification

- To encourage the expansion of the agribusiness sector through new and expanded value-added/agricultural related enterprises.
- To encourage the expansion of business activity for existing commercial businesses in the downtown areas/mainstreets of settlement areas.
- To encourage the expansion of business activity within the manufacturing/ industrial sector.
- To increase the number of business start-ups.
- To increase tourism.
- To increase the number of tourist accommodation establishments.
- To increase the number of creative economy businesses.
- To increase employment opportunities for local residents.

Goal B: To improve the quality of place for residents and visitors

- To improve the appearance of major entry points and tourism corridors.
- To improve the appearance and utilization of the lakeshore.
- To improve the appearance of the (respective municipality) and foster civic pride through improvements to private properties.

Goal C: To improve the stability and sustainability of the tax base

- To reduce the number of vacant commercial building spaces in the downtown areas/mainstreets of settlement areas.
- To reduce the number of vacant industrial/employment building spaces throughout the Municipality.
- To encourage the infill and redevelopment of vacant employment lands throughout the Municipality.
- To increase the assessment base of properties in the downtown areas/ mainstreets of settlement areas, and the agricultural area.

2.0 | Community Improvement Vision

2.3 Updates to Goals and Objectives

To address the emerging priorities mentioned before, it is recommended that the three existing CIP goals be expanded from three to five, in no particular order of importance, as follows:

- Create more Affordable/Attainable Housing Options
- Revitalize Sense of Place in Core Areas and Main Streets
- Diversify Agri-Tourism & Rural Economic Opportunities
- Improve Building Efficiency & Sustainability of Development
- Stimulate Economic Growth & Vitality

These goals largely maintain the focus of the former three CIP goals, but expand the focus to better reflect today’s priorities. This will also necessitate a reorganization of the CIPs objectives to reflect the new goals.

The following section outlines the recommended five goals and their associated objectives to be considered in the updated CIP. For each objective, a key performance indicator (KPI) has been identified to help “ground” each objective, suggesting a measure for which progress/program effectiveness can be measured. These will be refined as part of the draft CIP.

Create more Affordable/Attainable Housing Options



The County does not currently offer any grants targeting housing options/ diversification (aside from upper-storey mixed-use projects). In the midst of the housing crisis, the CIP can be used as a powerful tool to support the creation of much needed affordable/diverse housing options like purpose built rentals, additional dwelling units, and community housing.

Objectives	Key Performance Indicators
To increase the supply of affordable housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Number of affordable (at or below CMHC average) new units supported
To protect the existing supply of affordable housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Number of affordable (at or below CMHC average) retained
To support diverse housing options such as purpose-built rentals, additional dwelling units, and community housing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Number of new purpose-built rentals, additional dwelling units, and community housing units.

2.0 | Community Improvement Vision

Revitalize Sense of Place in Core Areas and Main Streets



It will be important to continue support for the County's core areas through grants targeting main streets. This goal is largely carried over from the existing plan.

Objectives	Key Performance Indicators
To improve the appearance of core areas and main streets and foster civic pride through improvements to private properties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrate improvements visually through 'before' and 'after' documentation
To improve the appearance of major sites such as entry points, tourism corridors, and the lakeshore	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrate improvements visually through 'before' and 'after' documentation

Diversify Agri-Tourism the Rural Economic Opportunities



Based on the feedback received during the background review, it is recommended that a specific rural-focused goal be implemented to reflect this sector as a priority for CIP support.

Objectives	Key Performance Indicators
To encourage the expansion of the agribusiness sector through new and expanded value-added/agricultural related enterprises.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of agribusiness operations applying for assistance, and being approved

Improve Building Efficiency & Sustainability of Development



The CIP offers some limited programming targeting building efficiency and sustainability, this is an important consideration in the overall improvement of the County given we're in a Climate Crisis. This goal should also address the natural environment/features as well.

Objectives	Key Performance Indicators
To promote sustainable building practices, energy efficiency improvements, and site designs that integrate renewable energy and green infrastructure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of buildings with new sustainable building practices

2.0 | Community Improvement Vision

Stimulate Economic Growth and Vitality



This goal is largely carried over from the existing plan, and seeks to tackle more employment/industry-focused outcomes.

