FORTFRANCES

Town of Fort Frances

Community Improvement Plan Update

FINAL Community Improvement Plan
Background and Recommendations Report

July 2026

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July 2026

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LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We respect and truly acknowledge that we are on Treaty Three territory, the traditional land of the Anishinaabe and the Métis Nation. We give gratitude and honour to the Ancestors, Elders, and all Anishinaabe and Métis People for sharing their resources and knowledge.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Town of Fort Frances is undertaking an update to its existing Community Improvement Plan (CIP), which was adopted by Council on February 10, 2003, and last modified December 22, 2008. The Town's existing CIP promotes economic development and revitalization through a series of Financial Incentive Programs available for private property owners throughout the Community Improvement Project Area, which is comprised of three (3) distinct Project Areas that collectively encompass the entire municipality. The CIP Update is an opportunity to review the existing CIP and refine the suite of available programs to align with current business and development needs and priorities in the community. Updates will identify opportunities to support community revitalization, business attraction, downtown revitalization, housing, and placemaking, among other priorities, to support continued economic growth and vibrancy in Fort Frances.

1.1 CIP BACKGROUND REPORT OVERVIEW

The CIP Background and Recommendations Report (the Report) outlines the preliminary options and recommendations for updates to the existing Town of Fort Frances CIP, and is structured as follows:

- Section 2.0 outlines the regulatory planning and policy framework applicable in the Town of Fort Frances for the preparation of the CIP, including a review of the Town's existing CIP;
- Section 3.0 includes a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis related to community improvements in the Town;
- Section 4.0 examines opportunities and presents preliminary recommendations for updates to the CIP Financial Incentive Programs, informed by a scan of other comparable Ontario municipal CIPs; and
- Section 5.0 provides a summary of next steps in the CIP Update project process.

1.2 WHAT IS A CIP?

A CIP is a planning and economic development tool under Section 28 of the Ontario Planning Act that municipalities use to promote community revitalization and serve as a catalyst for achieving economic, community planning, and urban development goals. Through CIPs, municipalities can implement various policies and financial incentive

programs to encourage private investment and support strategic initiatives for revitalizing targeted areas. A CIP assesses local needs, priorities, and circumstances within designated Community Improvement Project Areas, which can range in scale from large regions to specific streets or properties that are typically in transition and require maintenance, rehabilitation, development, or redevelopment.

CIPs can provide several benefits for a community, such as:

- Stimulating private sector investment in targeted areas through grants and loans provided by the municipality;
- Promoting revitalization and placemaking to attract tourism, business investment, and economic development opportunities;
- Supporting the development of affordable housing;
- Promoting the cleanup and redevelopment of "brownfield sites", which are former industrial or commercial properties that are typically vacant or underutilized, and have some form of environmental contamination that must be remediated prior to redevelopment taking place;
- Enhancing streetscapes, landscaping, building façades, signage, and accessibility;
- Supporting energy efficiency improvements; and
- Encouraging the effective use of community infrastructure.

In general, CIPs are not intended to support "greenfield" development in previously undeveloped areas, but rather to improve conditions in existing urban areas. Section 106 of the Municipal Act prohibits municipalities from directly or indirectly assisting industrial or commercial enterprises. However, municipalities are exempt from these restrictions if they are exercising their authority under Section 28 of the Planning Act, to promote community improvement initiatives. Section 28 of the Planning Act enables municipalities to:

- Designate by by-law a specific property, area, or entire community covered by an Official Plan as a Community Improvement Project Area;
- Acquire, hold, clear, grade, or otherwise prepare land for community improvement;
- Construct, repair, rehabilitate, or improve buildings on municipal land;
- Sell, lease or otherwise dispose of municipal land;

- Provide grants or loans to owners, tenants and their assignees within the community improvement area to pay the whole or any part of identified eligible costs; and
- Provide property tax assistance for environmental remediation purposes.

A municipality's Official Plan must contain policies to enable the preparation of a CIP, and the municipality also requires a by-law designating a Community Improvement Project Area. Section 9.3 of the Town of Fort Frances Official Plan (Approved by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing October 30, 2025) contains community improvement policies, as further discussed in **Section 2.7** of this Report.

Once an area has been designated as a Community Improvement Project Area by by-law, a variety of financial assistance programs may be implemented. These programs may include grants or loans to property owners and tenants to help cover the costs of improvements to eligible properties. CIPs commonly enable grants to assist private property owners with the costs of improving their properties, such as façade, signage, and landscaping improvements. CIPs may also be used to promote the remediation and redevelopment of brownfield sites, as well as the revitalization of commercial, industrial, and even rural areas. Further, a CIP may include grants to support development and redevelopment projects that increase a property's assessed value (tax increment equivalent grants), rebates on planning and application fees, and direct grants or loans to help finance building and property improvement projects.

1.3 WHY IS THE TOWN UPDATING ITS EXISTING CIP?

The Town of Fort Frances is updating its existing CIP to better reflect evolving economic development and community improvement needs and priorities, and to align the CIP with the Town's Official Plan and other municipal policies and strategies. The CIP review will specifically consider opportunities to:

- Attract new businesses and industries to the Town;
- Incentivize small businesses and start-ups in the downtown;
- Support the remediation and redevelopment of brownfield sites; and
- Support increased housing development.

The extent and boundary of the Community Improvement Project Area (CIPA), which currently encompasses the entire municipality, will also be reviewed.

1.3.1 CIP UPDATE PROJECT PROCESS

The CIP Update project process was initiated in March 2026 and is being undertaken in the following three (3) stages, as illustrated in **Figure 1-1**:

- Stage 1: Project Initiation and Pre-consultation;
- Stage 2: Background Review and Community Engagement; and
- Stage 3: Draft and Final Community Improvement Plan.

Figure 1-1: Community Improvement Plan Update Project Process

Key project deliverables, including the CIP Background and Recommendations Report and Draft and Final Community Improvement Plan will be reviewed by Town staff, including the Chief Building Official / Municipal Planner, Economic Development Officer, and representatives from other Town departments, including Public Works and Treasury, prior to being made available for public review. The updated CIP is expected to be brought forward for consideration of Council Adoption in September 2026.

Community engagement is essential to the success of the CIP throughout its development and implementation. The Town of Fort Frances will actively engage Indigenous communities, local business owners, residents, interest groups, and agencies during the CIP Update project process to ensure that the Plan reflects community needs and priorities.

Key opportunities for community engagement over the course of the CIP Update project process, and the results of engagement activities completed to date are summarized in **Section 3.0**.

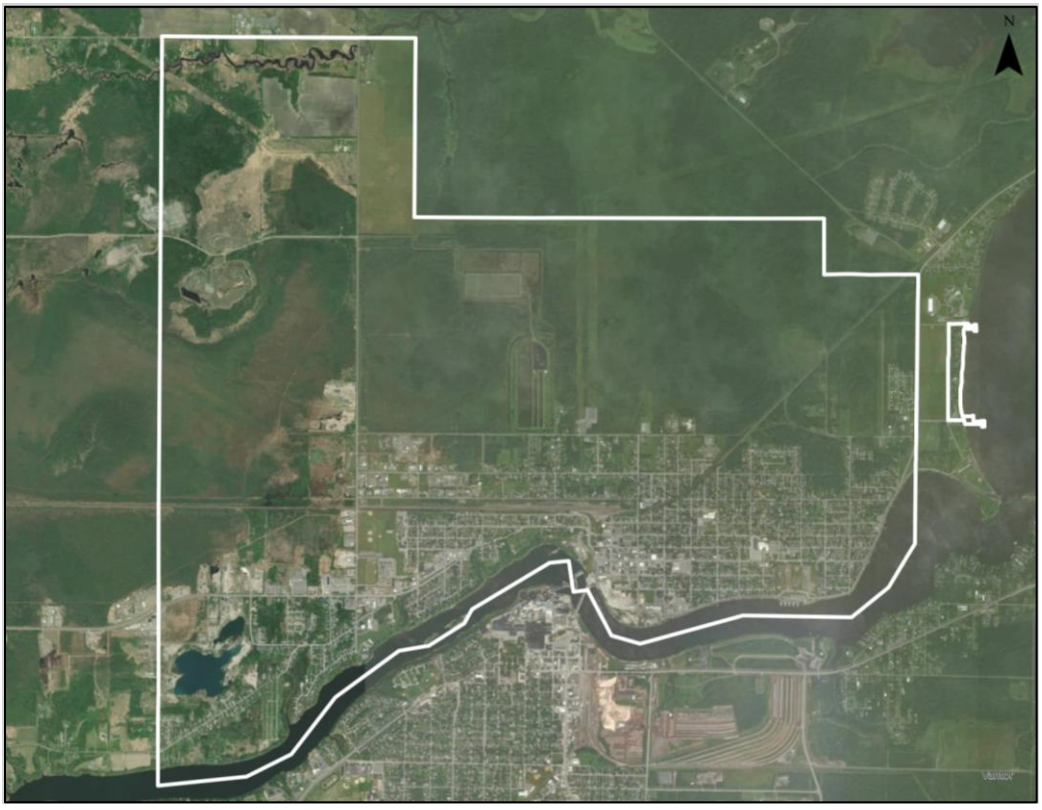
During the CIP Update project process, local Indigenous communities will also be engaged to determine their preferred level of involvement and will receive all key project reports and public engagement notices.

1.4 COMMUNITY PROFILE

1.4.1 BACKGROUND AND LOCATION

The Town of Fort Frances is a single-tier municipality located in Northwestern Ontario on the Rainy River, directly across from International Falls, Minnesota, USA. The Town has a land area of approximately 25.55 km^2 (Statistics Canada, 2021), and is situated on the unceded and traditional land and territory of the Anishinaabe and the Métis Nation, on Treaty Three territory. A key map of the Town of Fort Frances municipal boundary is shown in **Figure 1-2**.

Figure 1-2: Town of Fort Frances Municipal Boundary Key Map (Source: Vantor)



The Town has direct access to Ontario Highways 11 and 71, which provide vital connections east to Thunder Bay, north to Kenora, and south to the United States via the Fort Frances-International Falls International Bridge.

1.4.2 POPULATION

As reported in the last Statistics Canada Census, the population of the Town of Fort Frances was 7,466 in 2021. This represents a decrease of approximately 3.5% from the 2016 population of 7,739. In 2021, the population of the broader Rainy River Census division, which includes Fort Frances, was 19,437, a decrease of 3.3% from 20,110 in 2016.

Like many smaller communities across Northern Ontario, the Town of Fort Frances is experiencing population stagnation or decline. The Town continues to experience an aging population relative to the national average, with the 2021 Census reporting the following age distribution: 14.9% of residents aged 0-14 years; 61.5% of residents aged 15 to 64 years; and 23.4% aged 65 years and over. Furthermore, 8.6% of the population is in the 60 to 64 years age group.

1.4.3 HOUSING

The 2021 Census documented 3,450 occupied housing units within the Town, of which:

- 77.2% (2,665) were single-detached dwellings;
- 5.6% (195) were attached dwellings (i.e., semi-detached, row house, or apartment in a duplex);
- 15.2% (525) were apartments in a building that has fewer than five (5) storeys; and
- 0.7% (25) were movable dwellings (Note: Town staff have confirmed there are more than 25 mobile homes within the Town, but there may be a lack of Census data to confirm the accurate number).

There were no apartments in buildings with five (5) or more storeys in the Town.

Of the 3,445 total private households, 2,515 were privately-owned and 930 were rented. Suitable housing was reported by 3,365 households, while 80 households reported their housing was unsuitable according to the National Occupancy Standard (NOS), meaning that the dwelling does not have enough bedrooms for the size and

composition of the household. The need for major repairs was reported by 335 households.

A total of three-hundred and ninety (390) households (approximately 11% of the Town's total households) spend 30% or more of their income on shelter, exceeding the affordable housing threshold set by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and reflected in the Provincial Planning Statement, 2024. While this indicates that some households experience housing affordability pressures, this proportion is below the provincial average.

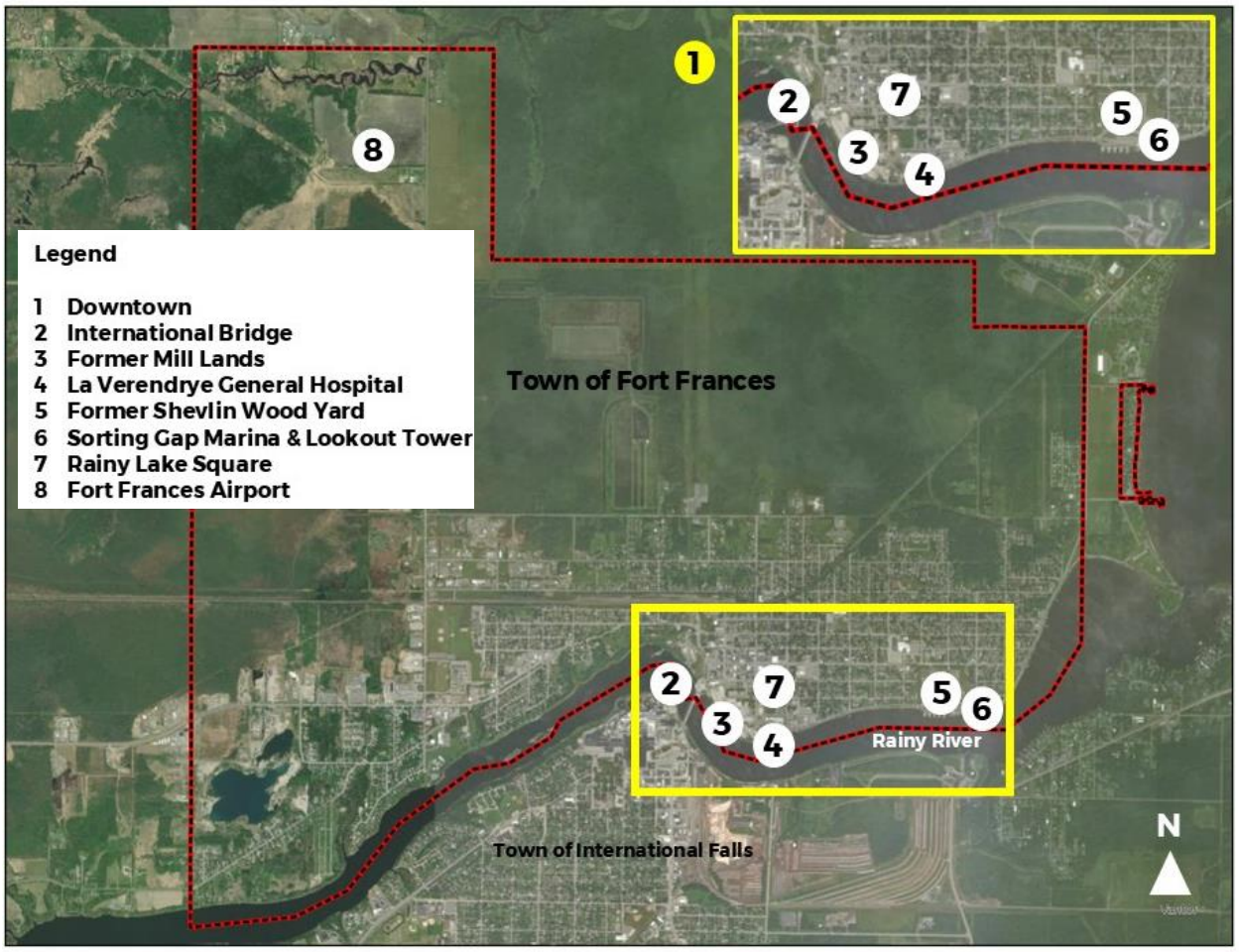
Recent Residential Development Activity

Between January 2021 and early 2026, the Town issued 17 multi-unit residential building permits, representing a total construction investment of nearly $700,000. Most of these permits (12 of 17) pertained to alterations and renovations of existing properties, while one (1) permit was issued for new construction. Significant projects included the development of four (4) accessory dwelling units at 1150 Portage Avenue North (~$120,000), representing residential intensification activity within the established built up area of the Town.

1.4.4 Land Use

Fort Frances is the principal commercial and service centre for the Rainy River District and surrounding Northwestern Ontario communities. The Town's commercial activity is concentrated in the Downtown core along Scott Street, which runs east-west from Church Street to the eastern commercial areas approaching Portage Avenue. This area is located along the Rainy River at the international gateway between Canada and the United States. Larger-format commercial and highway-oriented businesses are situated along King's Highway 11 and near the Fort Frances–International Falls border crossing. Neighbourhood-scale commercial uses are distributed throughout established residential areas, and are generally comprised of home occupations or mixed-use developments.

Figure 1-3: Major Land Uses in the Town of Fort Frances (Source: Vantor)



Residential development in Fort Frances is primarily low-rise, defined by established neighbourhoods and a compact urban structure. The community features a well-connected grid and modified-grid street network. The majority of the Town's development is focused within the southern part of the municipal boundary. Future residential growth is anticipated to be accommodated through infill, intensification, redevelopment of underutilized lands, and limited greenfield expansion where municipal services exist. Major institutional and community-serving facilities include La Verendrye General Hospital, operated by Riverside Health Care, and educational campuses operated by Seven Generations Education Institute and the Rainy River District School Board.

Fort Frances offers a comprehensive range of recreational opportunities, sports facilities, parks, waterfront amenities, and public open spaces for residents and visitors.

Significant open space assets are concentrated along the Rainy River waterfront, notably Point Park owned by Agency One (**Figure 1-4**), which features trails, gathering spaces, and views of the international waterway, as well as a nearby marina and boating facilities. Key community amenities include the Fort Frances Memorial Sports Centre, Public Library Technology Centre, and Museum and Cultural Centre. The Museum preserves and highlights the Town's Indigenous heritage, fur trade, forestry, and settlement history, reinforcing Fort Frances' role as both a regional service centre and a cultural destination.

Figure 1-4: Point Park, owned by Agency One (Source: Eh Canada Marketing Group)

Employment and industrial activity in Fort Frances is primarily focused in the northwestern and western parts of the Town (i.e., Industrial Park). Former industrial lands associated with the former Fort Frances Pulp and Paper Mill and Shevlin Wood Yard are south of the downtown. These areas support a diverse range of industrial, warehousing, transportation, construction, and service commercial operations that contribute to the economic vitality of both Fort Frances and the broader Rainy River District.

Opportunities for employment growth and redevelopment include the utilization of underused industrial lands, adaptive reuse of former industrial properties, and development of strategic sites with access to municipal services and regional transportation networks. These factors collectively position Fort Frances as a key economic centre in Northwestern Ontario.

Fort Frances further benefits from regional air transportation via the Fort Frances Municipal Airport, situated approximately five (5) kilometres southeast of the Downtown core. The Airport supports general aviation, emergency response, business travel, and regional connectivity in the area.

1.4.5 ECONOMY

In the 2021 Census, the Town reported a labour force of 6,185 people, a labour participation rate of 59.7%, an employment rate of 54.8%, and an unemployment rate of 8.1%. According to 2017 North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) data from the 2021 Census, the employment sectors with the greatest proportion of the labour force include:

- Health care and social assistance (800 jobs);
- Retail trade (480 jobs);
- Educational Services (395 jobs);
- Public administration (285 jobs).
- Accommodation and food services (270 jobs);
- Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction (245 jobs); and
- Construction (215 jobs).

Other sectors with less than 200 jobs include:

- Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services (150 jobs);
- Transportation and warehousing (135 jobs);
- Manufacturing (120 jobs);
- Professional, scientific and technical services (100 jobs);
- Finance and insurance (100 jobs);
- Agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting (80 jobs);

- Information and cultural industries (40 jobs);
- Wholesale (35 jobs);
- Utilities (30 jobs);
- Real estate, rental, and leasing (25 jobs); and
- Arts, entertainment, and recreation (25 jobs).

Recent Commercial and Industrial Development Activity

An analysis of Town commercial building permit data from January 2021 to April 2026 demonstrates significant growth in commercial investment in Fort Frances, with total project values exceeding $12.1 million across 58 permits. The majority of this investment occurred in 2024 and 2025, which together account for 62% ($7.5 million) of the total. Approximately 81% (47 out of 58) of commercial building permits were issued for renovations, alterations, and upgrades, rather than new construction. Key investment corridors include Highway 11 ($4.6 million) and Scott Street ($3.3 million), both of which have seen notable retail and restaurant expansion in recent years, such as the opening of Dollarama and A&W. Additional development included the conversion of commercial space into 10 new hotel suites at 700 Stewart Street (~$250,000).