Objectives	Key Performance Indicators
To encourage the expansion of business activity for existing commercial businesses in the downtown areas/mainstreets of settlement areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of existing businesses supported in expansion activity
To encourage the expansion of business activity within the manufacturing/industrial sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of new or existing industrial businesses supported through CIP
To increase the number of business start-ups and creative economy businesses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of business start-ups • Sustainability of business after 2nd year of operation • Number of creative economy businesses
To increase tourism and tourist accommodation establishments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of yearly tourists • Number of tourists accommodation establishments/ rooms
To increase employment opportunities for local residents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of jobs through business survey
To reduce the number of vacant employment lands, commercial buildings and industrial/ employment building spaces.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change in vacancy and available inventory
To increase the assessment base of properties in the downtown areas/mainstreets of settlement areas, and the agricultural area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change in assessment base each year

3.0 | CIP Programs

3.1 Existing Financial Incentives Catalogue

The Elgincentives CIP offers twelve financial incentive programs that support private investment in property improvements, business development, and community enhancement. While the programs target a wide range of projects, many share similar scopes, particularly those related to building improvements, remediation, beautification, and tourism, and the grants themselves overlap. The CIP has successfully supported private investment in the County, but streamlining these programs presents an opportunity to improve clarity.

The following table outlines the existing incentive programs and their funding structures.

Table 3: Elgincentives Financial Incentives Summary

Program Name	Purpose	Funding Structure
Tax Increment Equivalent Grant	Encourages significant investment in property redevelopment and rehabilitation by providing a rebate on the municipal tax increase.	100% tax rebate decreasing by 10% annually for five years (non-priority); 100% rebate for five years (priority/brownfield); special cases may receive full rebate.
Façade, Signage, and Property Improvement Grant	Supports exterior building improvements, signage updates, and enhancements to private property.	50% of eligible costs: Up to \$10,000 (priority), \$5,000 (non-priority) for façades; Up to \$7,500/\$2,500 for signage; Up to \$5,000/\$2,500 for property improvements.
Building Improvement/Restoration Grant	Assists property owners in maintaining and upgrading existing buildings to ensure long-term viability.	50% of eligible costs: Up to \$10,000 (priority) and \$8,000 (non-priority).
Building Conversion/Expansion Grant	Supports small-scale conversion of underutilized space into commercial, mixed-use, or other eligible uses.	\$15 per square foot of converted or expanded space: Up to \$10,000 (priority) and \$8,000 (non-priority).
Energy Efficiency Retrofit Grant	Encourages energy-efficient upgrades to commercial, industrial, or mixed-use properties.	25% of retrofit costs: Up to \$10,000 (priority) and \$7,500 (non-priority); professional fees max 15% of grant.
Outdoor Art Grant	Supports the installation of permanent outdoor artwork or sculptures to enhance public spaces.	50% of eligible costs: Up to \$3,000 (must be in a priority area).
Feasibility, Design, and Study Grant	Assists in the preparation of feasibility studies, architectural designs, and business development plans.	50% of eligible costs: Up to \$2,000.
Application and Permit Fees Grant	Reduces the cost of planning applications or building permits associated with improvement projects.	50% of municipal/county fees: Up to \$2,000.

3.0 | CIP Programs

Program Name	Purpose	Funding Structure
Multiple Property Owners Supplemental Grant	Provides an additional financial incentive when multiple property owners coordinate improvement projects.	15% of total approved grant value: Up to \$1,000 per owner/tenant.
Savour Elgin/ Elgin Arts Trail Supplemental Grant	Encourages business development aligned with the Savour Elgin and Elgin Arts Trail programs.	15% of total approved grant value: Up to \$2,000 per owner/tenant.
Environmental Study Grant	Assists property owners in conducting environmental studies to determine contamination levels and potential remediation costs.	50% of eligible costs: Up to \$8,000.
Brownfield Tax Assistance Program	Provides financial support for the remediation and redevelopment of brownfield (contaminated) sites by offering tax relief.	Municipal/county taxes cancelled for up to three years; provincial education taxes may be cancelled (subject to approval).

Where some of the programs are presented more “thematically” (e.g., “Façade, Signage, Property Improvement”), it is easy to infer what improvement projects they intend to target or support. On the other hand, some programs lack this defining theme or focus, often because they are smaller in scope and intended to be offered as a component of a broader incentive (e.g., Application and Permit Fees, Multiple Property Owners). To help better clarify the role and focus of each incentive program, it is suggested to consolidate these “smaller” programs under the umbrella of the main programs. This would also help create a simpler grant structure that reduces overlap, streamlines administration, and makes the program easier for applicants to navigate.

Similar to the above, another key opportunity revolves around merging similar programs. For example, the Building Improvement/Restoration and Building Conversion/Expansion grants, which share similar objectives, could be combined by including conversion in the program scope and adjusting grant amounts accordingly. A similar modified structure is proposed for the Environmental Study and Brownfield Tax Assistance Programs.

Finally, in addition to the above takeaways, in order to best reflect the updated vision, goals, and objectives for Elgincentives, it will be important to consider new incentive programs focused on housing provision and building efficiency/development sustainability. Recommendations for each of these are provided below as part of the new Elgincentives Grant Catalogue.

3.0 | CIP Programs

3.2 Recommended Updates to Financial Incentives Catalogue

Incentives are recommended to be organized according to one of several “Programs”, which are based on an improvement theme or focus area (e.g., Façade Improvement). An updated incentive program catalogue has been prepared to best reflect the updated vision, goals, and objectives being contemplated for Elgincentives. Under this approach, a total of eight (8) incentive programs are recommended for the Plan as follows (existing and new programs are noted):

- **Façade, Signage, and Property Improvement Program (existing)**
- **Building Improvement, Conversion, & Expansion Program (existing-combined)**
- **Brownfield Program (existing)**
- **Building Efficiency & Development Sustainability Program (new)**
- **Industrial Stimulus Program (new)**
- **Affordable Housing Program (new)**
- **Additional Dwelling Unit Program (new)**
- **Agri-Tourism & Rural Diversification Program (new-combined)**

Each program will outline its own eligibility requirements and intended scope, as well as the type of grants available, which would generally fall under one of the following:

- **Materials & Labour**
- **Professional Reports/Studies**
- **Building & Planning Fees**
- **Tax Increment Grant (TIG)**
- **Tax Cancellation**

It should be noted that the above grant types (excluding materials and labour) are standalone incentive programs under the current CIP. These are recommended to be maintained in the new CIP, but reorganized into each distinct incentive program. This change will help to clarify the distinct role/intended objective of each incentive program, while providing for consistency in the types of grants that are available for it. For each grant type listed above, matching percentages and dollar amount maximums will be listed, similar to the existing CIP.

Through the approach above, the overall number of incentive programs has been reduced from twelve to eight, helping to simplify administration/information. The following section provides a summary of the recommended new program catalogue, including a summary of each program, the grant types recommended, and some considerations specific to it.

3.0 | CIP Programs



Facade, Signage, & Property Improvement Program

Purpose

This program helps property and business owners make improvements that enhance the look, feel, and functionality of their buildings and properties. It supports projects that improve curb appeal, promote accessibility, create welcoming spaces, and contribute to the overall vibrancy of Elgin County communities. Eligible improvements include building façades, signage, landscaping, and permanent outdoor art that enriches the public realm.

Grant Types

- Materials & Labour – For construction, restoration, or installation work.
- Professional Reports/Studies – For design concepts, architectural drawings, or technical assessments.
- Building & Planning Fees – To offset municipal fees related to eligible projects.

Example Projects

- Restoring historic brickwork or installing new windows and doors to improve a main street storefront.
- Adding attractive signage for a local business, including side or rear signs visible from public areas.
- Upgrading parking areas at an estate winery to include bicycle and motorcycle parking.
- Installing landscaping and screening to buffer a manufacturing site from neighbouring residences.
- Creating pedestrian walkways or outdoor gathering spaces with seating and lighting.
- Adding murals, sculptures, or other permanent art pieces that celebrate local culture and heritage.
- Redesigning entrances to improve accessibility for people of all abilities.



Building Improvement, Conversion, & Expansion Program

Purpose

This program provides financial support for the improvement, conversion, and expansion of existing buildings. It is designed to help property and business owners undertake projects that may otherwise be cost-prohibitive, such as bringing buildings up to current Building Code standards, improving aesthetic quality, and enhancing safety and usability.

The program also supports the small-scale conversion of vacant or underutilized spaces into new commercial, mixed-use, industrial, or other eligible uses. Additionally, it encourages the expansion of existing businesses to support growth and increase non-residential assessment. This program is not intended to cover routine lifecycle replacements, but rather projects that create a meaningful improvement over current conditions.

Grant Types

- Materials & Labour – For physical construction, restoration, or installation work.
- Professional Reports/Studies – For design drawings, engineering reports, or feasibility studies.
- Building & Planning Fees – To help offset municipal permit and application fees.
- Tax Increment Grant (Major Projects Only) – For large-scale redevelopment or expansion projects that generate significant assessment growth.