Since January 2021, the Town has processed seven (7) industrial building permits totaling approximately $2,133,000 in project value, reflecting ongoing investment in local industrial business and infrastructure. These permits cover a range of projects, including new construction, building additions, and renovations; notable projects include a $1.2 million brewery and tap-room retrofit and a $450,000 firehall renovation. Currently, six (6) of the seven (7) permits remain in "Issued" status, indicating active development that is enhancing the community's industrial capacity and employment opportunities.

Key industries in Fort Frances include forestry and forest products, transportation and logistics, tourism, and health and community services. Regional economic drivers include the Rainy River Mine, located northwest of Fort Frances, which supports employment and infrastructure investment across Northwestern Ontario. Additionally, cross-border trade and goods movement through the Fort Frances–International Falls gateway and the regional transportation network are significant contributors to the local economy.

1.4.6 CULTURAL HERITAGE

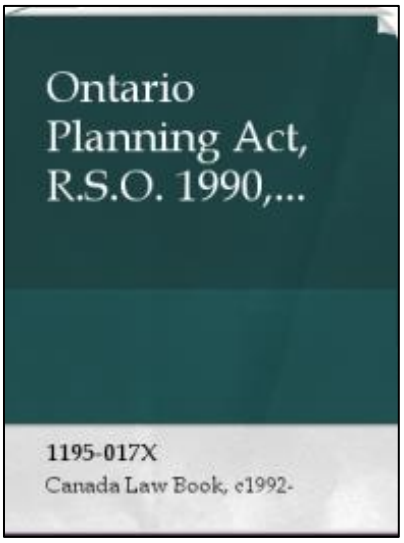
The Town of Fort Frances does not currently maintain a Municipal Heritage Register identifying buildings of historical or cultural significance. However, two (2) buildings in the Town are designated under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act and are listed on the Ontario Heritage Register, as follows:

- Fort Frances Museum and Cultural Centre, 259 Scott Street – By-law 17/00 passed on February 28, 2000; and
- Fort Frances Railway Station, 140 Fourth Street West – By-law 14-01 passed on March 12, 2001(**Figure 1-5**).

Figure 1-5: Fort Frances Railway Station (Source: Parks Canada)

2.0 PLANNING CONTEXT AND POLICY REVIEW

2.1 PLANNING ACT



The Planning Act outlines the tools, methods, and procedures municipalities can use to plan for and regulate land and building use in Ontario. The Act also outlines the powers that municipalities can exercise through a CIP.

"Community improvement" is defined in Section 28 (1) of the Planning Act as:

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

Affordable housing is addressed in Section 28 (1.1) of the Planning Act, which states:

> "Without limiting the generality of the definition of "community improvement" in subsection (1), for greater certainty, it includes the provision of affordable housing."

Section 28 of the Planning Act allows municipalities whose Official Plans contain provisions regarding community improvement to prepare and adopt CIPs for designated Community Improvement Project Areas (Section 28 (2)).

A Community Improvement Project Area is the area within which the CIP applies, and is designated through a by-law passed by Council (Section 28 (3)), based on the following criteria:

> "…age, dilapidation, overcrowding, faulty arrangement, unsuitability of buildings or for any other environmental, social or community economic development reasons." (Section 28 (1))

The broad nature of this definition provides municipalities with the flexibility to address specific local community improvement issues, such as downtown revitalization, as well as issues that are more generally present in a municipality at large, such as the presence of brownfields.

Where a by-law designating a Community Improvement Project Area has been passed, Council may adopt a plan (i.e., CIP) in accordance with certain subsections of Section 17 of the Planning Act. Section 17 outlines the statutory process for adopting the document, including the provision of at least one (1) public meeting, which must be held no earlier than 20 days after publishing the notice of the public meeting and making the CIP publicly available for review.

Under Section 17(15) of the Planning Act, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the upper-tier municipality, if applicable, must be consulted during the preparation of a CIP. When a CIP comes into effect, however, approval by the Minister is no longer required for the municipality to acquire land, provided the Plan provides for the acquisition and improvement of land (Section 28(3)). **The CIP may be used by the municipality to:**

> "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 land appurtenant thereto." (Section 28(6a)), and/or:
>
> "sell, lease or otherwise dispose of any land acquired or held by it in the community improvement project area any person or governmental authority for use in conformity with the community improvement plan." (Section 28 (6b))

This enables the municipality to directly intervene to make improvements to property or to build new buildings and facilities, as needed.

Under Section 28(7), **the municipality may issue grants and loans to property owners and tenants to help pay for eligible costs**. "Eligible costs" is broadly defined to include:

> "costs related to environmental site assessment, environmental remediation, development, redevelopment, construction and reconstruction of lands and buildings for rehabilitation purposes or for the provision of energy efficient uses, buildings, structures, works, improvements or facilities" (Section 28(7.1)).

Under no circumstance can the amount of a grant or loan made in respect of particular lands and buildings exceed the eligible cost of the CIP with respect to those lands and buildings (Section 28(7.3)).

The Planning Act also contains provisions that allow the municipality to enter into agreements concerning any grants or loans it may issue, and permit the municipality to register the agreement against the title of the land (Section 28(11)).

Once Council is satisfied that a CIP has been carried out, Council may pass a by-law to dissolve the Community Improvement Project Area. Following the dissolution of the project area, any previously affected CIPs are rendered non-applicable (Section 28(13)).

In addition to Section 28, Section 69 of the Planning Act allows municipalities to reduce or waive the amount of a fee in respect of a planning application where they feel payment is unreasonable. Many CIPs offer application fee refunds as a financial incentive.

2.2 MUNICIPAL ACT

The Municipal Act prohibits municipalities from directly or indirectly assisting any manufacturing business or other industrial or commercial enterprise through the granting of bonuses (Section 106(1)). Prohibited actions include:

a) giving or lending any property of the municipality, including money;
b) guaranteeing borrowing;
c) leasing or selling any property of the municipality at below fair market value; or
d) giving a total or partial exemption from any levy, charge or fee. (Section 106(2))

Section 106(3) of the Municipal Act provides an exception to the above, allowing a municipality to exercise powers under Section 28(6), (7) or (7.2) of the Planning Act, or Section 365.1 of the Municipal Act.

By including an exception to Section 106(1), **the Municipal Act grants a municipality powers and tools for community improvement. These include tools related to the remediation and redevelopment of brownfield properties.** Brownfield properties are considered to be properties that are (or are perceived to be) contaminated as a result of a prior land use (for example, a property where a Phase II Environmental Site Assessment has been conducted and which did not meet the standards specified under Section 168.4(1) of the Environmental Protection Act). Section 365.1 of the Municipal Act enables municipalities to provide property tax assistance to eligible properties to offset all or part of the remediation costs. **The Municipal Act also grants municipalities the authority to cancel or defer the municipal portion of property taxes on eligible properties.**

It is noted that this section of the Municipal Act does not specifically address the provision of financial assistance to residential properties. Typically, CIPs are intended to focus on commercial properties, but there are examples of CIPs that provide limited funding opportunities for particular types of residential properties (e.g., to help maintain historic residential properties or create new residential units).

Municipalities may also apply to the Province to match the municipal tax rebate with the education portion of the property tax through its Brownfields Financial Tax Incentive Program (BFTIP). Under the program, the Province can cancel all or part of the education property taxes of a property for up to three (3) years. However, applicants to this program must obtain approval from the Minister of Finance, and there must be a CIP in place for the property before they may apply. It should be noted that the BFTIP application process can be complex and the turnaround time for a decision from the Province can be considerable. However, the program should be considered for inclusion in the CIP. The municipality may choose to pursue a BFTIP on behalf of a landowner in a "trial run" and, if the process is too onerous, cease to use the program.

Section 107 of the Municipal Act outlines a municipality's powers to make grants, including the power to provide a grant in the form of a loan or by guaranteeing a loan, subject to criteria outlined in Section 106. Additional powers include:

- selling or leasing land for nominal consideration, or granting land;
- providing land owned and occupied by the municipality for use by anyone, upon terms established by council; and

- selling, leasing, or disposing of any municipal property at a nominal price, or by way of a grant, to provide for the use of the property on terms established by council.

Additionally, the Municipal Act permits municipalities to provide tax relief to owners of eligible heritage properties (Section 365.2). Municipalities may pass a by-law to establish a local program that provides tax reductions or refunds to owners of eligible heritage properties. To be eligible, properties must be designated under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act, or part of a Heritage Conservation District designated under Part V of the Ontario Heritage Act, or subject to a separate heritage conservation agreement between the owner and the municipality. This type of program may be identified as a component of a municipal leadership strategy through a CIP. However, these grant programs are typically implemented and administered separately by municipalities from the CIP.

2.3 Ontario Heritage Act

The Ontario Heritage Act is relevant to the preparation of a CIP, as it may support heritage conservation through financial incentives or municipal leadership programs. Under Section 39(1) of the Ontario Heritage Act, municipalities may pass by-laws to implement separate grant or loan programs to help owners of heritage properties designated under Part IV of the Act to pay for alterations to the property, in accordance with the terms established by the by-laws.

As previously mentioned in **Section 1.4.6** of this Report, the Town of Fort Frances does not maintain a Municipal Heritage Register. There are currently two (2) buildings in Fort Frances designated under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act.

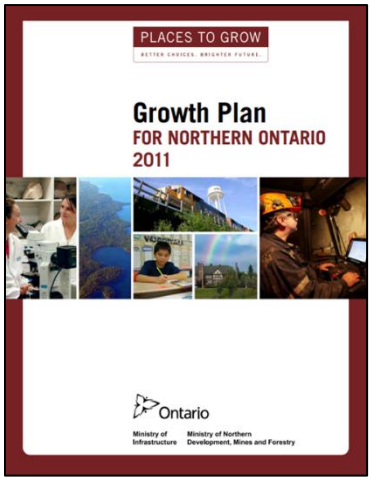
Recent changes to the Ontario Heritage Act through Bill 23, and subsequently Bill 200, provide that municipalities have until January 1, 2027 to issue a Notice of Intention to Designate (NOID) properties that were listed in a municipal heritage register as of December 31, 2022. Any properties removed because a NOID is not issued by January 1, 2027 cannot be relisted on the register for a period of five (5) years starting January 1, 2027 (i.e., not until January 1, 2032).

2.4 Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) establishes the framework for the development of province-wide, mandatory accessibility standards in all areas of

daily life. It guides building design through amendments to the Ontario Building Code, and the design of public spaces that are considered to be "new construction" or are undergoing major changes to existing features. Revitalization and redevelopment efforts supported by the CIP will need to consider AODA standards.

2.5 GROWTH PLAN FOR NORTHERN ONTARIO, 2011



The Growth Plan for Northern Ontario is a 25-year plan that came into effect in 2011. It was prepared under Ontario's Places to Grow Act (2005), which provides that the Province may identify and designate areas for the development of strategic growth plans. The Growth Plan focuses on attracting and sustaining growth in northern communities and is intended to serve as a strategic framework to guide decision-making in Northern Ontario over the next 25 years.

The Growth Plan is structured around six (6) key policy areas which contribute to the region's long-term sustainability and prosperity: Economy; People; Communities; Aboriginal Peoples; Infrastructure; and Environment.

The Growth Plan is focused on the following six (6) key guiding principles:

1. Creating a highly productive region, with a diverse, globally competitive economy that offers a range of career opportunities for all residents.
2. Developing a highly educated and skilled workforce to support an evolving knowledge-based economy and excellence in the trades.
3. Partnering with Aboriginal peoples (i.e., Indigenous peoples) to increase educational and employment opportunities.
4. Delivering a complete network of transportation, energy, communications, social and learning infrastructure to support strong, vibrant communities.
5. Demonstrating leadership in sustainable growth and environmental management.
6. Establishing innovative partnerships to maximize resources and ensure the Plan achieves its ambitious vision and is fiscally sustainable.

Several of the six (6) key policy areas contain policy direction that directly or indirectly supports community improvement initiatives. Under the Economy policy area, the

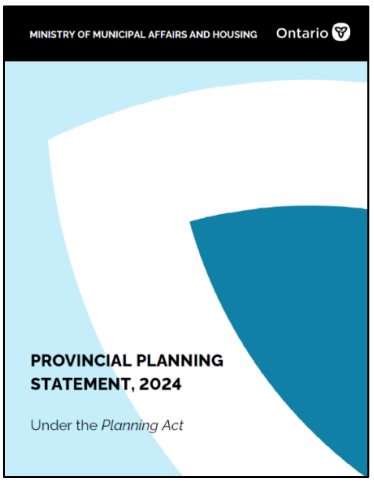
Growth Plan policies support the development of a strong, resilient, and more diversified northern economy through policies which are intended to support growth and diversity in the region's traditional resource-based industries, as well as the development of new and emerging economic sectors that have the greatest potential to result in job growth and opportunities in the North.

Under the Communities policy area, the Growth Plan policies support community planning that balances the priorities of human, economic, and environmental health. Official Plans, community economic plans, and participating in community planning efforts are identified as effective tools to ensure the future economy and long-term sustainability of communities reflect the views of citizens and businesses. Municipalities are encouraged to align their Official Plans with strategies which focus on achieving specific objectives relevant to the development of a Community Improvement Plan, such as optimized use of existing infrastructure and creating a high-quality of place.

Within the Infrastructure policy area, the Growth Plan policies promote intensification and brownfield redevelopment whenever feasible.

2.6 PROVINCIAL PLANNING STATEMENT, 2024

The Provincial Planning Statement, 2024 (PPS) came into effect on October 20, 2024, and replaced the Provincial Policy Statement, 2020. The new PPS provides a streamlined province-wide land use planning policy framework that enables more housing to be built faster in a way that protects the environment, public health and safety and manages natural resources. All land use planning decisions in the Province of Ontario shall be consistent with the policies of the PPS. Although the PPS does not explicitly reference Community Improvement Plans**, it supports revitalization in municipalities through specific policies.**



Section 2.3.1 of the PPS promotes settlement areas as the focus of growth and development. Policy 2.3.1.3 states that "Planning authorities shall support general intensification and redevelopment to support the achievement of complete communities, including by planning for a range and mix of housing options and prioritizing planning and investment in the necessary infrastructure and public service facilities."

The PPS defines "intensification" as:

> " the development of a property, site or area at a higher density than currently exists through:
> a) Redevelopment, including the reuse of brownfield sites and underutilized shopping malls and plazas;
> b) the development of vacant and/or underutilized lots within previously developed areas;
> c) infill development; and
> d) the expansion or conversion of existing buildings."

"Redevelopment" is defined as the creation of new units, uses or lots on previously developed land in existing communities, including brownfield sites.

The achievement of complete communities should be supported by accommodating an appropriate range of lands uses, housing options, and other uses to meet long-term needs; improving accessibility for people of all ages and abilities; and improving social equity and overall quality of life for people of all ages, abilities, and incomes, including equity-deserving groups (Policy 2.1.6. b).

With respect to housing, Policy 2.2.1. b) 2. of the PPS directs planning authorities, such as municipalities, to provide for an appropriate range and mix of housing options by permitting and facilitating all types of residential intensification, including the development and redevelopment of underutilized commercial and institutional sites (e.g., shopping malls and plazas) for residential use, development and introduction of new housing options within previously developed areas, and redevelopment.

The PPS also promotes the provision of affordable housing. Policy 2.2.1 a) requires that planning authorities provide an appropriate range and mix of housing options and densities to meet current and future demand by "establishing and implementing minimum targets for the provision of housing that is affordable to low and moderate income households, and coordinating land use planning and planning for housing with Service Managers to address the full range of housing options including affordable housing."

Regarding employment, **the PPS promotes economic development and competitiveness,** including by encouraging intensification of employment uses and

compatible, compact, mixed-use development to support the achievement of complete communities (Policy 2.8.1 d).

The implementation of these PPS policies can be directly supported through the inclusion of specific financial incentive programs in the Town of Fort Frances CIP.

2.7 EXISTING LOCAL MUNICIPAL PLANNING CONTEXT

Various municipal documents prepared by and for the Town of Fort Frances contain recommendations or directions that should be considered in the CIP Update. These documents provide strategic direction on land use, community development, infrastructure, and environmental management, helping to ensure that future planning decisions align with the Town's priorities and provincial policies.

A review of the Town's Strategic Plan, Official Plan, and current CIP is included in this section. An overview of other relevant municipal documents is included in **Section 2.8** of this Report.

2.7.1 TOWN OF FORT FRANCES STRATEGIC PLAN 2023-2027

The Town of Fort Frances Strategic Plan establishes a vision to guide decision-making for the 2023-2027 period, with a purpose or mission for this period is to "provide a safe, inclusive, sustainable, and welcoming community that enhances quality of life and promotes growth and prosperity for all."

The Town has also established four (4) strategic priorities, including:

1. Quality of Life;
2. Economic Growth;
3. Municipal Services & Infrastructure; and
4. Partnerships.

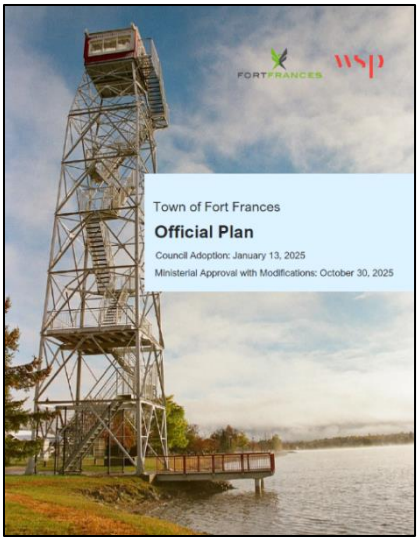
The following initiatives are most relevant to the CIP Update:

- Opportunities to enhance tourism through shared cultural and recreational activities;
- Develop waterfront attractions to draw interest from regional and cross-border tourists;
- Position the Town to attract investment;
- Consider incentive programs to attract residential, commercial, and industrial development, including implementation of the former mill site conceptual plan, CIP connection, and incentives to developers; and
- Support development of housing projects, seniors housing, and entry-level housing.

The Town's CIP Update will support the Strategy by establishing a refined suite of Financial Incentive Programs, including grants, to support economic development, tourism, and housing in Fort Frances. Further, opportunities to implement the Former Mill Site Conceptual Plan will be explored throughout the CIP review process.

2.7.2 TOWN OF FORT FRANCES OFFICIAL PLAN (2025)

The Town of Fort Frances Official Plan (OP) was adopted on January 13, 2025, and approved by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing with modifications on October 30, 2025. It provides for a range of permitted uses within the land use designations listed below, and illustrated in Schedule A-1 and A-2 to the OP:



1. Neighbourhoods;
2. Mixed Use;
3. Highway Commercial;
4. Industrial Employment;
5. Parks and Open Space;
6. Resource Development; and
7. Future Development.

The OP vision, as established in Section 2.0 Vision & Guiding Principles of the Plan, identifies Fort Frances as the "hub of the Rainy River District" and a place to live, work, and access services, reinforcing its role as the economic and service centre for the broader region. Section 2.0 of the OP emphasizes the importance of supporting existing businesses, attracting new investment, promoting tourism, and leveraging Fort Frances' strategic location as an international gateway. The Plan's guiding principles encourage the retention and expansion of employment uses, value-added industries, local entrepreneurship, and collaboration with economic development agencies and Indigenous communities. The OP also recognizes the significance of arts, culture, heritage, and recreational amenities in strengthening the local economy and enhancing the community's appeal.

Section 9.3 Community Improvement contains policies that apply to amendments to the existing 2003 CIP, or to any future CIPs developed for the Town. The policies direct that the goal of community improvement in the Town is to "reinforce the importance of the Town's downtown areas, aid in stimulating private sector redevelopment, and guide private sector development and redevelopment" (9.3.1 a)). In addition, the goal of community improvement on brownfield lands is intended to facilitate the remediation, rehabilitation, adaptive re-use, redevelopment and overall improvement of brownfield sites (9.3.1 b)).