3.0 | CIP Programs

Example Projects

- Structural repairs or accessibility upgrades to a downtown restaurant to improve safety and barrier-free access.
- Interior restoration and design of vacant upper-floor units to create new rental housing or office space.
- Installation of modern HVAC systems in a manufacturing facility to improve productivity and working conditions.
- Repurposing vacant upper-floor commercial space into new residential units in a main street building.
- Converting outdated ground-floor retail space into a new restaurant or commercial use.
- Expanding a commercial or industrial building to add office or production space for a growing business.



Brownfield Program

Purpose

This program provides financial support to encourage the remediation and redevelopment of contaminated brownfield sites. It combines funding for environmental studies with tax relief to help offset the costs of site assessment, clean-up, and risk management. By reducing financial barriers, the program aims to improve environmental conditions, promote redevelopment, and return underutilized lands to productive use.

Grant Types

- Professional Reports/Studies – For advanced environmental studies and assessments.
- Tax Cancellation – Temporary cancellation of municipal property taxes during remediation and redevelopment phases.

Example Projects

- Conducting environmental studies to determine the extent of site contamination and guide remediation plans.
- Excavating and replacing contaminated soil to prepare a site for redevelopment.
- Installing environmental or engineering controls, such as groundwater barriers or vapour management systems.
- Monitoring and maintaining remediation systems to ensure long-term site safety.
- Providing tax relief to support multi-year clean-up and redevelopment efforts, such as the revitalization of a former industrial property.



Building Efficiency & Development Sustainability Program

Purpose

This program supports projects that improve the climate resiliency and environmental performance of existing buildings and properties. It encourages upgrades that enhance energy efficiency, incorporate sustainable design features, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. By supporting improvements such as high-performance building envelopes, efficient mechanical systems, and renewable energy installations, the program helps reduce operating costs, improve comfort and durability, and extend the life of buildings. It is designed to complement existing federal and provincial funding programs, encouraging applicants to leverage multiple funding sources where possible.

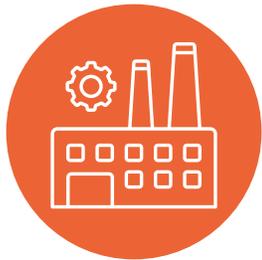
3.0 | CIP Programs

Grant Types

- Materials & Labour – For installation or construction of eligible upgrades.
- Professional Reports/Studies – For design work, energy audits, or related studies.
- Building & Planning Fees – To offset applicable municipal fees for eligible projects.

Example Projects

- Adding a green or blue roof to a commercial or multi-unit residential building.
- Installing ENERGY STAR–certified windows, doors, or high-efficiency HVAC systems.
- Introducing renewable energy systems such as rooftop solar panels or geothermal heating.
- Incorporating energy-efficient lighting controls, such as timers or motion sensors.
- Completing major building retrofits that meet third-party energy performance standards, such as LEED certification.



Industrial Stimulus Program

Purpose

This program is designed to encourage private investment in major projects that establish or significantly expand employment-generating industries within designated employment areas. By providing financial incentives, the program aims to attract new employers, support the growth of existing businesses, create local jobs, and diversify the economy. Funding is targeted toward exceptional projects that closely align with the County’s economic development goals and priorities. A

program-specific scoring system is recommended to be used to evaluate applications, ensuring that the highest-impact projects receive the greatest level of support.

Grant Types

- Building & Planning Fees – Relief from municipal fees associated with development and approvals.
- 10-Year Annual Tax Increment Grant – Financial support based on the increase in property tax assessment resulting from eligible projects.

Example Projects

- The development of a new advanced manufacturing facility that brings a significant number of skilled jobs to the community.
- The expansion of an existing industrial operation to increase production capacity and create new employment opportunities.
- Redevelopment of underutilized employment lands to accommodate a new employer in a targeted sector identified by the County.

3.0 | CIP Programs



Affordable Rental Housing Program

Purpose

This program supports the creation of new affordable, purpose-built rental housing to diversify the local housing supply and expand housing options for residents. By offering financial incentives such as municipal fee relief and tax increment grants, the program helps offset the reduced revenues experienced by housing providers when offering units at affordable rental rates. The program encourages collaboration between the development community and local or regional housing service providers, such as the City of St. Thomas Housing and Homelessness Services, to align projects with community housing needs and priorities.

Grant Types

- Building & Planning Fees – Relief from municipal fees related to development approvals and permits.
- Professional Reports/Studies – Funding for technical studies or design work required for eligible projects.
- 25-Year Annual Tax Increment Grant – Determined based on the level of affordability achieved, measured as a percentage of the current Average Market Rent (AMR) for each unit type, as defined by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC).