Section 9.3.1 c) and d) specify two Community Improvement Project Areas including:

1. The Downtown Community Improvement Project Area, consisting of lands designated Mixed Use on Schedules A-1 and A-2 of the OP; and
2. The Brownfields Community Improvement Project Area, consisting of lands designated as Industrial Employment and Highway Commercial.

Section 5.2 of the OP sets out policies for the Mixed Use designation, which intends to accommodate commercial, office, institutional, entertainment, tourism, and residential uses, primarily within the Downtown and established commercial areas. This designation supports the Town's commercial and service roles, promotes compact built form, and encourages residential intensification and redevelopment within serviced areas. The policies further support pedestrian-oriented development, adaptive reuse, and the ongoing evolution of the Downtown as a commercial and community focal point.

Within the Mixed Use designation, Section 9.3.1 c) i. of the OP provides the range of programs that may be offered within the Downtown Community Improvement Project Area, including, but not limited to:

- Façade Restoration and Improvement Loan Program;
- Development Charge Waiver / Exemption Program;
- Refund of Local Planning and Building Fees Program;
- Residential Conversion and Intensification Loan Program;
- Property Rehabilitation and Redevelopment Tax-Increment Grant Program; and
- Parking Requirements Reduction Program.

Section 5.3 Highway Commercial includes land for uses serving the travelling public, regional market, and businesses requiring exposure to high traffic volumes and direct highway access. Permitted uses include retail, restaurants, accommodations, automotive-related services, and other vehicle-oriented commercial activities. This designation supports gateway commercial activity, regional economic functions, and business uses that may not be suitable for Downtown or neighbourhood commercial areas.

Section 5.4 sets out policies for the Industrial Employment area designation, which includes employment-generating uses such as manufacturing, processing, assembly, warehousing, storage, transportation, construction, repair, and other industrial or business operations. This designation aims to protect lands for long-term employment, support economic diversification, encourage industrial investment, and promote business retention and expansion. The policies also emphasize access to transportation infrastructure, compatibility with adjacent uses, and efficient municipal servicing.

Section 6.5 of the OP identifies special study areas, including the Downtown Area, Former Shevlin Woodyard, and Point Park. The policies direct that these locations be further evaluated for future redevelopment opportunities that support economic diversification, tourism, placemaking, and improved community connectivity.

Section 9.3.1 f) outlines the range of programs which may be included in the Brownfields Community Improvement Project Area, including assistance for environmental site assessments and rehabilitation programs.

Inclusion of other land use designations within a Community Improvement Project Area and the updated CIP would require an amendment to Section 9.3.1 of the Official Plan.

Section 9.3.2 a) of the OP enables the establishment of new Community Improvement Project Areas, in consideration of the following criteria:

i. Conditions of existing buildings;
ii. Encouraging and incentivizing the construction of affordable housing through intensification, and housing forms that allow residents to age in place, and other housing needs of local residents, and of potential investors;
iii. Land use issues;
iv. Aesthetic issues;
v. Transportation or infrastructure issues;
vi. Natural or human-made environmental issues;
vii. Social or community issues;
viii. Economic issues; and
ix. Any other relevant issues which create barriers to the repair, rehabilitation or redevelopment of underutilized or dilapidated land/buildings.

Through the CIP Update, the existing Community Improvement Project Area in the 2003 CIP and the Financial Incentive Programs available therein will be reviewed to consider their continued relevance and alignment with the OP.

2.7.3 TOWN OF FORT FRANCES COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN (2003)

The Town of Fort Frances's existing CIP was adopted on February 10, 2003, and last modified in 2008, to support the implementation of community improvement objectives identified in the Town's previous Official Plan and to provide a framework for municipal investment, private-sector reinvestment, and broader economic revitalization initiatives. The CIP is intended to strengthen Fort Frances' economic competitiveness, improve the physical condition and appearance of key commercial areas, and support the long-term sustainability of the community through targeted public and private-sector improvements.

Section 2.4 of the existing CIP identifies several deficiencies and opportunities for improvement at both a Town-wide level and a specific Project Area level. The policy framework of the CIP emphasizes economic diversification and enhancement of the built environment. The Plan prioritizes commercial and industrial investment, downtown and waterfront revitalization, improvements to building façades and public spaces, and the renewal of underutilized properties. Infrastructure upgrades and municipal-led projects are also identified as key drivers of private sector reinvestment.

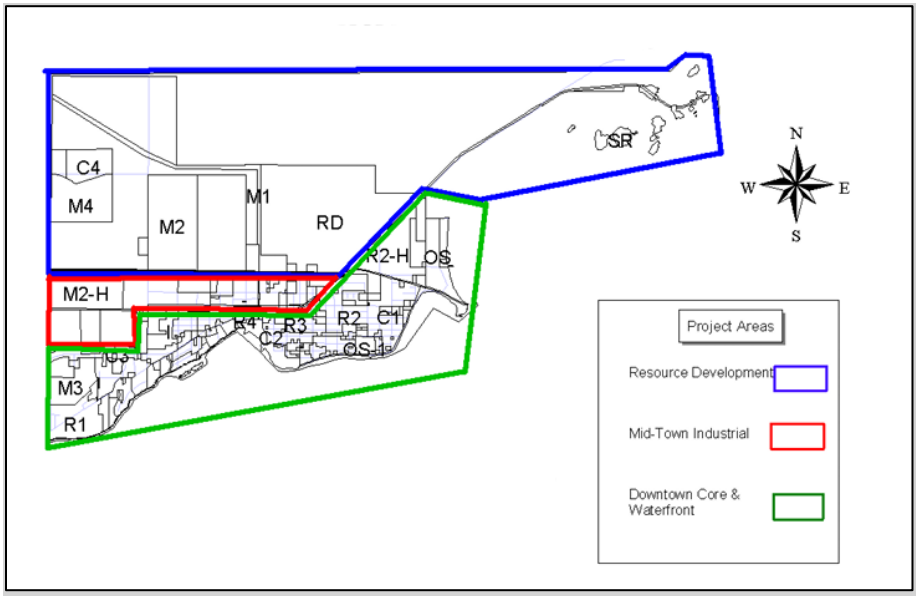
Overall, the existing CIP is oriented toward economic resilience and community revitalization, with an emphasis on supporting local businesses, improving the attractiveness of key areas, and leveraging public investment to encourage long-term private sector growth.

Existing Community Improvement Project Area

The Community Improvement Project Area, as designated by by-law, encompasses the entire municipal boundary. It is comprised of three (3) Specific Project Areas, as illustrated in **Figure 2-1**, within which specific Financial Incentive Programs are available:

1. Resource Development;
2. Mid-Town Industrial; and
3. Downtown Core and Waterfront.

Figure 2-1 : Town of Fort Frances Community Improvement Project Areas (CIP, 2003)



Municipal Leadership Initiatives – Town-wide Improvements

The CIP identifies a series of deficiencies and associated opportunities for improvement in the Community Improvement Project Area, including:

- The development of a municipal wide recreational trail and parks system with an emphasis on the waterfront area;
- Improvements to sidewalks and road surfaces to enable safe and comfortable travel by pedestrians, bicycles and vehicles;
- The development of a by-pass traffic route for large trucks to reduce conflicts in the core;
- Improvements to the water system to provide for sufficient fire flows;
- Encourage residents, business owners and service groups to participate in tree planting and street beautification programs;
- Developing a menu of available and innovative financial incentives to stimulate development;
- Develop a strategy in cooperation with First Nations for Point Park development and explore mutual opportunities and needs;
- Investigate advances in "wire' and "wireless" technology;
- Improve municipal infrastructure to property line and community services where physically and economically feasible;
- Improve the quality of housing stock and stimulate community pride in ownership and occupancy;
- The provision of grants or loans to registered or assessed property owners for such purposes as façade improvement, subject to municipal authority under the Planning Act, the Municipal Act, and/or any other applicable legislation; and
- The rehabilitation of municipal properties and/or the sale, lease or other disposition of municipal land as provided for in the Municipal Act and the Planning Act and/or any other applicable legislation.

Municipal leadership initiatives represent improvements to the public realm, or activities undertaken by the municipality to complement the improvements completed by private property owners supported by the CIP. Through the CIP Update project process, the above municipal leadership activities for Town-wide improvements will be reviewed with Town Council and staff to confirm their continued relevance.

Existing Financial Incentive Programs

Table 2-1 provides a summary of the four (4) existing Financial Incentive Programs which are currently available under the existing CIP in all three (3) Specific Project Areas, and which will be reviewed as part of the CIP Update. The existing CIP does not detail specific projects costs that may be eligible under each Program, nor a maximum program value that may be awarded to eligible applicants through the Programs.

Table 2-1: Town of Fort Frances CIP (2003) Financial Incentive Programs

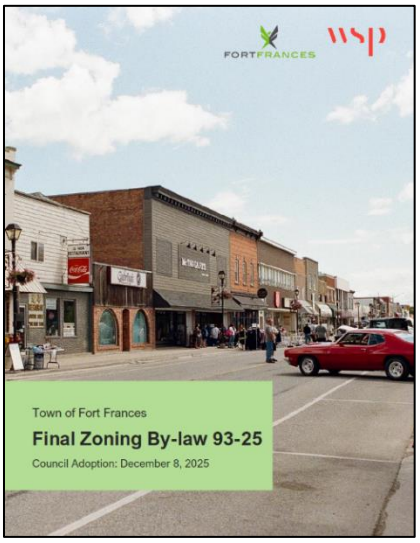
Financial Incentive Program	Purpose
A. Property Value Revitalization Program (Residential, Multi, and Commercial Classes)	To stimulate new development and the redevelopment of vacant or under-utilized lands and buildings.
B. Diversification Development Program	To encourage growth and stabilization in both jobs and municipal taxation revenue for the community by providing financial incentives for the development or redevelopment of properties for commercial / industrial uses in sectors such as manufacturing, processing, machining, environmental or technology related businesses.
C. Brownfields Development Program	To encourage and promote brownfields redevelopment and mitigate the costs of developing on brownfields by providing financial incentives to clean them up and replace them with productive economic land uses.
D. Façade Loan Program	To improve the appearance of commercial properties through the Town of Fort Frances.

2.7.4 CIP Successes

Between 2018 and 2023, the Town received 35 applications under the Property Value Revitalization Program (Residential), representing $14.8M in construction value. Of these applications, 12 projects have been completed. Further, the following CIP applications have been approved in recent years:

- 2024: Six (6) grants under the Property Value Revitalization Program (Residential) and one (1) grant under the Diversification Development Program;
- 2025: Three (3) grants under the Property Value Revitalization Program (Residential); and
- 2026: Two (2) grants under the Property Value Revitalization Program (Residential).

2.7.5 TOWN OF FORT FRANCES ZONING BY-LAW 93-25



The current Town of Fort Frances Zoning By-law 93-25 was adopted by Council on December 8, 2025. Section 5 of the Zoning By-law establishes the 16 operative Zones across the Town, which are illustrated on a series of two (2) Zoning Schedules.

The Zoning By-law establishes:

- How land may be used;
- Where buildings and structures can be located on a property;
- Permitted land uses within each Zone; and
- The lot sizes and dimensions, parking requirements, buildings heights, and setbacks from streets, adjacent properties, and watercourses.

As the Official Plan specifies that only lands designated Mixed Use, Highway Commercial, and Industrial Employment are eligible to be included in the Downtown and Brownfields Community Improvement Project Areas through a CIP, eligible properties for Financial Incentive Programs under the updated CIP would be limited to properties which are located within those designated areas which are generally implemented by the following Zones: Mixed Use (MU); General Commercial (GC); Highway Commercial (HC); Light Industrial (M1); Heavy Industrial (M2); and Resource Development (RD).

The Official Plan and Zoning By-law include a Future Development (FD) designation and Zone that comprise large areas of former industrial lands identified for redevelopment. Inclusion of these areas as eligible within the updated CIP would require an amendment to Section 9.3.1 of the Official Plan.

2.8 OTHER LOCAL PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

The following Section provides brief summaries of other local plans and studies that are particularly relevant for consideration in the CIP Update, including the following:

- Town of Fort Frances Recreation Master Plan (2024);

- Former Fort Frances Mill Properties: Conceptual Land Use Plan - Final Report (2022);
- Shevlin Woodyard Feasibility Study (2021);
- Town of Fort France Asset Management Plan (2018); and
- Town of Fort Frances Active Transportation Plan (2007).

Table 2-2 includes a review of the above-noted municipal plans and studies.

Table 2-2: Review Table – Town of Fort Frances Municipal Plans and Studies

Summary of Plan / Study	Relevance to the CIP Update
Town of Fort Frances Recreation Master Plan (RMP) (May 2024)	
• The Town of Fort Frances RMP sets out a comprehensive strategy to enhance the recreational and cultural landscape of the Town over the horizon to 2034. • Recreation, parks, and public realm amenities are key contributors to the quality of life, economic vitality, and community appeal of Fort Frances. • Public assets, such as parks, trails, waterfront areas, and community facilities, play a significant role in attracting and retaining residents, promoting tourism, and advancing placemaking initiatives. • The waterfront and trail network have strategic value, with opportunities to enhance waterfront access and activation, improve active transportation links, and strengthen connections between neighbourhoods, the downtown core, and major recreational destinations. • The need to enhance public spaces, streetscapes, wayfinding, and gathering places to create a more vibrant and attractive community center is identified. • Accessible, connected and well-maintained recreation infrastructure is important, with opportunities to reinvest in aging facilities and to improve facilities that support inclusivity, walkability and long-term sustainability. • These priorities position recreation and public realm investments as catalysts for downtown revitalization, tourism growth, and overall community enhancement.	• Section 6.1 Key Recommendations of the RMP identifies a number of actions that could be included in a municipal leadership strategy under the CIP, such as the development of: o accessible ramps and pathways; o bicycle parking infrastructure; o improved signage and wayfinding; o cultural programming and infrastructure enhancements; o community garden expansions; and o active transportation infrastructure.

Summary of Plan / Study	Relevance to the CIP Update
Former Fort Frances Mill Properties: Conceptual Land Use Plan - Final Report (May 20, 2022)	
• The vision for the Mill properties is: "The redevelopment of the former Mill site is a monumental project for Aazhogan Renewal, Fort Frances and the surrounding district. Ushering in a new, sustainable future for the region, the redevelopment should be a model for economic regeneration, urban revitalization, and inclusive community building that transforms the former Mill site and reopens the waterfront in particular. It should be a home for innovation, bold ideas, and experimentation in design and land use." • The Report acknowledges that the Town's current CIP includes financial tools that could be used to support the redevelopment of the Mill lands. It is noted that the Mill lands are located within the boundary of the current Downtown Core and Waterfront Community Improvement Project Area.	• Consider the inclusion of the Mill lands within the Community Improvement Project Area, with a specific suite of financial tools to support redevelopment.
Shevlin Woodyard Feasibility Study (2021)	
• The Shevlin Wood Yard and Gateway to Fort Frances Report was endorsed by Council on February 8, 2021 and provides an implementation plan for the future development of the study area lands based on community engagement and financial considerations. The study area lands comprise the former Shevlin Wood Yard and the Gateway site, which includes the area on the Fort Frances side of the Fort Frances-International Falls International Bridge. • The vision for the redevelopment Shevlin Wood Yard contemplates the inclusion of residential (i.e., townhomes, apartments), mixed use, and commercial development. The Report notes the preference for the lands to be developed privately, and that updates to the Phase 1 and 2	• Consider inclusion of the Shevlin Wood Yard within the Community Improvement Project Area, with a specific suite of financial tools to support redevelopment, including housing.

Summary of Plan / Study	Relevance to the CIP Update
Environmental Site Assessments, Record of Site Condition, and Official Plan and Zoning By-law Amendments are necessary to bring the plan to fruition. • Funding strategies or consideration of financial programs to support the Shevlin Wood Yard redevelopment are not discussed in detail in the Report.	
Town of Fort France Asset Management Plan (AMP) (2018)	
• The AMP is intended to assist the Town of Fort Frances in managing their infrastructure needs while ensuring timely investments to minimize repair and rehabilitation costs and maintain municipal assets. • It identifies a series of classes for the Town, which have a total asset valuation of $355 million (2018), of which Road Networks comprised 30%, followed by the Sanitary Sewer Network (24%), and the Water System (23%). • The AMP offers strategic recommendations for the continuous improvement of program activities and outputs. • It provides detailed data on the current state of the Town's assets, such as roads, parks, trails, and public facilities, which can inform priority areas that require investment or revitalization through municipal leadership initiatives. The CIP can be used to recommend municipal investment within the Community Improvement Project Area, contributing to meaningful community revitalization, increasing the Town's tax base, and bolstering Fort Frances as an attractive place to live and do business.	• The updated CIP will be aligned with the goals of the AMP, aiming to enhance the community's built environment, economic vitality, and quality of life, which depend on reliable and well maintained infrastructure. • While the CIP primarily supports revitalization through investment by private property owners, the AMP ensures that the foundational infrastructure is in place to support future growth and development. Specific recommended municipal leadership initiatives should be identified in the CIP, to complement private improvements funded in part by the CIP Financial Incentive Programs.

Summary of Plan / Study	Relevance to the CIP Update
3. Town of Fort Frances Active Transportation Plan (December 2007)	
• The purpose of the ATP is to develop a plan for a continuous parkland and trail system in Fort Frances, provide linkages between the waterfront park and the Town's west end and north end residential areas, and to identify needs for parkland development, as well as identify underutilized parks. • The ATP includes an overview of existing active transportation conditions in the Town, a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis, a future needs analysis based on local demographics and current facilities use, vision, and recommended next steps. • The ATP vision is focused on the active transportation network, infrastructure, amenities, and legislation/policies, education and marketing, and funding.	• Streetscaping features, such as bike racks and pedestrian walkways, could be included as eligible projects under a Property Improvement Grant for commercial or industrial properties. • Wayfinding and other public realm improvements could be included as municipal leadership initiatives to be undertaken by the Town.

3.0 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement is a critical component to the success of the CIP, from its development through to its implementation. The Town of Fort Frances is committed to engaging with local property and business owners / operators, residents, local interest groups, and agencies throughout the CIP Update. This will ensure that the CIP reflects community needs and priorities and can support and facilitate community improvement projects with tangible impacts on the quality of life and vitality in Fort Frances.

The CIP Update project process includes several opportunities for community engagement to inform the development of a vision and goals for the new CIP, the suite of Financial Incentive Programs which will be available to private landowners, as well as recommendations for municipal leadership activities on public lands. To date, the following engagement activities have been undertaken, and their results are summarized in the following sections:

- CIP Visioning Workshop and Community Tour, June 17, 2026;
- In-person Public Open House, June 17, 2026; and
- Community Survey and CIP Prospective Applicant Survey, June 2 to June 21, 2026.

3.1 CIP VISIONING WORKSHOP

On June 17, 2026, the WSP project team facilitated an in-person Visioning Workshop with a focused group of participants including members of Town Council and staff, and representations from the Fort Frances Chamber of Commerce, Business Improvement Area (BIA) Committee, Rainy River Future Development Corporation (RRFDC), and the Rainy River District Services Administration Board (DSSAB).

The Visioning Workshop included a presentation to introduce the CIP Update project purpose, process, and provide an overview of the Town's existing CIP, as well as examples of Financial Incentive Programs and CIP results in other Ontario communities. Participants took part in the following visioning activities to set the foundation for the project, including:

- A mapping exercise to review and confirm the proposed boundaries of the Community Improvement Project Area and more specific Program Areas;
- Development of a draft Vision Statement and goals; and
- Consideration of Financial Incentive Programs of interest to be included in the updated CIP.

A summary of the Visioning Workshop results is provided in **Appendix A**.

3.2 IN-PERSON PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE

An in-person Public Open House was held on June 17, 2026, from 5:00 pm to 7:00 pm at the Town of Fort Frances Public Library Technology Centre, Shaw Community Hub. The purpose of the Public Open House was to:

- Provide an introduction and overview of the CIP Update project process, work plan, and engagement program to the community;
- Collect information and input from the community with respect to key opportunities and priorities that should be addressed through the CIP; and
- Launch the Community Survey.

Three (3) members of the public attended the Public Open House, and one (1) member of the public provided the following feedback:

- Inquired as to the budget to undertake the CIP Update project, and whether the Town will be applying for external funding (e.g., to support tourism initiatives);
- Suggested the Town develop a tourism pamphlet highlighting local points of interest and businesses, as well as improved wayfinding within the Town (e.g., for U.S. residents visiting Fort Frances via the International Border Crossing);
- Inquired about the threshold for housing to be considered affordable and eligible for a potential CIP incentive program;
- Shared safety concerns in the downtown, including at Rainy Lake Square, and suggested that the Town install a gated entry to the Square with access by request.

3.3 COMMUNITY SURVEY

An online Community Survey was available from June 2, 2026, to June 21, 2026, via a Survey Monkey link on the Town's project webpage. The Survey provided an

opportunity for Fort Frances residents to share their input on a vision, as well as key opportunities and priorities to be considered through the CIP Update. Participants were invited to review the Draft Community Improvement Plan Background and Recommendations Report (June 2026), to assist in completing the survey.

A total of 54 responses to the Community Survey were received, which will be used to inform the draft Vision Statement and potential Financial Incentive Programs in the updated CIP. A summary of the Community Survey responses is included in **Appendix B**.

3.4 CIP Prospective Applicant Survey

Concurrently with the online Community Survey, a separate online CIP Prospective Applicant Survey was also available via Survey Monkey, and disseminated by Town staff to local property and business owners / operators as prospective applicants for the future Financial Incentive Programs in the updated CIP. The Survey sought feedback on the existing strengths, challenges, and opportunities facing business owners and operators in the Town, and included questions to identify specific properties and areas in need of improvements, as well as ideas for specific Financial Incentive Programs that would be of interest to future applicants.

A total of six (6) responses to the CIP Prospective Applicant Survey were received. A summary of the Survey responses is included in **Appendix C**.

3.5 Town of Fort Frances Business Recruitment and Downtown Revitalization Committee – Downtown Business and Community Survey

In 2026, the Town of Fort Frances established the Business Recruitment and Downtown Revitalization Committee, comprised of members of Town Council and staff, representatives / business owners from the BIA, and representatives from the Fort Frances Chamber of Commerce and Rainy River Future Development Corporation. Separately from the CIP Community Survey and CIP Prospective Application Survey, the Committee undertook a Downtown Business and Community Survey, which received 178 responses from residents throughout the Rainy River District. The survey results provided valuable insight into the types of businesses residents would support, barriers affecting downtown business activity, and priorities for future investment.

The Survey results identified the following major priorities for Downtown enhancements:

1. **Business Attraction** – Residents are seeking a wider variety of Downtown businesses and retail shopping opportunities, such as clothing stores, specialty retail, bakeries, cafes, restaurants, entertainment venues, tourism-oriented businesses, and health and wellness services.
2. **Downtown Beautification** – Residents expressed a desire for enhanced streetscaping (e.g., trees, flowers, decorative lighting, street furniture, seasonal decoration), patios, public art, and storefront façade improvements.
3. **Downtown Activity** – To support increased Downtown activity, residents suggested extended business hours (i.e., evenings and weekends), seasonal outdoor patios, markets and pop-up retail, festivals and events, family-friendly activities, youth recreation, and general entertainment opportunities and venues.
4. **Safety and Comfort** – Residents expressed safety concerns related to loitering, disorderly conduct, evidence of drug use, and a desire for improved property maintenance, cleanliness, and activation of vacant buildings and underutilized spaces.

Based on the survey results, the Town's Business Recruitment and Downtown Revitalization Committee has recommended the inclusion of the following Financial Incentive Programs in the CIP to facilitate Downtown investment and improvements:

- **Downtown Start-Up Grant Program** – to encourage new businesses within priority sectors (e.g., retail, restaurants, entertainment, tourism) to locate within the downtown core, with eligible project costs such as leasehold improvements, equipment, signage, professional fees, and marketing.
- **Downtown Commercial Rent Incentive** – a rent rebate for the first year of business operations to reduce financial barriers for entrepreneurs entering the downtown market, and to encourage utilization of vacant buildings.
- **Façade Improvement Grant** – to improve the visual appeal of downtown buildings and encourage property investment, with eligible project costs related to exterior building rehabilitation and restoration (e.g., doors, windows, masonry, architectural features, awnings, etc.)
- **Signage Improvement Grant** – to improve the downtown aesthetics through enhanced business signage, including new or replaced signs, illuminated signs, and heritage signage.

- **Vacancy Reduction Incentive** – to reduce vacant storefronts and activate underutilized spaces by assisting property owners with renovations and conversions through grants, tax rebates, and/or permit fee reductions.
- **Pop-Up Retail and Business Incubator Program** – to support entrepreneurs by facilitating pop-up or shared retail spaces and temporary leases.
- **Upper Floor Residential Conversion Incentive** – to create downtown residential units and improve building utilization and downtown activity, through renovation grants, permit fee rebates, and/or a tax increment grant.
- **Outdoor Patio and Streetscape Enhance Program** – to enhance the pedestrian environment downtown by supporting the installation of patios, outdoor seating, decorative lighting, and landscaping through grants and permit fee waivers.
- **Public Art and Cultural Investment Incentive** – to enhance downtown's unique identity by support the installation of murals, Indigenous art, public sculptures, heritage interpretation, and interactive art displays.
- **Building Improvement Tax Increment Grant** – to encourage major development and redevelopment projects by providing a grant equivalent to the incremental increase in municipal property tax assessment.

The Town's Business Recruitment and Downtown Revitalization Committee has also developed a list of recommended actions to be undertaken by the Town and its partners (e.g., BIA), as summarized in **Table 3-1**.

Table 3-1: Business Recruitment and Downtown Revitalization Committee – Recommended Actions for Downtown Fort Frances Improvements

Theme	Recommended Actions
Short-term Actions (0 to 12 Months)	
Business Recruitment	• Complete and launch the Downtown Business Recruitment Package • Develop a Downtown Vacancy Inventory &d Available Spaces Guide • Identify and actively recruit businesses aligned with Survey results
Beautification	• Install additional flower planters and hanging baskets • Add benches, picnic tables, and seating areas • Expand murals, public art, and window displays • Improve seasonal decorations and lighting • Review opportunities for additional trees and greenery

Theme	Recommended Actions
Short-term Actions (0 to 12 Months)	
Events and Animation	• Expand Burger Wars and similar food-focused events • Introduce monthly downtown events (e.g., night markets, Food Truck Fridays, sidewalk sales, Family Fun Days, live music nights) • Develop a coordinated Downtown events calendar
Business Support	• Encourage 1 evening / week where businesses remain open later • Explore a "Late Night Downtown" promotion • Establish a Downtown Business Mentorship Program • Create a Downtown Business Welcome Package for entrepreneurs
Safety and Cleanliness	• Increase downtown maintenance efforts • Install additional garbage and sharps containers • Work with community partners to address public safety concerns • Increase visible foot patrols during peak periods and events
Medium-term Actions (1 to 3 Years)	
Downtown Business Incubator	• Develop a Downtown Incubator Program that allows entrepreneurs to test retail concepts, share storefront space, and access mentoring and support services
Expanded Financial Incentive Programs	• Establish CIP grants, such as Façade Improvement Grants, Signage Grants, Accessibility Improvement Grants, and Downtown Start-Up Incentive
Downtown Branding	• Create a unified downtown identity through wayfinding signage, visitor maps, business directories, and marketing campaigns
Public Realm Improvements	• Implement permanent seating areas, enhanced landscaping, decorative lighting, public gathering spaces
Long-term Actions (3 to 10 Years)	
Downtown Redevelopment Strategy	• Develop a comprehensive Downtown Master Plan focused on business attraction, housing development, tourism growth, and public realm improvements
Mixed Use Development	• Encourage residential units above commercial storefronts to increase downtown activity and support local businesses
Waterfront Connection	• Strengthen the connection between Scott Street and the waterfront through improved pedestrian routes, wayfinding signage, tourism experiences, and public spaces
Destination Development	• Position downtown Fort Frances as a regional destination through signature annual events, culinary experiences, arts and culture programming, and tourism-focused businesses

3.6 FUTURE ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The CIP Update project process will also include the following upcoming community engagement opportunities:

- **Virtual Public Open House:** In late Summer 2026, a virtual Public Open House will be held to present the proposed Community Improvement Project Area and Draft CIP to the community, including a formal presentation outlining key elements of the Draft CIP, followed by an opportunity for community members to ask questions and provide comments on the proposed Community Improvement Project Area and Draft CIP.
- **Virtual Statutory Public Meeting:** Also in late Summer 2026, a virtual Statutory Public Meeting under the Planning Act will be held to present the Final Draft CIP to Town Council and the public. Attendees will be able to make oral delegations to Council and/or submit written comments regarding the Final Draft CIP. A Notice of Statutory Public Meeting will be published 20 calendar days in advance of the meeting, as required under the Planning Act, along with the Final Draft CIP document for public review. Following this meeting, the Final CIP will be prepared with consideration of all comments received, prior to being presented to Council for consideration of adoption.

4.0 SWOT ANALYSIS

The Consultant Team conducted a community tour of Fort Frances with Town staff on June 17, 2026 to identify key priority areas and opportunities for revitalization to be addressed in the CIP. These have been documented through a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis, presented in **Table 4-1**, which will help inform the Community Improvement Project Area and Program Area boundaries, the types of Financial Incentive Programs to be included in the updated CIP, and recommended municipal leadership initiatives which may be completed by the Town.

Figure 4-1 provides photos from the Community Tour, including key sites representing the Town's strengths and opportunities.

Table 4-1: Fort Frances CIP Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) Analysis

CIP Element	Strengths	Weaknesses
Building Stock	• Downtown buildings add historic character and value • Recent improvements to several Downtown buildings, including façade and signage renovations • New commercial businesses added to the Town in recent years, including Downtown and around Highway 71 / McIrvine Road	• Some aging buildings in need of repair • Vacant buildings and storefronts across the Town • Lack of rental apartment buildings identified • Some Downtown businesses are only accessible by steps or stairs, or have accessible entry ways are in need of repair • Some Downtown businesses lack accessibility features within building (e.g., washrooms)
	Opportunities	**Threats**
	• Potential to introduce new mixed use buildings through the redevelopment of the former Mill lands and Shevlin Wood Yard • Strong desire for new residential development opportunities, including affordable housing, additional residential units, rental housing • Former St. Michael's School site identified as opportunity for redevelopment	• Lack of private investment in redevelopment of vacant and underutilized sites in the Town • Potential financial constraints to undertake building improvements • Vacant buildings and buildings in disrepair contribute to poor perception of Downtown building stock and safety, as well as public complaints
CIP Element	**Strengths**	**Weaknesses**
Parking	• Abundant (unpaid) street parking in Downtown • Surface parking lots generally abut main streets • Ample space for all types of vehicles, including trucks and trailers	• Parking takes up high proportion of the right-of-way, which is not ideal for bike or other vehicle lanes
	Opportunities	**Threats**
	• Beautification and green infrastructure features can be added in place of parking spaces to increase vibrancy	• Snowfall and the long winter season results in a need for parking in close proximity to retail and commercial uses

	• Removal of some on-street parking spaces in certain Downtown areas to utilize the space for other uses (e.g., seasonal events, on-street patios, pop-up retail spaces, market stalls) • Removal of some on-street parking may be offset by using vacant sites as parking lots, or relocating parking to the rear of buildings where there is access from a side road and rear laneway	
CIP Element	**Strengths**	**Weaknesses**
Streetscaping	• Metal banners depicting various Canadian animals installed on light posts on Scott Street provide a welcome to Downtown Fort Frances, with a strong sense of northern identity • Wide rights-of-way to accommodate street parking, larger vehicle traffic, and snow clearing	• Light posts along La Verendrye Parkway have banner fasteners, but are not being used currently
	Opportunities	**Threats**
	• Strong desire for more seasonal street patios and outdoor spaces to support local businesses • Beautification through increased street trees, garden beds, and boulevard plantings (requires urban tolerant species and adequate soil volume) • Increased lighting and accessibility features • Potential for new crosswalk(s) at key intersections	• Potential budget constraints may limit implementation of improvements
CIP Element	**Strengths**	**Weaknesses**
Public Spaces	• Stunning viewshed of Rainy Lake and Rainy River from the La Verendrye Parkway, which runs from Highway 11 leading into Town from the northeast and along Front Street up to the Canada-US International Border crossing	• General lack of signage / wayfinding to destinations throughout the Town • No signage and wayfinding to Point Park at the east side of Town

	• La Verendrye Parkway includes public art (Hallett boat), as well as attractions such as the Lookout Tower and Sorting Gap Marina • Lookout Tower public space is animated by outdoor exercise equipment • Outdoor mural by local artist Lindsay Joy Hamilton is featured at the Public Library Technology Centre • Rainy Lake Square in central Downtown is host to a weekly market in the summer months, which showcases local small businesses • Other key public spaces include the Fort Frances Community Garden at Lillie Avenue North and recent upgrades to Legion Park and playground	
	Opportunities	**Threats**
	• Increased marketing and wayfinding to key public spaces (e.g., Lookout Tower and Sorting Gap Marina) could be provided at International Border Crossing and at key gateways into the Town	• Some perceived safety concerns in Downtown broadly, including at Rainy Lake Square
CIP Element	**Strengths**	**Weaknesses**
Gateways / Wayfinding	• Some wayfinding signage installed on Front Street on the riverfront and by the Canada-US International Border crossing. Wayfinding signage is directed at vehicular traffic, rather than for tourists or visitors to the area. • Town welcome sign on Highway 11 entering Fort Frances from the northeast includes the Town branding, and is in a highly visible location to mark the entrance to the Downtown	• General lack of wayfinding signage throughout the Town – directional signage is lacking, including at the Gateway lands along Highway 11 into Fort Frances, other than the Town welcome sign

	Opportunities	**Threats**
	• Opportunity to provide wayfinding to key destinations (Lookout Tower, Sorting Gap Marina, Highway 11 commercial area) • Opportunity to partner with local businesses for production of signs, maps, activity passports, etc.	• Funding for improvements is a constraint • Signage posted on Scott Street (Highway 11) may required approval by the Ministry of Transportation (MTO)
CIP Element	**Strengths**	**Weaknesses**
Land Use	• Conceptual Master Plan studies already completed for the former Mill lands and Shevlin Wood Yard, with phased redevelopment work and planned servicing extensions underway • Official Plan and Zoning By-law Amendments for Shevlin Wood Yard redesignation from Future Development to Mixed Use were approved by Council on June 22, 2026	• Underutilized lots across the Town, including vacant properties and underutilized parking lots
	Opportunities	**Threats**
	• Strong potential for continued commercial development along Highway 11 in the west • Former Safeway / gas station site on Scott Street identified as a brownfield site with redevelopment opportunity • Shevlin Wood Yard redevelopment has the potential to be a vibrant waterfront mixed use district, with a key anchor commercial tenant, diverse housing options, and quality public spaces • Town-owned industrial lands along 8th Street West being examined for future Plan of Subdivision for light industrial uses and potential servicing (Council	• Costly brownfield site remediation needs to take place before affected properties (i.e., former Safeway / gas station on Scott Street) are redeveloped

	approved budget in 2026 to run municipal water services up McIrvine Road)	
CIP Element	**Strengths**	**Weaknesses**
Economic Development	• Some successes experienced with the former CIP Property Value Revitalization Program with 12 projects ($14.8M in construction value) completed between 2018-2023, which received CIP funding, as well as 11 grants approved between 2024-2026 • Town of Fort Frances Business Recruitment and Downtown Revitalization Committee formed to support with economic development and downtown initiatives	• Previous lack of private investment into the Downtown in recent years • Limited promotion of the existing CIP
	Opportunities	**Threats**
	• External funding sources may be utilized to bolster municipal financial resources • Opportunity to encourage spending / fund allocation to CIP improvements • Town-owned lands at 8th Street / Webster Avenue North identified by Town as desirable for future light industrial development; successful completion of large scale industrial projects in the future will add to growth of the Town's local economy • Shevlin Wood Yard redevelopment to a mixed use area presents significant opportunities for uses such as the introduction of higher-density residential / commercial buildings, a retirement home, outdoor event space, and commercial spaces over a phased development process	• Securing funding is a challenge; limited budget is available • Shevlin Wood Yard redevelopment requires partnerships and investments from private developers

Figure 4-1: SWOT Analysis – Community Tour Photos

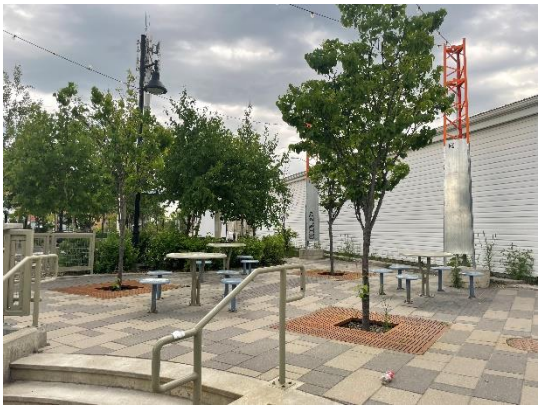
Outdoor exercise equipment at riverfront Lookout Tower

Metal banners and renovated storefront along Scott Street

Existing accessible entryway to Downtown business in need of repair

Existing public art along Scott Street / Portage Avenue

Rainy Lake Square events/ gathering space



Rainy Lake Square outdoor public seating

Shevlin Wood Yard – future mixed use development area looking south towards Lookout Tower and riverfront

Town-owned industrial lands for future light industrial uses along 8th Street

5.0 CIP Opportunities

This section presents a summary of preliminary opportunities for consideration in updating the Town of Fort Frances's CIP. These opportunities have been identified through a review of:

- Local planning considerations in Fort Frances, based on the information presented in **Section 2.0** of this Report;
- A review of the Financial Incentive Programs available through the existing 2003 CIP, as described in **Section 2.7.4** of this Report;
- The SWOT analysis summarized in **Section 4.0** of this Report;

- Current CIP approaches and Financial Incentive Programs offered in other municipalities across Ontario; and
- Input received from Town Council, Town staff departments, external agencies, and the community, including local business and property owners who are prospective CIP applicants, on the current community improvement needs and priorities.

5.1 SCAN OF CIP APPROACHES

This section reviews current CIP approaches in Ontario, including those in Northwestern Ontario, focusing on Financial Incentive Programs used to support housing development, commercial and industrial development, and economic diversification. These examples offer insights into CIP elements that may drive successful economic development in the Town of Fort Frances, and to assess gaps in the Town's existing Financial Incentive Programs included in the current CIP.

5.1.1 HOUSING-FOCUSED CIP PROGRAMS

Table 5-1 presents an overview of Financial Incentive Programs in select municipal CIPs across Ontario that are specifically focused on encouraging the development of housing units, with a particular focus on facilitating affordable housing.

Table 5-1: Overview of Current Municipal Housing-focused CIP Programs

*Denotes a municipal CIP that was associated with, or funded in part by, the Federal government's Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF).

Housing		
Municipal CIP	**Financial Incentive Program and Purpose**	**Incentive Amount**
City of Kenora CIP (2026)	**Additional Residential Units Grant:** To support the development of additional residential units on the same property as a single detached, semi-detached, or townhouse dwelling.	Grant up to a maximum of 50% of eligible costs to a maximum of $10,000 per additional residential unit, or as determined at the discretion of Council.
	Multi-Unit Housing Grant: To support multi-unit residential development consisting of a minimum of five (5) or more new dwelling units (rental or ownership), which may include the development of new affordable dwelling units.	Grant up to a maximum of 50% of eligible costs to a maximum of $5,000 per dwelling unit, with an additional maximum of $10,000 per affordable dwelling unit; total maximum per property at the discretion of Council.
	Residential Conversion and Intensification Grant – Upper Storey(s): To promote the renovation and conversion of upper storey units to new residential units (rental or ownership).	Grant up to a maximum of 100% of eligible costs up to a maximum of $10,000, or as determined at the discretion of Council.
Town of Cochrane Growth CIP (2025)	**Sale of Land Below Market Value ($10/lot program):** To stimulate private development of new residences by selling vacant municipally owned properties for less than market value.	Council will consider the sale of municipally owned residential property at $10 "per lot" to applicants who meet the program requirements.
City of Elliot Lake CIP (2024)	**New Multi-Residential Dwelling Grant:** To encourage multi-residential housing development in the CIP Project Area to increase the number of new dwelling units in the City.	A grant of $1,000 per new dwelling unit for a maximum of 20 units or $20,000.
	Multi-Residential Renovation Grant: To stimulate investment in the existing housing stock in multi-	A grant of up to $500 per unit to a maximum of $10,000 per project.