Example Projects

- Construction of a new multi-unit residential building where at least 25% of units are rented at or below AMR for a minimum of 25 years.
- Redevelopment of an underutilized property to add affordable rental units as part of a mixed-use development.
- Conversion of an existing building into rental housing that meets long-term affordability requirements.



Additional Dwelling Unit Program

Purpose

This program provides financial assistance to support the creation of new Additional Dwelling Units (ADUs) and the legalization of existing units that were not previously established in compliance with zoning, building, or fire code standards. By encouraging the development of safe, functional, and appropriately located ADUs, the program helps expand housing choice and promotes gentle intensification within designated areas of the community.

Grant Types

- Materials & Labour – For construction or renovation costs related to eligible projects.
- Building & Planning Fees – Relief from municipal fees associated with approvals and permits.
- Professional Reports/Studies – Funding for technical studies or design work required to support compliance.

Example Projects

- Construction of a new ADU, such as a basement apartment, detached garden suite, or in-house secondary unit, in accordance with the Township's Official Plan and Zoning By-law.
- Permanent upgrades or renovations to bring an existing ADU into compliance with building, fire, zoning, or planning regulations.
- Converting an underutilized space, like a garage or upper floor, into a safe and legal rental unit.

3.0 | CIP Programs



Agri-Tourism & Rural Diversification Program

Purpose

This program supports the establishment, expansion, or enhancement of non-traditional, agriculture-related ventures that strengthen Elgin County's rural economy and tourism offerings. It is intended to encourage value-added agricultural businesses, agri-tourism attractions, on-farm diversified uses, and rural recreation enterprises that showcase the area's agricultural heritage while driving economic diversification.

The program does not support general production-based agricultural operations such as livestock, dairy, cash cropping, or conventional horticulture. Instead, it focuses on projects that add new visitor experiences, diversify farm income, and enhance rural community vitality.

Grant Types

- Materials & Labour – For construction, installation, or upgrades associated with eligible projects.
- Building & Planning Fees – Relief from municipal fees for required permits and approvals.
- Professional Reports/Studies – Funding for feasibility studies, business plans, or technical design work.

Example Projects

All projects would be expected to align with OMAFRA's permitted use guidelines and conform with County and Local Municipal Partner Official Plans for uses in the agricultural area. Some example projects could include:

- Construction of a new building or addition for an agri-tourism or on-farm diversified use, such as a farm café, educational facility, or event space.
- Renovations to existing buildings to meet fire, safety, and accessibility standards.
- Façade upgrades, including masonry restoration, window and door replacements, or new exterior lighting.
- Installation of new or improved signage to enhance visitor wayfinding and site branding.
- Permanent landscaping or site improvements to improve access, circulation, and visitor experience, such as pathways, seating areas, or activity spaces.

3.0 | CIP Programs

3.3 Grant Maximums

Elgincentives currently limits the total combined value of grants for a property/project to \$15,000. When looking at the vision, goals, and objectives established for the CIP (including those recommended as part of the update), as well as the intended outcomes being sought through the incentive programs (both existing and proposed), this maximum grant amount is insufficient. This is further evident when considering how economic shifts over the last decade have resulted in increased material, labour, and professional costs associated with development projects.

Grant amounts and maximums should be appropriately tailored to the scope of the incentive program, as well as the scale of the project being undertaken. As part of the grant restructuring being proposed under the updated CIP, it is recommended that any combined/overall maximum grant per property/project be defined according to the maximums established within each program and potential eligible combinations when dealing with multiple programs for one project.

To this end, it is recommended that a maximum percentage and/or dollar amount be established for each grant type and program to control maximum grant amount, with an overall combined limit of 50% of project costs.

This change would allow the County and local municipalities to provide more substantial support to improvement projects, which may encourage increased participation, a more competitive application process, potentially leading to more projects that have the greatest impact on the County's communities.

4.0 | CIP Project Area & Grant Area

4.1 Project & Grant Area Recommendations

A Community Improvement Project Area (CIPA) must be identified before a Community Improvement Plan (CIP) can be prepared and implemented in a municipality. The entirety of each local municipality was identified as a CIPA as part of the development of Elgincentives in 2015, which has allowed a great degree of flexibility for plan implementation and scope of programming. It is recommended that the updated Plan maintain this approach and level of flexibility.