Housing		
Municipal CIP	**Financial Incentive Program and Purpose**	**Incentive Amount**
	residential apartment buildings within the CIP Project Area.	
Housing for Hamilton CIP* (2024)	**Additional Dwelling Unit and Multi-Plex Housing Incentive (ADU-MHI):** To support the development of Additional Dwelling Units or Garden Suites on the same property as low-density houses or the creation of multi-plex dwellings with six (6) or less units.	Cost of each building permit, up to a maximum of $2,000 per permit; and/or A 15-year Forgivable Loan of $25,000 per Eligible Unit(s), up to a maximum of $150,000.
	Housing Acceleration Incentive (HAI): To support the creation of seven (7) or more net new housing units and/or affordable rental housing units on sites which have been the subject of a City-led land use planning initiative that occurred after April 7, 2022**, and which removed barriers in order to support new housing creation. **Date that the City received Social Services Relief Funding from Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing.	Grant of $35,000; and/or A 15-year Forgivable Loan of $25,000 per Eligible Unit(s), up to a maximum of $2,500,000.
	Roxborough Access to Homeownership Grant (RAHG): To support the provision of homeownership units at below-market prices to enable greater access to homeownership and contribute to more housing options within the Roxborough community specifically.	Grant equal to the value of the municipal Development Charges owed for the unit(s).

Housing		
Municipal CIP	**Financial Incentive Program and Purpose**	**Incentive Amount**
	Roxborough Rental Housing Loan (RRHL): To support the creation of new residential rental units which meet a specific rent threshold and contribute to the broader spectrum of housing options within the Roxborough community specifically.	A forgivable loan equal to the value of municipal Development Charges owed, forgiven on a pro-rated basis in a minimum amount equal to 1/10th the value of the principal loan plus interest (or other fraction as required dependent on the term of the loan).
Thunder Bay Housing CIP* (2024)	**Additional Dwelling Units Grant:** To incentivize the development of Additional Dwelling Units that contribute to the supply of rental housing.	Grant up to a maximum of 100% of eligible costs to a maximum of $20,000 per unit.
	Housing Rehabilitation and Conversion Grant: To support renovations that bring existing residential units up to Ontario Building Code, and the conversion of commercial / mixed-use buildings to residential rental units.	Grant up to a maximum of 100% of eligible costs to a maximum of $25,000 per unit.
	Multi-Unit Residential Grant: To incentivize the development of multi-unit residential buildings.	Grant up to a maximum of 100% of eligible costs to a maximum of $25,000 per unit above the 70% density threshold of the zone, up to a maximum of $300,000 per property. Funding is only provided for the units above the 70% density threshold (e.g., if you may construct a maximum of 6 units on a lot, and you build 5 units, 70% of the maximum density is 4.2 units, and therefore you would be funded for 0.8 units over maximum density).

Housing		
Municipal CIP	**Financial Incentive Program and Purpose**	**Incentive Amount**
	Planning and Building Permit Fees Grant: To encourage a range of housing options by offsetting the cost of applications and permits.	Grant up to a maximum of $10,000 per project and/or property.
	Servicing Grant: To support municipal servicing upgrades for additional dwelling units that contribute to the supply of rental housing.	Grant up to a maximum of 100% of eligible costs up to a maximum of $10,000, where municipal servicing upgrades are required to satisfy current City standards.
Thunder Bay Downtown and Strategic Core Areas CIP (2021)* Note: The Construction Assistance Grant has been added in 2024 as a stand-alone grant funded by the HAF.	**Construction Assistance Grant (2024):** To stimulate the development of new residential units in these areas and support property owners and developers with financial incentives to help develop new units	Grant up to $20,000 per unit for single bedroom and up to $30,000 per unit for 2 or more bedrooms for the cost to construct new residential units, to a maximum of $300,000 per property. This grant can also be stacked with other Strategic Core Area CIP grants.
	Residential / Office Conversion Grant – 2nd Floor: To promote the renovation and conversion of second floor or higher units to residential or office use.	Equal to 50% of renovation costs to a maximum of $10,000.
Municipality of Wawa CIP (2024)	**Housing Feasibility and Development Grant:** To assist with the cost of undertaking professional studies to determine a housing project's feasibility prior to construction, and to support required planning and technical studies and plans.	Grant for up to 50% of professional fees required to prepare an eligible study, to a maximum of $5,000, or as determined by Council.
	Residential Intensification Grant – Upper Storey(s): A grant per new residential dwelling unit (rental or ownership) created, intended to encourage	Grant for up to 50% of construction costs per new residential dwelling unit created, up to a maximum of $5,000 per unit and a total maximum of $20,000

Housing		
Municipal CIP	**Financial Incentive Program and Purpose**	**Incentive Amount**
	property owners to create new residential dwelling units on upper storeys only through new development or addition to existing buildings.	for all new residential dwelling units created, or as determined by Council.
	Residential / Office Rehabilitation and Conversion Grant – Upper Storey(s): To offset the cost of rehabilitating and converting existing upper storey units above an existing commercial use to residential dwelling units or office uses.	Grant for up to 50% of construction costs, up to a maximum of $5,000 per unit and a total maximum of $20,000 (or 4 units), or as determined by Council.
Town of The Blue Mountains Housing within Reach CIP (2021)	**Additional Dwelling Unit Program:** To encourage additional dwelling units that are accessory to a single detached dwelling, semi-detached dwelling, duplex dwelling or townhouse dwelling.	Grant of 50% of eligible costs to a maximum of $15,000, or a loan for 50% of eligible costs to a maximum of $30,000.
	Attainable Housing Feasibility Grant: To assist eligible applicants with the cost of determining an attainable housing project's feasibility prior to construction.	Grant of 100% of eligible costs to a maximum of $20,000 per property.
	Downtown Apartment Rehabilitation or Conversion Program: Intended to facilitate the rehabilitation of an existing residential unit, or the conversion of commercial, residential or mixed-use building space into an attainable housing unit(s) in the upper-storey or rear floor space of a building.	Grant of 50% of eligible costs to a maximum of $15,000 per dwelling unit (maximum of 4 units), or a loan for 50% of eligible costs to a maximum of $30,000 per dwelling unit (maximum of 8 units).

Housing		
Municipal CIP	**Financial Incentive Program and Purpose**	**Incentive Amount**
	Municipal Fees Equivalent Program: To reduce financial costs associated with planning application and building permit fees that may be incurred by an eligible application through the development application process, resulting in a reimbursement of a portion of certain planning applications and building permit fees.	Grant of up to 100% of fees, or $10,000, whichever is less. Loan of 100% of fees, or $20,000, whichever is less.
	Surplus Land Grant Program: To identify municipally owned lands that are determined to be surplus to the needs of the Town or the County and that will be subsequently offered through a Request for Proposal process for development purposes.	Granting of surplus land at a significantly reduced value or at no cost, based on a valuation of a surplus property.
	Tax Increment Equivalent Program: To encourage significant investment in developing attainable housing in the Town by offering a grant or loan to offset increased tax assessment.	Grant equivalent up to 50% of eligible costs to a maximum of $25,000 per year for up to 10 years.
	Development Charges Grant Equivalent Program: To offset the cost of development charges that are incurred through the development application and approval process, to promote the development of attainable housing within the Town.	Grant based on the value of development charges applicable to the number of attainable dwelling units in a development, with the maximum being 100% of the value of the applicable development charges, to a maximum of $250,000.
City of Owen Sound CIP (2020)	**Development Charges Grant:** To incentivize construction and stimulate the supply of Rental Housing Development on a city-wide basis.	Rental Housing Developments, as defined in this Plan, are eligible to receive a grant equal to or less than the amount of Development Charges

Housing		
Municipal CIP	**Financial Incentive Program and Purpose**	**Incentive Amount**
		owed at the time of Building Permit issuance in accordance with the City's Development Charges By-law.
Greater Sudbury Affordable Housing CIP (2018)	**Feasibility Grant Program:** To stimulate private sector investigation of the potential adaptive re-use or redevelopment of buildings or vacant land.	Grant up to a maximum of $5,000.
	Planning and Building Fee Rebate: To encourage the development and redevelopment of eligible properties by rebating fees associated with Planning Act and Ontario Building Code applications.	Rebate up to a maximum of $5,000 for planning fees, and $30,000 for building fees.
	Residential Incentive Program (per-door grant): To jump-start affordable housing in locations that best serve needs of tenants.	Grant of $10 per square foot of newly created affordable habitable residential space, or $20,000 per affordable dwelling unit, whichever is lesser, to a maximum of $200,000 per property.
	Second Unit Incentive Program: To encourage the creation of second units by a non-profit or charitable institution.	Grant up to a maximum of 50% of approved project costs to a maximum of $50,000.
	Tax Increment Equivalent Grant: To encourage the development and redevelopment of eligible properties by providing grants equivalent to the incremental increase in municipal property tax assessment and revenue resulting from property improvements.	Grant equal to 100% of the tax increment in years 1-3, and 50% of the tax increment in years 4-5.

5.1.2 CURRENTS CIPS IN NORTHERN ONTARIO AND OTHER ONTARIO MUNICIPALITIES

A review of the following current CIPs from Northern Ontario municipalities, as well as municipalities of interested identified by Town staff, was conducted to help inform the selection and development of potential Financial Incentive Programs for the Fort Frances CIP Update based on their relevance to the Town's community improvement priorities:

- City of Kenora CIP (February 2026);
- Town of Cochrane Growth CIP (2025);
- City of North Bay Growth CIP (September 2024);
- City of Elliot Lake (May 2024);
- Municipality of Wawa Downtown CIP (March 2024);
- City of Sudbury Strategic Core Areas CIP (Revised February 2024);
- City of Thunder Bay Strategic Core Areas CIP (Adopted August 2016; Amended January 2021);
- Owen Sound CIP (December 2020);
- City of Dryden CIP (December 2019); and
- Town of Hearst Downtown – Highway 11 / Front Street Corridor CIP (Amended July 2019).

Table 5-2 to **Table 5-9** are organized by the theme of the various CIP programs included in the above CIPs, and summarize the name, purpose or objective, and grant amount of each relevant Financial Incentive Program.

5.1.3 MUNICIPAL CIP IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

Based on WSP's background research and experience in assisting municipalities across Ontario with developing CIPs, the following are common practices for CIP implementation and monitoring. The listed items should be considered in updating the Town of Fort Frances CIP:

- Typical annual municipal CIP budgets generally range from approximately $25,000 to $100,000, with municipalities that have recently received CMHC Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF) funding having notably higher budgets to provide significant support for housing development;

- The majority of municipalities use general municipal tax revenue as the primary funding source for CIP annual budgets, while some municipalities use reserve funds and external funding sources, such as the HAF;
- Municipalities use varied approaches to monitor and report back to their municipal Councils and communities on CIP programs and implementation, including the publication of annual CIP monitoring reports for transparency; and
- CIP metrics monitored generally include: the number of grants and grant values awarded; the construction value of CIP-funded projects; increase in building square footage; number of jobs created; and number of new residential units created (including affordable units).

Table 5-2: Accessibility Programs in Northern Ontario CIPs

Accessibility		
Municipal CIP	**Financial Incentive Program and Purpose**	**Incentive Amount**
City of Kenora CIP (2026)	**Accessibility Grant:** To encourage accessibility improvements for existing commercial and mixed use properties and buildings in accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, as amended.	Grant for up to 50% of eligible costs, to a maximum of $10,000, or as determined by Council.
City of Elliot Lake CIP (2024)	**Structural and Accessible Improvements Grant:** To assist with making building improvements required to upgrade existing buildings to bring them into full compliance, or more into compliance, with the current standards of the Ontario Building Code, or to provide additional assistance to support accessibility.	Grant of up to 75% of eligible costs, to a maximum of $5,000.
Municipality of Wawa Downtown CIP (2024)	**Accessibility Improvements Grant:** To improve the accessibility of existing commercial sites and buildings, in accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 and the Municipality's commitment to being an age-friendly community.	Grant for up to 50% of eligible costs, to a maximum of $5,000, or as determined by Council.
City of Owen Sound CIP (2020)	**Accessibility Improvement Grant:** To promote improvements to properties for the purposes of enhancing accessibility. It is intended that any improvements considered under this grant program will meet or exceed the requirements of the	Grant for up to 50% of eligible costs, to a maximum of $10,000.

Accessibility		
Municipal CIP	**Financial Incentive Program and Purpose**	**Incentive Amount**
	Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and the Ontario Building Code.	
City of Dryden CIP (2019)	**Accessibility Grant:** To improve the accessibility of existing buildings in accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005.	Grant for up to 50% of the construction costs, to a maximum of $15,000.

Table 5-3: Brownfield Sites Programs in Northern Ontario CIPs

Brownfield Sites		
Municipal CIP	**Financial Incentive Program and Purpose**	**Incentive Amount**
City of Kenora CIP (2026)	**Environmental Site Assessment Grant:** To promote the completion of environmental studies to understand the type of contamination and potential remediation costs for a contaminated property to support the filing of a Record of Site Condition.	Grant for up to 50% of eligible costs, to a maximum of $6,000, or as determined by Council.
Municipality of Wawa Downtown CIP (2024)	**Brownfields Redevelopment Grant:** To encourage the remediation, rehabilitation, and redevelopment of brownfield sites in the Downtown.	The Municipality may, by by-law, defer or cancel all or part of the municipal taxes on a brownfield site during the Rehabilitation Period and Development Period, as defined in Section 365.1(1) of the Municipal Act (total value deferred or cancelled will not exceed the total eligible costs).

Brownfield Sites		
Municipal CIP	**Financial Incentive Program and Purpose**	**Incentive Amount**
		The Municipality may apply to the provincial Brownfields Financial Tax Incentive Program, on behalf of the owner, to cancel or freeze all or part of the education component of property taxes.
City of Elliot Lake CIP (2024)	**Environmental Site Assessment Grant:** To promote the undertaking of environmental studies for development and redevelopment projects.	A grant of up to 50% to a maximum of $5,000.
City of Owen Sound CIP (2020)	**Brownfield Financial Tax Incentive Program:** To encourage the revitalization of brownfields and promote the environmental cleanup and rehabilitation of vacant or underutilized lands, that have been contaminated from a former use.	The City may pass by-laws to provide a deferral or cancellation of all or a part of the municipal property taxes on a brownfield site during the Rehabilitation Period and Development Period, as defined in Section 365.1(1) of the Municipal Act. The total value of the property tax assistance will not exceed the total eligible costs.
City of Dryden CIP (2019)	**Brownfield Property Tax Assistance Grant:** To encourage the remediation, rehabilitation, and redevelopment of brownfield sites in the City.	The City may, by by-law, defer or cancel all or part of the municipal taxes on a brownfield site during the Rehabilitation Period and Development Period, as defined in Section 365.1(1) of the Municipal Act (total value deferred or cancelled will not exceed the total eligible costs). The City may apply to the provincial Brownfields Financial Tax Incentive Program, on behalf of the

Brownfield Sites		
Municipal CIP	**Financial Incentive Program and Purpose**	**Incentive Amount**
		owner, to cancel or freeze all or part of the education component of property taxes.
	Environmental Site Assessment Grant: To promote the completion of environmental studies by property owners to better understand the type of contamination and potential remediation costs for brownfield sites.	Up to 50% of the cost of undertaking an eligible study, to a maximum of: a) $3,000 per study; and b) 2 studies per property / project.
Town of Hearst Downtown – Highway 11 / Front Street Corridor CIP (2019)	**Brownfield Rehabilitation Grant:** To provide financial assistance for the remediation, rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of brownfield sites.	Annual grant equivalent to 50% of the increase in municipal taxes that result from the project for a period of up to 10 years, or when total grant payments equal total eligible costs, whichever is first.
	Environmental Site Assessment Grant: To support additional studies to understand the type of contamination and potential remediation costs for a brownfield property.	50% of costs, up to a maximum of $6,000 per study, and $12,000 per property / project.
	Green Municipal Fund Program: To provide financial assistance for brownfield remediation above and beyond CIP programs.	Applications are completed on a project-by-project basis and considered through a Request for Proposal (RFP) process.
	Project Feasibility Study: To promote the undertaking of feasibility studies with respect to the costs of reusing, rehabilitating and retrofitting brownfield buildings and lands.	50% of eligible study costs to a maximum of $3,000.

Brownfield Sites		
Municipal CIP	**Financial Incentive Program and Purpose**	**Incentive Amount**
	Property Tax Assistance Program: To encourage brownfield remediation and development by offsetting the costs of property tax increases.	The value of the increase in municipal property tax for 3 years, up to a maximum of the eligible costs.

Table 5-4: Commercial / Residential Revitalization and Intensification Programs in Northern Ontario CIPs

Commercial / Residential Revitalization and Intensification		
Municipal CIP	**Financial Incentive Program and Purpose**	**Incentive Amount**
City of Kenora (2026)	**Ground Floor Commercial Activation Grant:** To assist with the cost of renovating the interior of the ground floor of an existing commercial building, or converting the interior of the ground floor of existing buildings to viable commercial uses (e.g., retail stores, restaurants, uses that support Harbourtown Centre as a tourism destination) to activate the streetscape.	Grant for up to 50% of eligible costs, to a maximum of $25,000, or as determined by Council.
	Sidewalk Patio and Pop-ups Grant: To provide Downtown businesses with the opportunity to utilize publicly owned sidewalks and on-street parking spaces to permit sidewalk patios and pop-up retail spaces.	Grant for up to 100% of eligible costs, to a maximum of $5,000, or as determined by Council.

Commercial / Residential Revitalization and Intensification		
Municipal CIP	**Financial Incentive Program and Purpose**	**Incentive Amount**
City of Elliot Lake CIP (2024)	**Feasibility Study and Design Grant:** To provide financial assistance for feasibility studies for redevelopment or adaptive re-use of buildings or new construction on vacant land.	50% of costs, up to a maximum of $5,000.
	Planning and Design Grant: To offset the costs associated with preparing the necessary plans and drawings for works related to another CIP incentive for improvements to an existing building or structure.	75% of costs, up to a maximum of $1,500.
	Commercial Expansion Grant: To provide financial assistance with the expansion of existing commercial and industrial uses.	A grant of up to $7,500 per project or property at $20 per square foot of expanded floor space.
City of North Bay Growth CIP (2024)	**Building Improvement Grant:** To support the development of new businesses, significant enhancement of existing businesses, or the creation of new residential units.	50% of costs, up to a maximum of $30,000.
	Sidewalk Patio Grant: To provide downtown businesses the opportunity to utilize publicly owned sidewalks and on-street parking spaces to permit sidewalk patios.	100% of professional fees to design the sidewalk patio, up to a maximum of $1,000; and 100% of construction costs, up to a maximum of $1,000.
City of Sudbury Strategic Core Areas CIP (2024)	**Business Improvement Areas Tenant Attraction Program:** To support the creation of new office space and improve existing office spaces in the Business Improvement Area.	The lesser of: 1) 90% of eligible leasehold improvement costs; 2) a ratio of the square foot area by a factor of the term of the lease; 3) $250,000.

Commercial / Residential Revitalization and Intensification		
Municipal CIP	**Financial Incentive Program and Purpose**	**Incentive Amount**
	Commercial Vacancy Assistance Program: To minimize commercial vacancy by providing funds to new permanent or 'pop-up' commercial tenants of vacant commercial space to make permanent interior improvements.	50% of costs up to $5,000, where the applicant has a lease term for 3 to 6 months; 50% of the costs up to $10,000, where the applicant has a lease term greater than 6 months.
	Residential Incentive Program: To encourage residential development in strategic core areas.	$20 per square foot of newly-created or newly-habitable residential space, or $20,000 per dwelling unit, whichever is lesser, up to a maximum of $200,000 per property.
Municipality of Wawa Downtown CIP (2024)	**Activation Grant for Vacant Buildings:** To assist with the costs of converting and/or rehabilitating existing vacant commercial buildings / properties into viable commercial uses, such as retail spaces to reactivate Downtown building stock.	Up to 50% of eligible costs, to a maximum of $10,000 per property or as determined by Council.
City of Thunder Bay Strategic Core Areas CIP (2021)	**Commercial Conversion (Main Floor):** To encourage the redevelopment of existing main floor space to a commercial use.	50% of the cost of renovating and converting main floor residential to a commercial use up to a maximum of $10,000.
	Residential/Office Conversion Grant: To encourage property owners to create a new second storey or higher, residential dwelling units within the project areas through new development, while maintaining commercial on the main floor.	50% of the cost of renovating and converting second floor or higher units to residential or office use up to a maximum of $10,000.

Commercial / Residential Revitalization and Intensification		
Municipal CIP	**Financial Incentive Program and Purpose**	**Incentive Amount**
City of Owen Sound CIP (2020)	**Start-up Space Leasehold Improvement Program:** To assist new businesses and start-up companies to 'set-up-shop' by providing grants for the financing of permanent leasehold improvements to commercial or mixed use spaces that increase the marketability of the property and commercial rental units.	Grant up to 50 percent (50%) of eligible costs, to a maximum of $5,000.
	Vacant Building Conversion and Expansion Grant: To assist in the conversion of existing vacant space into a new or more suitable commercial use or a mixed use, as defined by this Plan.	Grant of 50% of eligible costs, to a maximum of $10,000
City of Dryden CIP (2019)	**Commercial and Rental Housing Conversion and Expansion Grant:** To support new and growing businesses in Dryden and facilitate the provision of affordable housing units in the City.	$5,000 per project and/or property for professional services; with the maximum value not exceeding 15% of the grant that is calculated for eligible construction costs.
Town of Hearst Downtown – Highway 11 / Front Street Corridor CIP (2019)	**Building Rehabilitation Loan:** To support renovations to non-residential properties, promote functional improvements, and support conversions to mixed use buildings.	50% of the eligible costs, up to a maximum loan of $17,500.

Table 5-5: Building Facade / Signage Improvement Programs in Northern Ontario CIPs

Building Façade / Signage		
Municipal CIP	**Financial Incentive Program and Purpose**	**Incentive Amount**
City of Kenora CIP (2026)	**Façade Improvement Grant:** To encourage aesthetic improvements to streetscapes and support the continued maintenance of building stock by upgrading building facades while maintaining Kenora's design guidelines, where feasible.	Grant for up to 50% of eligible costs, to a maximum of $25,000, or as determined by Council.
	Signage Improvement Grant: To promote new signage to contribute to attractive streetscapes.	Grant for up to 50% of eligible costs, to a maximum of $5,000, or as determined by Council.
City of Elliot Lake CIP (2024)	**Building Façade Improvement Grant:** To stimulate investment in the Project Area through the updating of building façades to renew and improve the attractiveness of the buildings.	The grant for the main/front façade improvements for a building or storefront will equal up to 50% to a maximum of: • $6,000 toward the façade improvement for a façade that is 1 storey in height and up to 10 metres in width; • $10,000 toward the façade improvement for a façade that is 2 storeys in height or 10 metres or more in width. The grant for exterior side or rear façade improvements that are visible from the street, public sidewalks, or parking facilities will equal up to 50% to a maximum of:

Building Façade / Signage		
Municipal CIP	**Financial Incentive Program and Purpose**	**Incentive Amount**
		• $5,000 per side/rear façade up to a maximum of $7,500. The maximum façade improvement grant to any one (1) building shall be $17,500.
	Signage and Awnings: To assist with replacing and updating existing signage including sign lighting and awnings.	Grant for up to 50% of costs, to a maximum of $2,000.
City of North Bay Growth CIP (2024)	**Façade Improvement Grant:** To upgrade building facades within the Downtown Target Area in alignment with design criteria.	Grant for up to 50% of costs, to a maximum of $15,000.
City of Sudbury Strategic Core Areas CIP (2024)	**Façade Improvement Grant:** To achieve aesthetic improvements to streetscapes by providing financial assistance for façade improvements.	50% of the costs, to a maximum of $20,000.
Municipality of Wawa Downtown CIP (2024)	**Beautification Grant:** To encourage property owners to undertake minor improvements (e.g., window displays, seasonal displays and lighting, landscaped planters, etc.) to enhance the overall visual appeal of their businesses, buildings, and properties, contributing to a sense of place and community vibrancy in the Downtown.	Up to 50% of the eligible costs, to a maximum of $1,500.
	Building Façade and Signage Improvement Grant: To encourage aesthetic improvements to buildings and properties as well as new attractive and pedestrian-oriented business signage, and to	Facades: Up to 50% of the construction costs, to a maximum of $10,000, or as determined by Council; the maximum grant for professional architectural services or heritage professionals shall not exceed

Building Façade / Signage		
Municipal CIP	**Financial Incentive Program and Purpose**	**Incentive Amount**
	support continued maintenance of Downtown commercial building stock.	50% of the grant that is calculated for eligible construction costs. Signage: Up to 50% of the construction costs, to a maximum of $5,000.
City of Thunder Bay Strategic Core Areas CIP (2021)	**Commercial Façade Improvement Grant:** For the rehabilitation and improvement of facades of buildings within the project area, to achieve aesthetic improvement to the streetscape while respecting the character of the street and historical features of the building.	50% of the cost of improvements to the façade of commercial storefront buildings, up to a maximum of $10,000.
City of Owen Sound CIP (2020)	**Façade and Structural Improvement Grant Program:** The purpose of this program is to improve the appearance and encourage the restoration and rehabilitation of street-facing exteriors of buildings within the City's Downtown and Harbour Area.	The following incentives may be offered to eligible applicants under this program: 1. Waiving Building and Sign Permit fees for façade and structural improvements; 2. Capital grant of up to 33 percent (33%) of the cost of single façade and structural improvements that satisfy design guidelines, to a maximum of $5,000 (per project per year); 3. Capital grant of up to 50 percent (50%) of the cost of façade and structural improvements that satisfy design guidelines and result in second or double facades, to a maximum of $7,500 (per project per year).

Building Façade / Signage		
Municipal CIP	**Financial Incentive Program and Purpose**	**Incentive Amount**
City of Dryden CIP (2019)	**Façade Improvement Grant:** To encourage aesthetic improvements to buildings and properties, and to support continued maintenance of the City's building stock. This grant is intended to promote building and associated streetscape improvements that reflect the City's northern character ad contribute to a vibrant, modern environment in Dryden.	Up to 50% of the construction costs, to a maximum of $15,000.
	Signage Improvement Grant: To promote new attractive and pedestrian-oriented signage that contributes to the visual identity and northern character of the City.	Up to 50% of the construction costs, to a maximum of $4,000.
Town of Hearst Downtown – Highway 11 / Front Street Corridor CIP (2019)	**Building Façade Improvement Grant:** To encourage private investment in building façade improvements in the commercial areas of the CIP project area.	50% of the cost of eligible façade improvements to existing commercial properties to a maximum of $17,500 (façade) and $5,000 (sides), with a maximum of 1 grant per property per year.
	Planning, Design and Architectural Grant: To promote the undertaking of concepts, drawings, and/or architectural plans for site development and building façade improvements.	50% of the costs, to a maximum of $600
	Signage Grant: To promote signage improvements in accordance with the CIP Design Guidelines.	50% of the costs, up to a maximum of $2,500.

Table 5-6: Landscaping and Parking Improvement Programs in Northern Ontario CIPs

Landscaping and Parking		
Municipal CIP	**Financial Incentive Program and Purpose**	**Incentive Amount**
City of Kenora (2026)	**Landscaping and Property Improvement Grant:** To assist with the revitalization of private commercial properties including improvements related to landscaping, public art, and beautification.	Grant for up to 50% of eligible costs, to a maximum of $15,000, or as determined by Council.
City of Elliot Lake CIP (2024)	**Landscaping and Property Improvements Grant:** To stimulate investment in the CIP Project Area by upgrading exterior areas of properties, including parking areas, boulevards, and other landscaping features including roofscapes and murals.	A grant of up to 50% to a maximum of: • $5,000 for plant materials • $10,000 for paving and hardscaping
City of North Bay Growth CIP (2024)	**Parking and Landscape Grant:** To revitalize existing parking lots and parking spaces, to make them safer, more sustainable and visually appealing.	50% of the costs, to a maximum of $5,000.
	Parking and Transit Fee Grant: To help offset the costs of parking permits and transit passes for employees of new and/or expanding businesses and residents in the downtown.	Up to 50% of parking permit fees or monthly transit passes for new and/or expanding businesses for a maximum of 3 years. Net new residential units are eligible for a grant of 50% on parking permits and monthly transit pass fees for 1 year.
City of Owen Sound CIP (2020)	**Landscaping & Property Improvement Grant:** To encourage property owners and tenants of land to improve their properties, including parking areas, through the installation of appropriate	The program provides 2 types of capital grants: 1. A capital grant up to 50 percent (50%) of the eligible costs, to a maximum of $5,000 for eligible projects located outside of a priority area identified

Landscaping and Parking		
Municipal CIP	**Financial Incentive Program and Purpose**	**Incentive Amount**
	landscaping, fencing, exterior lighting, pedestrian connections, street furniture, and patios.	by the City's Landscaping and Property Improvement Grant Guidelines; or 2. A capital grant up to 50 percent (50%) of the eligible costs, to a maximum of $10,000 for eligible projects located within a priority area identified by the City's Landscaping and Property Improvement Grant Guidelines.
City of Dryden CIP (2019)	**Landscaping and Parking Area Improvement Grant:** To assist eligible applicants with improvements to private properties which will optimize the amount and quality of off-street parking, make more efficient use of private parking areas, improve their aesthetics.	Up to 50% of the construction costs, to a maximum of $15,000 (grant for professional landscape architectural services shall not exceed 50% of the grant that is calculated for eligible construction costs).
Town of Hearst Downtown – Highway 11 / Front Street Corridor CIP (2019)	**Parking Area Improvement Grant:** To promote a 'greener' streetscape via landscaping improvements to parking areas and space adjacent to roadways or laneways, or provide funds to resurface and line paint existing parking areas.	50% of the costs, to a maximum of $17,500.

Table 5-7: Municipal Fee Rebate Programs in Northern Ontario CIPs

Municipal Fee Rebates		
Municipal CIP	**Financial Incentive Program and Purpose**	**Incentive Amount**
City of Kenora CIP (2026)	**Planning and Building Permit Fees Grant:** To encourage a range of development by offsetting the cost of applications and permits.	50% of the municipal fees, to a maximum of $5,000.
City of Elliot Lake CIP (2024)	**Application and Permit Fee Rebates:** To stimulate private investment in the CIP Project Area by reducing applicable planning and building permit fees related to a CIP project which improves the building and/or property.	Planning Application Fees: 75% reduction of planning application fees, except legal costs, up to a maximum of $1,500. Building Permit Fees: 100% reduction in building permit fees, up to a maximum of $10,000. Signage Permit Fees: 100% reduction in signage permit fees, up to a maximum of $200. Demolition Permit Fees: 100% reduction in demolition permit fees, up to a maximum of $3,000.
City of North Bay Growth CIP (2024)	**Landfill Tipping Fee Grant:** To rebate the required Landfill Tipping fees needed for the demolition of a building that is derelict.	100% of the Landfill Tipping Fees for sorted material, up to a maximum of $50,000, or 25% of the Landfill Tipping Fees for unsorted material to a maximum of $25,000. 25% will be rebated when the building is demolished, and 75% when the building is replaced with a new building within 1 year.

Municipal Fee Rebates		
Municipal CIP	**Financial Incentive Program and Purpose**	**Incentive Amount**
	Municipal Fee Grant: To encourage development and redevelopment by offsetting the costs of municipal fees.	100% of municipal fees, up to a maximum of $250,000.
City of Sudbury Strategic Core Areas CIP (2024)	**Planning and Building Fee Rebate:** To encourage development and redevelopment by rebating fees associated with Planning Act and Ontario Building Code applications.	The cost of planning application fees up to a maximum of $5,000, and the cost of building permit fees up to a maximum of $30,000.
Municipality of Wawa Downtown CIP (2024)	**Planning and Building Fee Grant:** A rebate of planning application fees (e.g., Official Plan Amendment, Zoning By-law Amendment, Minor Variance, Consent, Site Plan Control) and building permit or demolition permit fees to assist with the administrative costs of development or redevelopment of a site or existing building with commercial or mixed uses, or the development of an affordable rental or purpose-built rental housing project.	Up to 50% of the Municipality's fees up to a maximum of $5,000, to cover the cost of planning, building permit, or demolition permit application fees. Does not include dumping fees.
City of Thunder Bay Strategic Core Areas CIP (2021)	**Planning Application and Building Fee Grant:** To stimulate investment by property owners or tenants of commercial or mixed-use buildings in the Project Areas through the provision of a grant for application costs.	100% of the fee for a planning application and rebating the 100% of the fee for a building permit, up to a maximum of $10,000.
City of Dryden CIP (2019)	**Planning, Building, Demolition, and Landfill Fee Grant:** To encourage infill development and	Planning Fee Grant: Up to 100% of the City's fees, as determined at the discretion of Council and in

Municipal Fee Rebates		
Municipal CIP	**Financial Incentive Program and Purpose**	**Incentive Amount**
	redevelopment that is context-sensitive, attractive, and desirable.	consultation with the City's Administrator and/or the Land Sale and Development Committee, to cover the cost of minor variance applications, zoning by-law, amendment applications, or site plan applications. Building and Demolition Permit Fee Grant: Up to 100% of the City's fees, as determined at the discretion of Council and in consultation with the City's Administrator and/or the Land Sale and Development Committee, to cover the cost of building permit fees or demolition permit fees. Landfill Tipping Fees Grant: Up to 100% of the City's tipping fees at the City of Dryden Highway #502 Landfill for regular (sorted) loads, as determined at the discretion of Council and in consultation with the City's Administrator and/or the Land Sale and Development Committee.
Town of Hearst Downtown – Highway 11 / Front Street Corridor CIP (2019)	**Municipal Fee Grant:** To encourage development and redevelopment by refunding the costs of municipal fees.	Building Permit Fee: 100% of the cost, up to a maximum of $2,500. Landfill Site Tipping Fee: 100% of the cost, up to a maximum of $500.

Table 5-8: Tax Increment Equivalent Grant Programs in Northern Ontario CIPs

Tax Increment Equivalent Grants (TIEGs)		
Municipal CIP	**Financial Incentive Program and Purpose**	**Incentive Amount**
City of Kenora CIP (2026)	**Tax Increment Equivalent Grant (TIEG):** To stimulate development, redevelopment, or adaptive reuse of a property / building for uses including commercial, industrial, residential (with a minimum of 4 new dwelling units created), or mixed uses.	Equal to a declining percentage of the municipal tax increase resulting from the improvements, starting at 100% in year 1 and declining by 20% over the course of 5 years.
Town of Cochrane Growth CIP (2025)	**Tax Increment Equivalent Grant (TIEG):** To encourage the development and redevelopment of eligible properties by providing grants equivalent to the incremental increase in municipal property tax assessment.	Equal to a declining percentage of the municipal tax increase resulting from the improvements, starting at 100% in year 1 and declining by 20% over the course of 5 years.
City of Elliot Lake CIP (2024)	**Property Tax Increment Grant:** To stimulate private investment in the CIP Project Area and to promote the rehabilitation of properties. The effect of this grant would be to phase in any tax increase relating to a revised property assessment resulting from the property improvements.	Equal to a declining percentage of the municipal tax increase resulting from the improvements, starting at 100% in year 1 and declining by 25% over the course of 4 years.
City of North Bay Growth CIP (2024)	**Tax Increment Grant:** To stimulate new private sector investment by businesses and encourage intensification of residential units.	Equal to a declining percentage of the municipal tax increase resulting from the improvements, starting at 100% in year 1 and declining by 25% over the course of 4 years.
City of Sudbury Strategic Core Areas CIP (2024)	**Tax Increment Equivalent Grant (TIEG):** To encourage the development and redevelopment	Standard TIEG: Years 1 to 3, grant for 100% of tax increment. Years 4 and 5, grant for 50% of tax increment.

Tax Increment Equivalent Grants (TIEGs)		
Municipal CIP	**Financial Incentive Program and Purpose**	**Incentive Amount**
	of properties by offsetting the incremental increase in municipal property tax.	Superstack TIEG: 10-year grant where redevelopment includes brownfield redevelopment and/or affordable housing. Corridors TIEG: 5-year grant where development fronting along a strategic corridor includes: a. a minimum of 30 dwelling units up to 100 dwelling units, in the case of multi-residential development; b. a minimum of 30 guest rooms up to 100 guest rooms, in the case of a retirement home development; or, c. 30 beds up to 100 beds, in the case of a long-term care facility development. Years 1-3, grant is equal to 100% of the increment. Years 4-5, grant for 50% of the tax increment. 10-year grant where development fronting along a strategic corridor includes greater than: a. 100 dwelling units, in the case of a multi-residential development; b. 100 guest rooms, in the case of a retirement home development; or

Tax Increment Equivalent Grants (TIEGs)		
Municipal CIP	**Financial Incentive Program and Purpose**	**Incentive Amount**
		c. 100 beds, in the case of a long-term care facility development. Note: The City also has a Parking Structure TIEG.
Municipality of Wawa Downtown CIP (2024)	**Tax Increment Equivalent Grant (TIEG):** To help offset the costs for property owners undertaking commercial, office, multi-residential or mixed use projects where the property assessment increases as a result of development, redevelopment, or major improvement, and there is a subsequent increase in municipal property taxes.	Equal to a declining percentage of the municipal tax increase resulting from the improvements, and shall be paid to the owner each year for a maximum duration, as determined on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of Council and in consultation with the CIP Administrator and/or the Economic Development team.
City of Thunder Bay Strategic Core Areas CIP (2021)	**Tax Grant Rebate Program:** Grants to property owners who rehabilitate their properties to an extent that results in a property value increase as determined by the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC).	100% of the increased municipal taxes attributed strictly to the valuation change in each year of the program. It is recommended that any development that results in new residential uses be eligible for a rebate for a term of up to 10 years. All other uses would be eligible to receive a rebate for a term of up to 5 years.
City of Owen Sound CIP (2020)	**Tax Increment Equivalent Grant:** To stimulate major investment by deferring part of the increase in property taxation as a result of adaptive reuse, building and property redevelopment or rehabilitation, and retrofit works for commercial and/or industrial properties.	Equal to a declining percentage of the municipal tax increase resulting from the improvements, starting at 100% in year 1 and declining by 10% over the course of 10 years.

Tax Increment Equivalent Grants (TIEGs)		
Municipal CIP	**Financial Incentive Program and Purpose**	**Incentive Amount**
City of Dryden CIP (2019)	**Tax Increment Equivalent Grant:** To stimulate infill development and redevelopment projects, which would include those properties and/or buildings that have undergone rehabilitation or significant building improvements.	Equal to a declining percentage of the municipal tax increase resulting from the improvements, and shall be paid to the owner each year for a maximum duration, as determined on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of Council.
Town of Hearst Downtown – Highway 11 / Front Street Corridor CIP (2019)	**Building / Property Improvement Rebate Grant:** To incentivize rehabilitation and redevelopment in the CIP project area.	Equal to a declining percentage of the municipal tax increase resulting from the improvements, starting at 100% in year 1 and declining by 20% over the course of 5 years.

Table 5-9: Other Financial Incentive Programs in Eastern Ontario and Other Ontario CIPs

Other Financial Incentive Programs		
Municipal CIP	**Financial Incentive Program and Purpose**	**Incentive Amount**
City of Kenora (2026)	**Municipal Surplus Land Disposition Program:** To permit the sale and disposition of surplus lands owned by the City of Kenora below market value to promote the development of new residential, commercial, mixed use, or industrial development.	Council will consider the sale and disposition of municipal lands which have been declared surplus below market value, at a cost to be determined by Council.
	Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) Grant: To facilitate the installation of site security improvements.	Grant of up to 75% of CPTED costs, up to a maximum of $10,000, or as determined at the discretion of Council.