Notwithstanding the above, it is still important to appropriately scope incentive programming to specific areas/types of development in the County. The current CIP accomplishes this through the identification of CIP “sub-areas”, which are used to determine project eligibility based on geographic location. The current sub areas include:

- **Settlement Areas** - Any properties located within a settlement area designated by the COP
- **Agricultural Areas** - Any property located outside of a settlement area, generally designated Agricultural Area in the COP
- **Designated Employment Lands** - Any property identified as Employment Lands in the COP or an appropriate equivalent in a LMP Official Plan

This approach is effective in balancing the flexibility of designating the entire municipality/County as a CIPA, while ensuring incentives are targeting appropriate locations in the community. As such, this approach is recommended to be continued in the updated CIP, with some minor revisions as described below.

4.2 Recommended New Sub-Area: Main Street/Corridor

It is recommended to maintain the existing sub-areas as-is, while adding a new fourth sub-area “Main Street/Corridor” to better focus some of the grant programming. This new sub-area would ideally include any property located within or proximal (i.e. within a block) to an established main street or downtown core in a settlement area, generally based on main street/corridor classifications in the COP or LMP. Eligibility criteria will further complement the above and help to scope eligible projects based on property designation, proposed use, etc., depending on the program.



Downtown Rodney, West Elgin

5.0 | Municipal Leadership Initiatives

Municipal leadership initiatives are those public-facing improvement projects or mandates typically led by council, intended to complement private investment in community improvement. These can include streetscape strategies, collaborative relationships, or other capital investments on public lands, spaces, and/or properties. These initiatives are important in allowing the municipality to lead by example when it comes to community improvement, fostering a truly collaborative approach between the public private sectors.

Elgin incentives does not currently incorporate Municipal Leadership Initiatives. Introducing such initiatives would demonstrate municipal leadership in improvement planning, strengthen alignment with the CIP's goals, and help maximize the impact of private improvements. These initiatives can vary in focus and scope and are not prescriptive; rather, they provide a flexible set of options that the municipality can adapt, refine, and implement based on local needs, available resources, and community priorities. At a basic level, identification of these initiatives within a formal plan such as a CIP can potentially benefit future grant applications to upper levels of government as well as help scope and plan for allocation of municipal resources to pursue them.

The following County-level municipal leadership initiatives are recommended for consideration to be included in the updated CIP. Specific roles, responsibilities, and implementation timelines for each would be discussed as part of the CIP update.

5.1 County-Wide Streetscaping and Public Space Improvement Strategy

Main streets play a vital role in shaping the identity and vibrancy of communities. Creating welcoming, attractive, and pedestrian-friendly streetscapes can help support local business development, draw visitors and residents. Guided by the principles of complete streets, improvements to main streets, downtowns, and core areas can activate and beautify these spaces, complementing private investment supported through the CIP. Enhancements may include permanent design modifications, such as widened sidewalks or safer crossing, to improve walkability, as well as temporary measures like planters, or street furniture that add vibrancy and flexibility.

Similarly, municipal investments in public spaces and important gateways could support the goals of revitalising sense of place and the beautification of major sites such as tourism corridors and entry sites. Investments in wayfinding and branding could also complement the incentives aimed at attracting tourists and encouraging agri-businesses.



5.0 | Municipal Leadership Initiatives

5.2 County and Local Municipal Partner Land Inventory Analysis

To advance the CIP’s affordable housing and economic development objectives, the County could take a leadership role in preparing a comprehensive land inventory analysis alongside its Local Municipal Partners (LMPs). This would generally entail a cataloguing of publicly-owned lands and subsequent evaluation of each parcel’s current use, strategic value, and potential to be used to support priorities such as housing, economic development, and/or conservation.

Section 28(6) of the Planning Act specifically authorizes municipalities to:

- a) construct, repair, rehabilitate or improve buildings on land acquired or held by it in the community improvement project area in conformity with the community improvement plan, and sell, lease or otherwise dispose of any such buildings and the land appurtenant thereto;*
- (b) sell, lease or otherwise dispose of any land acquired or held by it in the community improvement project area to any person or governmental authority for use in conformity with the community improvement plan*

By undertaking an inventory, the County and LMPs could have a better understanding of which parcels could potentially be used to accomplish the goals and objectives of the CIP through sale, donation, and/or redevelopment through an improvement-focused partnership.