Other Financial Incentive Programs		
Municipal CIP	**Financial Incentive Program and Purpose**	**Incentive Amount**
	Energy Efficiency Grant: To encourage property owners to improve energy efficiency of existing commercial and industrial buildings, and to facilitate the installation of small-scale renewable energy systems.	Grant of up to 50% of eligible costs, to a maximum of $10,000, or as determined at the discretion of Council.
	Kenora Economic Development and Growth Incentive: To facilitate and expedite development or redevelopment of key "Priority Properties" within the Community Improvement Project Area, which would result in substantive community benefits, and where their revitalization would function as a broader catalyst to advance revitalization priorities of the CIPA.	
Town of Cochrane Growth CIP (2025)	**Physician Return of Service Incentive Program:** To attract and retain physicians to the Town in order to provide primary care medical services to current and future residents by offering a financial incentive package for physicians who agree to relocate to the Town.	In exchange for a 5-year return of service agreement between the physician and the Town, Council may offer physicians the following incentives: • Relocation grant - $15,000 • Grant - $50,000 to be paid equally over five years, at the beginning of each year. • Interest Free Loan - $100,000 (repayable after 5 years)

Other Financial Incentive Programs		
Municipal CIP	**Financial Incentive Program and Purpose**	**Incentive Amount**
		• Free fitness and pool membership, public skating, and polar bear habitat membership for physician and family, and for the service team.
City of Elliot Lake CIP (2024)	**Tourism Activation Grant:** To encourage investment in tourism operations in the City.	50% up to a maximum of $7,500.
City of North Bay Growth CIP (2024)	**Professional Study Grant:** To encourage housing projects, downtown projects, or industrial development by offsetting the costs of hiring Engineers, Architects, and/or a Qualified Designer.	50% of the costs to a maximum of $5,000 in the Housing Target Area and Industrial Target Area. 75% of the costs to a maximum of $5,000 in the Downtown Target Area.
	Public Art Grant: To promote vibrancy in Downtown North Bay through the provision of public art.	50% up to a maximum of $2,500.
City of Sudbury Strategic Core Areas CIP (2024)	**Feasibility Grant Program:** To stimulate private sector investigation of potential adaptive re-use or redevelopment of buildings or vacant land within the project area. Financial assistance for feasibility studies, building renovation design, energy efficient improvements, and business plans will be provided through this program.	Maximum of $7,500; 50% paid at submission of the final completed study and 50% paid upon building occupancy.
Municipality of Wawa Downtown CIP (2024)	**Public Art Grant:** To support the implementation of public art throughout the Downtown, including on exterior building walls (e.g., vinyl mural installations) fronting a public street or publicly accessible open space.	Up to 50% of the cost of eligible art works and displays on private property (including the exterior of buildings) that are clearly visible and/or accessible to the public, to a maximum of $3,000 per property or as determined by Council.

Other Financial Incentive Programs		
Municipal CIP	**Financial Incentive Program and Purpose**	**Incentive Amount**
City of Owen Sound CIP (2020)	**Study and Design Grant:** To assist property owners with financing the costs of undertaking various studies in support of the completion of appropriate due diligence for eligible projects, and encourage a high standard of urban design in private development.	50% up to a maximum of $10,000; maximum of 2 grants per any 1 property.
	Surplus Lands and Buildings Grant: This program is intended to apply where the City wishes to offer surplus lands or buildings for sale, lease, rent or redevelopment at reduced or no cost or with special development requirements or parameters attached.	Affordable housing projects, as defined by this Plan, may be given top priority under this program. If it is determined that the lands are not suitable for a residential use, they will be offered for other uses through a Request for Proposal (RFP) or through parameters of the agreement of purchase and sale.
	Heritage Property Tax Rebate: To assist owners of designated heritage properties in maintaining and restoring their properties for the benefit of the entire community. This program provides an incentive to owners to make regular investments in the ongoing conservation of their heritage properties.	The Heritage Property Tax Rebate Program provides a rebate of up to 20% of the City, County and education portion of taxes to owners of designated heritage properties each year.
	Vacant Lands Tax Assistance: To assist property owners with financing the increased taxes resulting from the redevelopment of a vacant site in the City's Downtown and Harbour Area.	Equal to a declining percentage of the municipal tax increase resulting from the improvements, starting at 100% in year 1 and declining by 10% over the course of 10 years.

Other Financial Incentive Programs		
Municipal CIP	**Financial Incentive Program and Purpose**	**Incentive Amount**
City of Dryden CIP (2019)	**Energy Efficiency Grant:** To encourage property owners to improve energy efficiency of existing commercial / industrial buildings, and to facilitate the installation of small-scale renewable energy systems.	Up to 50% of eligible project costs, to a maximum of $15,000.
	Municipal Land Disposition Program: To promote the establishment of new development (new commercial, residential, mixed use, or industrial development) on surplus lands owned by the City of Dryden and contribute to the City's long-term revenue base.	The City will consider disposing of municipally-owned lands below market value where an applicant is prepared to enter into a development agreement with the City to be registered on title. "Market value" shall be defined as "the most probable price which Land should bring in a competitive and open market as of a specified date under all conditions requisite to a fair sale, the buyer and seller each acting prudently, knowledgeably and in their own best interests," in accordance with the City's Land Acquisition and Disposition By-law No. 4543-2018.
	Public Art Grant: To encourage the inclusion of public art in building and property improvements on private properties to promote a sense of place, community spirit, and vibrant streetscapes, while contributing to a positive experience for visitors of Dryden.	Up to 50% of the cost of eligible art works and displays on private property (including the exterior of buildings) that are clearly visible and/or accessible to the public, to a maximum of $5,000 per property.

Other Financial Incentive Programs		
Municipal CIP	**Financial Incentive Program and Purpose**	**Incentive Amount**
	Urban Agriculture Grant: To promote community gardens, small-scale agricultural uses, local food production, and the production of value-added agricultural products on private vacant lands as an interim use prior to the development and/or redevelopment of the lands.	Up to 50% of eligible costs, to a maximum of $2,000.
Town of Hearst Downtown – Highway 11 / Front Street Corridor CIP (2019)	**Sale of Public Land for Less than Market Value:** To promote the development of underutilized publicly-owned properties in the CIP Project area.	Council will consider the sale of municipally-owned property at 25% less than market value for developments that meet the intent and Design Guidelines of the CIP.

The following table presents a summary snapshot of the available Financial Incentive Programs organized by the theme in the select Northern Ontario CIPs examined:

- City of Kenora CIP (2026);
- Town of Cochrane Growth CIP (2025);
- City of Elliot Lake CIP (2024);
- Owen Sound CIP (2020);
- City of North Bay Growth CIP (2024):
- City of Sudbury Strategic Core Areas CIP (2024);
- Municipality of Wawa Downtown CIP (2024);
- City of Thunder Bay Strategic Core Areas CIP (2021);
- City of Dryden CIP (2019); and,
- Town of Hearst Downtown – Highway 11 / Front Street Corridor CIP (2019).

Table 5-10: Summary Snapshot of Northern Ontario CIP Financial Incentive Programs

Financial Incentive Program Theme	Northern Ontario Municipalities with Available Financial Incentive Programs									
	Kenora CIP (2026)	Cochrane Growth CIP (2025)	Elliot Lake CIP (2024)	Owen Sound CIP (2020)	North Bay Growth CIP (2024)	Sudbury Strategic Core Areas CIP (2024)	Wawa Downtown CIP (2024)	Thunder Bay Strategic Core Areas CIP (2021)	Dryden CIP (2019)	Hearst Downtown – Hwy 11 / Front Street Corridor CIP (2019)
Accessibility	●		●	●			●		●	
Brownfield Sites	●		●	●			●		●	●
Commercial / Residential Vitality and Intensification	●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Building Façade / Signage	●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Landscaping and Parking	●		●	●	●	●	●		●	●
Municipal Fee Rebates	●	●	●		●	●	●	●	●	●
Tax Increment Equivalent Grant	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Other Programs	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●

5.2 PRELIMINARY CIP RECOMMENDATIONS

This section presents a series of preliminary recommendations for the updated CIP.

5.2.1 COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT PROJECT AREA

As previously noted, the Town's 2025 Official Plan (OP) prescribes the following Community Improvement Project Areas:

- Downtown Community Improvement Project Area, comprised of lands designated as Mixed Use land use designation in the OP; and
- Brownfields Community Improvement Project Area, consisting of lands designated as Industrial Employment and Highway Commercial in the OP.

Based on discussions with Town staff, members of Council, and members of the local business and economic development at the CIP Visioning Workshop, it is recommended that the Town expand the Community Improvement Project Area to include all lands within the municipal boundary. In order to designate a Town-wide Community Improvement Project Area, an Official Plan Amendment would be required to be initiated by the Town, which can occur concurrently with the CIP Update project process. The Official Plan Amendment would need to be approved first, prior to the designation of the Town-wide Community Improvement Project Area by by-laws, and the adoption of the updated CIP.

Program Areas

The following Program Areas are recommended to be established within the updated CIP, where specific Financial Incentive Programs may be available:

1. **Town-Wide Program Area** – encompassing the entire municipal boundary, where Financial Incentive Programs related to housing and select commercial / industrial improvements can be made available.
2. **East and West Gateway Program Area** – including lands primarily designated Highway Commercial in the Town's Official Plan, located along Highway 11 in the west, and Highway 11 / Mill Road in the east.
3. **Downtown / Mixed Use Program Area** – comprised of Downtown Fort Frances and the Shevlin Wood Yard area, which are designated Mixed Use in the Town's Official Plan.

4 **Industrial Program Area** – including lands designated Industrial Employment in the Town's Official Plan, which are generally located north of the CN Rail and north and south of 8th Street, between McIrvine Road and Cornwall Avenue.

5.2.2 EXISTING FINANCIAL INCENTIVE PROGRAMS

The following table presents recommendations related to the existing Financial Incentive Programs included in the 2003 CIP, including whether the program should be maintained, removed, or modified.

Table 5-11: Recommendations for Changes to the 2003 CIP Financial Incentive Programs

Financial Incentive Program and Purpose	Recommendations
Property Value Revitalization Program (Residential, Multi, and Commercial Classes): To stimulate new development and the redevelopment of vacant or under-utilized lands and buildings.	• **Remove and replace program** with distinct programs to support multi-unit residential and affordable housing development, mixed use development, and the development and revitalization of existing commercial buildings and properties, such as: Accessibility Grant; Affordable Housing Grant; Downtown Residential Conversion and Intensification Grant (Upper Storeys); Façade Improvement Grant; Multi-Unit Housing Grant; Planning and Building Permit Fees Grant; Signage Improvement Grant; Tax Increment Equivalent Grant; and Vacant Commercial Buildings Activation Grant.
Diversification Development Program: To encourage growth and stabilization in both jobs and municipal taxation revenue for the community by providing financial incentives for the development or redevelopment of properties for commercial / industrial uses in sectors such as manufacturing, processing, machining, environmental or technology related businesses.	• **Remove and replace program** with distinct programs to support building and property improvements on commercial and industrial properties, such as: Commercial / Industrial Property Improvement Grant (for both interior and exterior improvements); Energy Efficiency Grant; Landscaping and Property Improvement Grant; and Tax Increment Equivalent Grant.
Brownfields Development Program: To encourage and promote brownfields redevelopment and mitigate the costs of developing on brownfields by providing	• **Remove and replace program** with distinct programs, including an Environmental Site Assessment Grant and a Brownfields

Financial Incentive Program and Purpose	Recommendations
financial incentives to clean them up and replace them with productive economic land uses.	Redevelopment Property Tax Assistance Program.
Façade Loan Program: To improve the appearance of commercial properties through the Town of Fort Frances.	• **Remove and replace program** with a Façade Improvement Grant, rather than a loan, which is more onerous to administer.

5.2.3 NEW RECOMMENDED FINANCIAL INCENTIVE PROGRAMS

The following table presents additional new Financial Incentive Programs that may be considered for inclusion in the updated CIP, based on a review of current community improvement needs and priorities, as well as the scan of other municipal CIPs.

Table 5-12: New Recommended Financial Incentive Programs

Financial Incentive Program	Purpose	Eligible Program Area
Housing		
Additional Residential Units Grant	• To support the development of additional residential units on the same property as a single detached, semi-detached, or townhouse dwelling.	• Town-Wide
Multi-Unit Housing Grant	• To support multi-unit residential development consisting of four (4) or more new dwelling units (rental or ownership), a percentage of which must be maintained as affordable housing.	• Town-Wide
Downtown Residential Conversion and Intensification Grant	• To encourage the creation of new residential units and to improve the condition of existing upper-storey or rear residential units within mixed-use buildings in downtown Fort Frances.	• Downtown / Mixed Use
Commercial / Industrial Building and Property Improvements		
Accessibility Improvements Grant	• To improve accessibility to existing commercial and mixed-use properties and buildings in accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, as amended.	• Downtown / Mixed Use • East and West Gateway

Financial Incentive Program	Purpose	Eligible Program Area
Beautification Grant	• To encourage property owners to undertake minor improvements (e.g., window displays, seasonal displays and lighting, landscaped planters, etc.) to enhance the overall visual appeal of their businesses, buildings, and properties, contributing to a sense of place and community vibrancy in the Downtown.	• Downtown / Mixed Use
Brownfields Property Tax Assistance Program	• To encourage the remediation and rehabilitation of brownfield sites by providing a cancellation of part or all of the property tax increase on a property that is undergoing or has undergone remediation and development to assist with payment of the cost of environmental remediation.	• Downtown / Mixed Use • East and West Gateway • Industrial
Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) Grant	• To facilitate the installation of site security improvements associated with commercial, mixed use (with ground floor commercial), and industrial buildings and properties.	• Downtown / Mixed Use • East and West Gateway • Industrial
Energy Efficiency Improvements Grant	• To encourage property owners to improve energy efficiency of existing commercial, industrial, and mixed-use buildings, and to facilitate the installation of small-scale renewable energy systems.	• Downtown / Mixed Use • East and West Gateway • Industrial
Environmental Site Assessment Grant	• To promote the completion of environmental studies to better understand the type of contamination and potential remediation costs for brownfield sites.	• Town-wide
Business Start-up and Vacant Commercial Buildings Activation Grant	• To assist with the cost of leasehold improvements and renovating the interior of the ground floor of an existing commercial building, or converting the interior of the ground floor of existing buildings to viable commercial uses (e.g.,	• Downtown / Mixed Use • East and West Gateway

Financial Incentive Program	Purpose	Eligible Program Area
	retail stores, restaurants, entertainment venues, tourism businesses).	
Commercial / Industrial Property Improvement Grant	• To assist with interior and/or exterior improvements to commercial and industrial buildings and properties, including interior retrofits, landscaping, paving, or streetscape improvements.	• Downtown / Mixed Use • East and West Gateway • Industrial
Façade and Signage Improvement Grant	• To encourage aesthetic improvements to buildings and properties as well as new attractive and pedestrian-oriented business signage, and to support continued maintenance of commercial building stock	• Downtown / Mixed Use • East and West Gateway
Sidewalk Patio and Pop-ups Grant	• To provide businesses with the opportunity to utilize publicly owned sidewalks and/or on-street parking spaces to permit sidewalk patios and pop-up retail spaces.	• Downtown / Mixed Use
Municipal		
Planning and Building Permit Fees Grant	• To encourage development and redevelopment by offsetting the costs of required applications and permits.	• Town-wide
Tax Increment Equivalent Grant	• A percentage rebate on the annual municipal property taxes (municipal portion only) resulting from the increased assessment value generated by property development / redevelopment, which offsets the increase in municipal property tax resulting from property improvements.	• Town-wide

5.2.4 OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS RELATED TO ELIGIBILITY AND IMPLEMENTATION

The following modifications to the existing CIP are recommended with respect to general eligibility criteria for properties and projects, and for the implementation and administration of the CIP:

- Restructure the CIP to include the following sections:

  - Introduction, including subsections outlining the purpose of the CIP, a community profile, and the Community Improvement Project Area where the CIP applies;
  - CIP Vision and Goals;
  - Municipal Leadership Strategy;
  - Financial Incentive Programs, with subsections for each individual Program including its purpose, eligible costs, program details (i.e., program value), and program-specific eligibility criteria;
  - Implementation, including subsections for interpretation and administration of the CIP, general eligibility requirements for all CIP applicants; an outline of the CIP application process; a recommended marketing strategy; a recommended monitoring and evaluation program; and information regarding the process for CIP amendments.
- In the general eligibility criteria, permit subsequent applications for certain grants (e.g., Façade and Signage Improvement Grant) for the same property where there has been a change of property ownership, change of business, or the previously completed improvements funded through a prior grant have reached the end of their lifecycle and require rehabilitation;
- Where a proposed project is for affordable housing, the definition of "affordable" should be consistent with the definition provided in the Provincial Planning Statement, 2024 (PPS 2024), as may be amended by the Province from time to time, and which is based on the definition established by the CMHC. This definition may change as required to comply with Federal and/or Provincial initiatives and amendments. Further, at the sole discretion of Council, an alternative definition of "affordable" may be applied to an eligible application that meets the eligibility criteria of the CIP. Eligible affordable housing projects should be permitted to comprise a mix of affordable and market rent units;

5.2.5 Municipal Leadership Opportunities

The majority of municipal CIPs identify municipal leadership opportunities, including activities and improvements to public lands, policies, and regulations, that the municipality may undertake over the lifespan of the CIP to help achieve its vision and goals. These initiatives can complement the investments undertaken by private property owners and their projects.

The following municipal leadership activities may be included as recommendations for future improvements to be undertaken by the Town to contribute to achieving the vision and goals of the CIP:

- Identification and declaration of municipally owned surplus lands, to allow for their sale and disposition for future development;
- Continued support for opportunities and partnerships with developers and organizations for investment and development in the Town;
- Advancement of the following development and redevelopment opportunities across the Town, including:
  - Redevelopment of the Shevlin Woodyard;
  - Continued redevelopment of the former Fort Frances Mill Properties;
  - Development of the Town-owned industrial lands on 8th Street;
  - Installation of municipal services running north up McIrvine Avenue;
  - Continued support for commercial development at the west end of Town in proximity to McIrvine Avenue and King's Highway 11;
- Consideration of gateway and wayfinding improvements in key areas of the Town, most notably at the Gateway lands at the eastern entrance to Town, at the western limit of Town along King's Highway 11, and the Fort Frances-Internal Falls International Bridge border crossing. There is some existing wayfinding signage located along the Rainy River waterfront pathway on Front Street, however the Town may wish to consider additional signage in other key locations of the Town to assist with guiding visitors and passersby into Fort Frances, and encouraging visitation to key destinations within the Town. Permanent and digital signage could be considered;
- Preparation of Town-branded brochures and maps in both print and digital format, to identify key destinations and landmarks in the area, as well as local cultural and recreational activities (e.g., Fort Frances Library, events at Rainy Lake Square and other municipal parks, local attractions like the Fort Frances Museum, shops, and restaurants);
- As also identified in the Town's Recreation Master Plan and Active Transportation Plan, consideration by the Town for the development of enhanced and added infrastructure that would support active transportation, such as walking and cycling, and improved accessibility. Such features could include pedestrian paths and walkways, bicycle parking, and street furniture;

- Addition of lighting, including street lighting in key areas of the Town, such as the Gateway Area, downtown core, International Border crossing, municipal parks, and the Fort Frances Community Garden (FFCG)on Lillie Avenue; and
- Support for the inclusion of seasonal sidewalk/street patios in the downtown core during the summer months.

6.0 NEXT STEPS

The Draft CIP will be prepared and made available for public review in Summer 2026. It will be presented in Summer 2026 at a virtual Public Open House and a virtual Statutory Public Meeting, where members of the public can make delegations to Council with their comments on the proposed CIP.

The Final CIP will then be prepared and presented to Council for consideration of Adoption, which is anticipated to occur in September 2026.