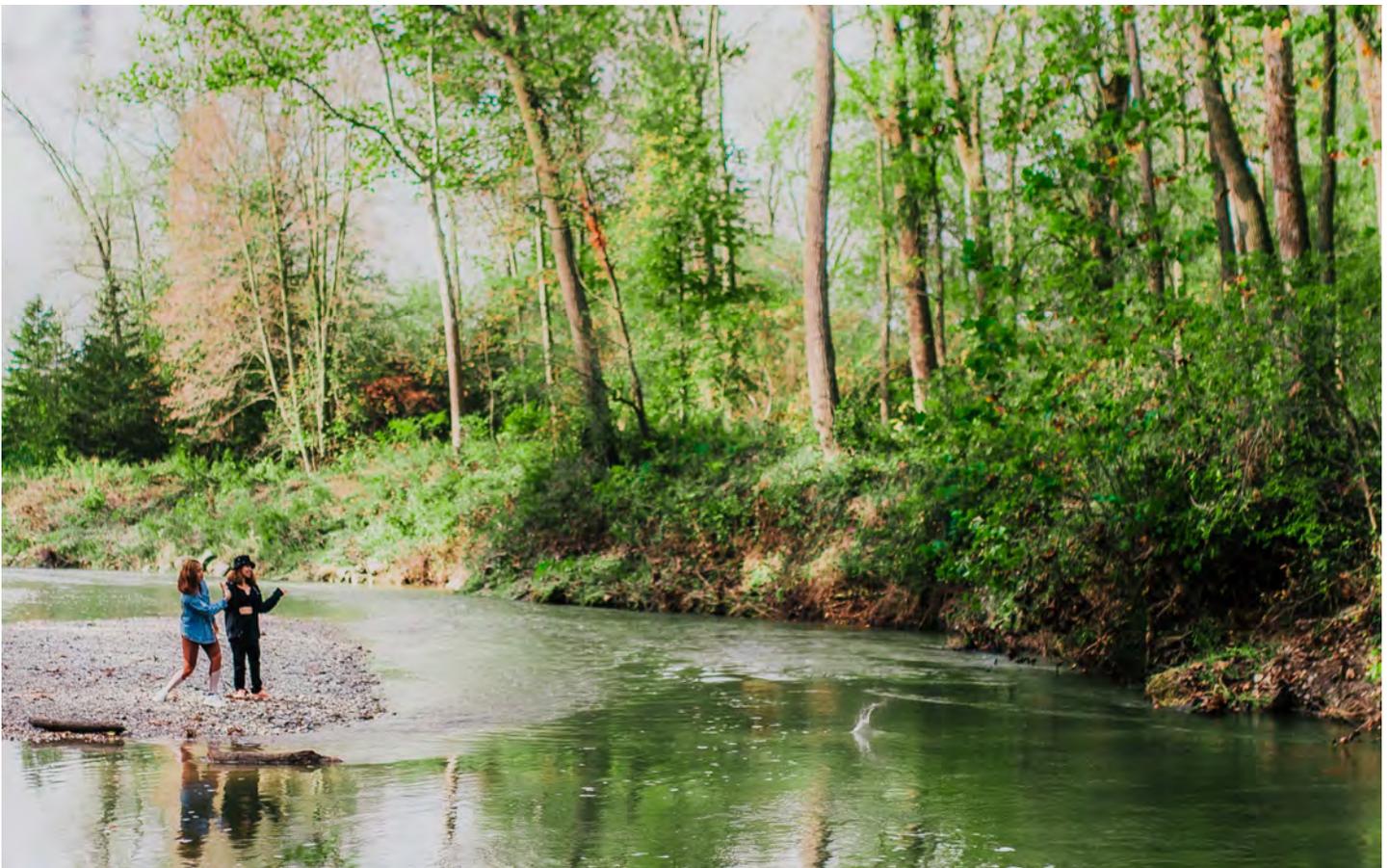
5.0 | Municipal Leadership Initiatives

5.3 Climate Change Adaptability & Sustainability Improvements to Public Buildings, Facilities, and Lands

As climate change continues to impact communities, municipalities play a key role in enhancing local resiliency and sustainability. While existing and proposed financial incentives encourage private development to incorporate sustainable building practices and green infrastructure, municipal leadership is equally important. By investing in the adaptation and improvement of publicly-owned buildings, facilities, and lands, the County can demonstrate a commitment to climate action while creating healthier, more livable communities.

Potential improvements could include the integration of green infrastructure, such as permeable paving, rain gardens, or stormwater management systems, into public spaces to mitigate flooding and heat impacts. Expanding greenspaces, planting trees, and increasing vegetation in core areas and public gathering spaces would not only support climate resiliency but also contribute to beautification, biodiversity, and improved community well-being.

These investments can also complement other CIP objectives by enhancing the attractiveness of main streets and public spaces, supporting tourism and economic vitality, and reducing long-term municipal operating costs through energy efficiency and natural infrastructure solutions.



6.0 | General Implementation Recommendations

6.1 Localized, but Consistent Branding

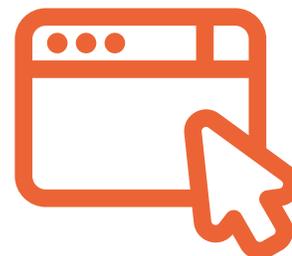
A refreshed and consistent branding approach is recommended across all LMPs to strengthen recognition, simplify messaging, and generate renewed interest in the CIP programs. A unified style will create a clear connection between the LMPs and Elgincentives. Within a unified style, each individual LMP can still maintain its own visual identity, for example by adapting the CIP template to an artistic rendition of LMP boundaries. This would provide a recognizable, place-specific symbol while remaining visually connected to the overall Elgincentives CIP family. This cohesive visual identity will support marketing, outreach, and long-term recognition at the local and County levels.

6.2 Improving Access and Clarity of CIP Information

The Elgincentives Background Review and consultation process revealed that there are barriers to accessing CIP information and application materials. Currently, documents and resources can be difficult to access, creating challenges for potential applicants. Streamlining access to information will make the CIP more user-friendly, encourage participation, and simplify administration.

It is recommended that as part of the updated CIP, a more streamlined route be created to access information through a clearer, dedicated CIP web page at the County and Municipal levels. This page should include, at the County and LMP levels:

- A summary of the Elgincentives' purpose, goals and objectives;
- An overview of the available programs with brief descriptions;
- Links to detailed program information and each application forms;
- A direct link to the full CIP document.
- FAQ page for applicants



It should be noted that Elgin County does maintain a dedicated CIP webpage, but consistency in how this information is accessed, particularly via LMP websites differs from one webpage to the next.

6.3 Web Tools for applicants

Enhancing online tools can improve the accessibility and efficiency of the CIP application process. Clearer guidance at the outset will make the process more user-friendly for applicants while reducing the number of ineligible or incomplete submissions for administrators. It is recommended that:

- A digital pre-screening tool be developed and linked directly from the CIP webpage to help applicants self-assess project eligibility before booking a consultation.
- A web-based application system be implemented with required fields and validation checks to ensure complete submissions

7.0 | Conclusion and Next Steps

Over the last ten years, Elgincentives has participated in driving over \$9 million in private investment through 287 grants. Seeking to build on this success, the County and LMPs are looking at refreshed vision, goals, and objectives, including new priorities such as affordable housing, agri-tourism and rural diversification, and building efficiency/sustainability.

The purpose of this document is to introduce and spur discussion on the proposed directions for the Elgincentives CIP update. Feedback gathered during this step will be crucial in refining these recommendations and preparing an updated CIP that effectively reflects the County and Local Municipal Partners' shared vision for community improvement over the next ten years.

Key Recommendations to be refined through further engagement/input:

- **Updating the CIPs vision** and expanding on the goals and objectives guiding the plan's implementation and review of funding applications
- **Streamlining and updating the grant catalogue**, reducing the number of programs from twelve to eight while introducing new incentives to address housing and sustainability needs.
- **Updating funding structures**, including higher grant maximums and simplified application processes to improve clarity and participation
- **Introducing municipal leadership initiatives**, such as streetscape strategies, a land inventory analysis, and climate sustainability investments to complement private improvements.
- **Enhancing administration and accessibility**, through clearer branding, improved online tools, and easier access to information for both applicants and administrators

Over the next phase of the update, these recommendations will be presented to County Council, each local council, and the broader community for feedback and validation. This collaborative engagement process will help confirm priorities, build consensus, and ensure the updated CIP is responsive to the diverse needs of Elgin County while maintaining a consistent framework across municipalities. Feedback gathered through this round of engagement will be used to refine the recommendations and prepare a draft updated Elgincentives CIP. Once drafted, the updated CIP will be further reviewed and circulated via the statutory public meeting process

It is the intent that the updated Elgincentives CIP serves as a renewed blueprint for public and private investment in Elgin County, helping to foster vibrant downtowns, support economic diversification, strengthen community resiliency, and reinforce Elgin County's position as a place where residents, businesses, and visitors can thrive.