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Appendix A:

Visioning Workshop Results

APPENDIX A: VISIONING WORKSHOP RESULTS

A Visioning Workshop was held on June 17, 2026, from 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm at the Fort Frances Public Library Technology Centre, Shaw Community Hub. Participants included members of Town Council and staff, the Fort Frances Chamber of Commerce, Business Improvement Area (BIA) Committee, Rainy River Future Development Corporation (RRFDC), and Rainy River District Services Administration Board (DSSAB).

EXERCISE 1: MAPPING COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT PROJECT AREA

The purpose of this exercise was to confirm the boundaries of the Community Improvement Project Area (CIPA), where the Financial Incentive Programs in the updated CIP would be available. Participants were asked to review the existing boundary of the 2003 CIPA, which is comprised of 3 distinct Project Areas, that together encompass the entire municipal boundary. Participants were also asked to identify specific sites or properties which represent key opportunity areas for improvement.

During the workshop, participants discussed key opportunity areas to be considered in the updated CIP, where Financial Incentive Programs would be available:

- Downtown;
- Former Mill lands;
- Shevlin Wood Yard;
- Industrial area north of 8th Street;
- Commercial properties along Highway 11;
- West Gateway properties; and
- Residential areas.

Figure A-1: Workshop input showing potential CIP Program Areas

Participants concluded that the updated CIP should continue to include all lands within the municipal boundary. Participants discussed the potential to include specific geographic Program Areas where certain Financial Incentive would be available.

EXERCISE 2: A VISION FOR THE FORT FRANCES CIP

Workshop participants were asked to use the online Mentimeter tool to answer questions regarding existing conditions in Fort Frances, as well as how they envision the Town in the future. The words and statements generated through this exercise will be used in developing a Vision Statement for the updated CIP.

Participants were asked to **describe in 1 or 2 words, what comes to mind when you think of Fort Frances today.** Responses are summarized below, with recurring answers shown in **bold**.

- **Potential**
- **In transition**
- **Stagnant**
- Engaged
- First Nation
- Full of potential
- Growth
- Tourism
- Community centric
- Under-utilized
- **Opportunity**
- **Resistant to change**
- Vibrant
- Small town community
- Inviting
- Need for new things
- Small
- Aging
- Complacent
- Stuck in the Past

The answers were formatted into a "word cloud". The words which were identified by workshop participants most frequently are shown more prominently in the following image.

Participants were then asked to **describe in 1 or 2 words, how they envision Fort Frances in the future**. Responses are summarized below, with recurring answers shown in **bold**.

- **District Hub**
- **Prospering**
- **Reconciliation and partnerships with First Nations**
- **Increase in housing**
- Industrial growth
- Community engagement
- Modernized
- Diversification
- Sustainable
- Host to Region
- **Destination**
- **Tourism**
- **Energy Hub** (including green and renewable energy)
- **Growth** (planned, energetic)
- Lively
- Vibrant
- Business growth
- Natural integration
- Revitalized downtown
- Vital to the district

The answers were formatted into a "word cloud". The words which were identified by workshop participants most frequently are shown more prominently in the following image.

Participants were then split into four (4) groups and asked to **develop a draft Vision Statement for the updated CIP** by expanding on the thoughts and perspectives shared in the previous exercises. The statements developed by the groups are provided below:

> "Fort Frances will foster a thriving, energetic, prosperous community by strengthening its role as the district hub for tourism, commerce, recreation, and investment."
>
> "The Town of Fort Frances will act as a prosperous destination in the North, with a self-sustaining energy that fosters economic diversity, growth, and tourism."
>
> "The Town of Fort Frances recognizes its position as a gateway of tourism, energy, and development, striving to be the host of the region, while servicing the district of Rainy River and its neighbours."
>
> "The Town of Fort Frances will support energetic growth for the Town to support the community and Rainy River District."

From these draft vision statements, it is evident that participants envision the Town as a vibrant, self-sustaining, and prosperous regional hub, that attracts tourism and investment while supporting economic growth and serving the broader District.

EXERCISE 3: GOAL SETTING

Expanding on their draft Vision Statements, each group of participants was asked to develop a series of complementary goals which potential community improvement projects could be evaluated against, to determine whether they meet the intent of the updated CIP.

Suggested goals included to:

- Prioritize accessibility and community safety;
- Increase attractive neighbourhoods and business areas;
- Attract primary industries while encouraging retention of existing businesses;
- Invest in waterfront development;
- Facilitate Downtown beautification and improve accessibility;
- Encourage the development and redevelopment of underutilized and vacant land and buildings; and
- Increase housing options including affordable housing, condos, apartments, etc.

Secondly, participants were asked to **identify any new Financial Incentive Programs that should be considered for inclusion in the updated CIP**. Responses included:

- Façade improvement grants;
- Business retrofits;
- Property revitalization;
- Vacancy reduction grants;
- Pop-up retail and business incubator programs;
- Construction / renovation; and
- Programs aimed at business retention.

Appendix B:

Community Survey Results

APPENDIX B: COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

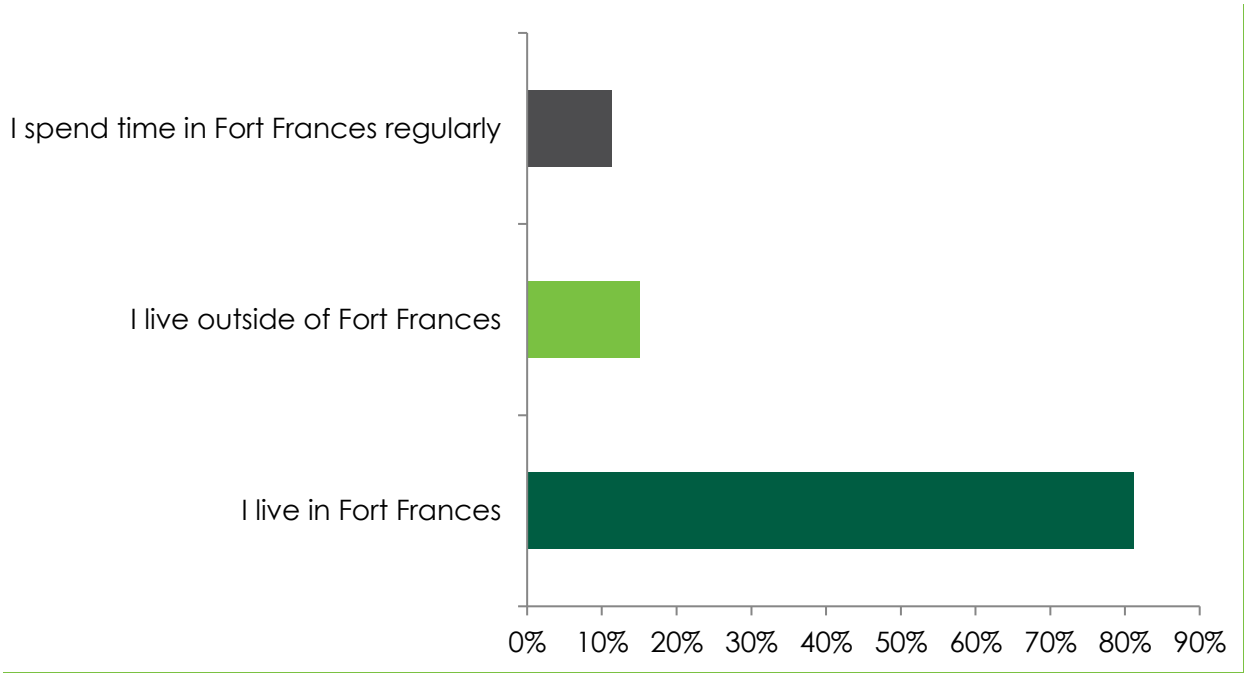
An online Community Survey was available from June 2 to June 21, 2026, through the online platform, Survey Monkey. The intent of the Survey was to gain input from residents on a vision, opportunities, and priorities to consider through the CIP Update. Participants were invited to review the Draft Community Improvement Plan Background and Recommendations Report (June 2026), to assist in completing the survey.

The Community Survey included nine (9) questions. A total of 54 responses to the Community Survey were received, which will be used to inform the development of the draft Vision Statement, goals, and Financial Incentive Programs to be included in the updated CIP.

SUMMARY OF INPUT RECEIVED

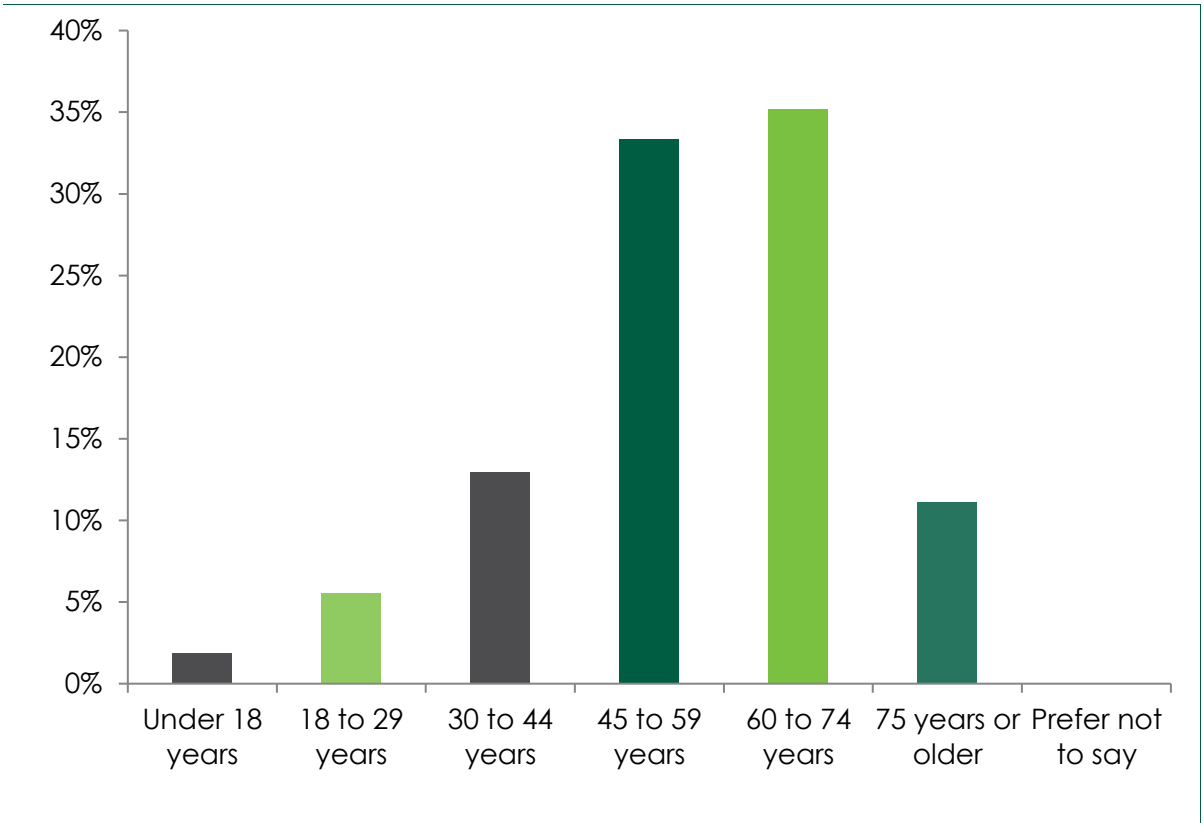
Question 1: Which best describes you? Please select all that apply:

Over 81% respondents indicated they live in Fort Frances, 15.1% live outside of Fort Frances, and just over 11% regularly spend time in the Town.



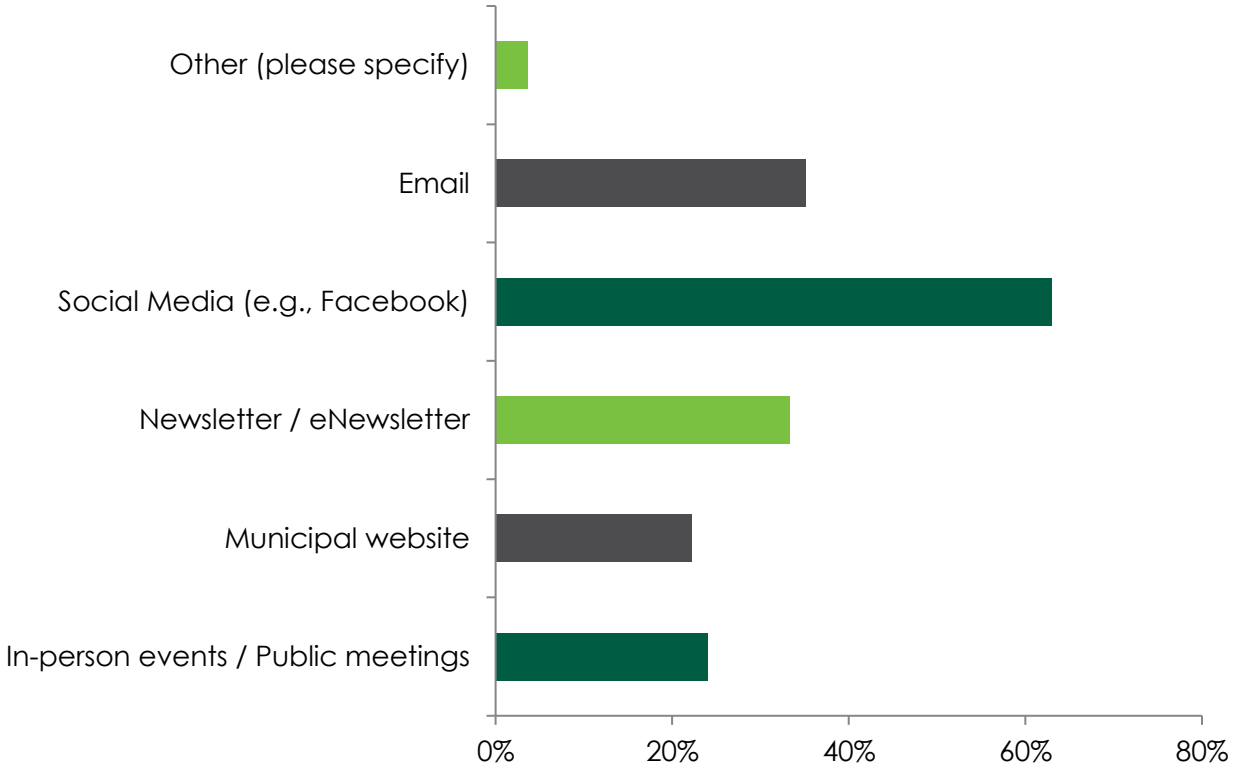
Question 2: Please select your age range.

The majority of respondents (35.2%) were 60-74 years old, closely followed by the 45-59 age group (33.3%).



Question 3: What is your preferred method(s) of receiving communication and engaging on the CIP project? Select all that apply.

The majority of respondents (62.9%) identified that they would prefer to receive communication and engage on the CIP Update project through Social Media (e.g., Facebook).



Question 4: Describe in 1-2 sentences the Town of Fort Frances as it is today. Consider what the Town offers to residents and visitors, and how you would describe its character.

The majority of responses indicated that the Town has many opportunities to improve its character and economic vitality. Generally, residents feel that the Town has significant untapped potential. Responses are summarized below:

- **Community Vision, Identity and Direction:** Survey results suggest a perceived lack of clear direction and vision for the Town's future. Respondents indicated that residents feel that the Town has been stagnant in growth and has struggled to redefine itself following the closure of the Paper Mill. While there are concerns about long-term economic sustainability, many respondents also emphasize the Town's strong potential. There is a clear desire for strong cohesive leadership, a vision, and strategies to attract investment and guide future growth.
- **Economic Decline and Downtown Revitalization:** Respondents highlighted concerns regarding limited economic activity, a lack of new businesses, and underutilized spaces. The downtown core (e.g., Scott Street), was identified as a key opportunity

area, currently described as having vacant buildings, unattractive spaces, and limited street trees and character. Respondents expressed that there is a desire to improve the safety of public spaces and downtown areas, noting issues which may affect participation, perceptions of safety, and decisions about living or visiting the Town.

- **Tourism Opportunities:** Survey respondents generally expressed that Fort Frances has untapped tourism potential, specifically noting limited tourism services, underdeveloped waterfront access, and missed opportunities to attract visitors. Respondents all indicated that the Town is currently perceived more as a pass-through location than a destination.
- **Infrastructure and Public Realm Improvements**: Feedback highlighted concerns about infrastructure conditions, including road quality and general maintenance of public spaces. Some respondents noted that parts of Town can appear "run-down" or lack visual appeal, and that there are limited community activities and events.

Question 5: Describe in 1-2 sentences the Town of Fort Frances as you wish to see it in the future. Consider what will draw people and businesses to Fort Frances. How will the Town look and feel?

The majority of respondents envision a positive future for the Town of Fort Frances, with a strong desire for a safe, vibrant, and forward-looking community. Responses are summarized below:

- **Economic Vitality and Business Growth:** Respondents fostering a thriving local economy with more businesses, services, and employment opportunities as a key priority. There is a desire to incentivize new businesses (e.g., restaurants, shops, markets, food trucks, etc.), and support for small businesses and options for extended business hours.
- **Downtown Revitalization and Public Space Enhancement:** Many respondents envision Fort Frances as having a lively, vibrant, and welcoming downtown. Respondents expressed a general desire to improve the downtown appearance, including revitalized streetscapes and landscaping, improved accessibility, and walkability. Common responses included the need to increase the number of downtown amenities, shops, green spaces, parks, and event spaces, to support year-round community use.
- **Tourism Development:** There is a common desire among respondents to reposition Fort Frances as a destination rather than a pass-through town, by building

experiences that encourage visitors to stop, stay, and spend time. Respondents noted numerous ways to enhance tourism in the Town, including leveraging the Town's waterfront, trails and parks, creating unique tourist attractions (e.g., sturgeon statue), enhancing gateway experiences at Town entry points, and improving signage and visitor services.

- **Liveability and Recreation:** Respondents envision Fort Frances as a vibrant, growing community, emphasizing the need for increased residential capacity to support this growth, and improvements to the perceived safety in the Town. There is a strong desire to increase the amount of community events and amenities for all ages.

Question 6: On a scale of 1 to 3 (1 – very important, 2 – somewhat important, 3 – least important), how would you rank the following community improvements?

The top five (5) most important topics based on survey responses were:

- Improving energy efficiency of commercial / industrial buildings;
- Improving commercial building signage;
- Encouraging housing supply and options throughout the Town for additional residential units (e.g., basement suites, tiny homes / garden suites in a backyard) on municipally serviced lots;
- Improving commercial building facades; and
- Enhancing landscaping and parking areas.

Question 7: Are there specific properties or locations in Fort Frances that you believe need improvement, redevelopment, or revitalization?

In total, there were 31 answers to this question. The key properties and locations that were identified as priority areas for improvement are summarized as follows:

- Former Mill Site;
- Waterfront areas;
- Marina area;
- Shevlin Wood Yard;
- Sunny Cove;
- Downtown area (e.g., Scott Street, Central Avenue, downtown parking areas);

- Midtown motel;
- Old tourism building / tourist bureau;
- Rainy Lake Square and Market Square; and
- Gateway Area (e.g., bridge entry).

Question 8: What elements of Fort Frances' heritage and character are important to preserve?

In total, there were 28 answers to this question. Some of the commonly listed elements are summarized as follows:

- Lil Amik;
- Relationships and connections with First Nations communities;
- Museum;
- Rainy River and Lake;
- Heritage / older buildings;
- Outdoor areas and parks;
- The Hallet; and
- Waterfront areas.

Question 9: Is there anything else you would like to share with the Town's CIP project team?

In general, most of the other comments and concerns emphasized previous responses that were provided in the other survey questions. Respondents reiterated the need to address vulnerable populations and the necessary services for this community. Other responses included:

- Desire for enhanced recreational opportunities;
- Enhanced advertisement of local opportunities for local contractors;
- Support for incentives for people to invest in the Town; and
- Need for road repairs.

Appendix C:

CIP Prospective Applicant Survey Results

APPENDIX C: CIP PROSPECTIVE APPLICANT SURVEY RESULTS

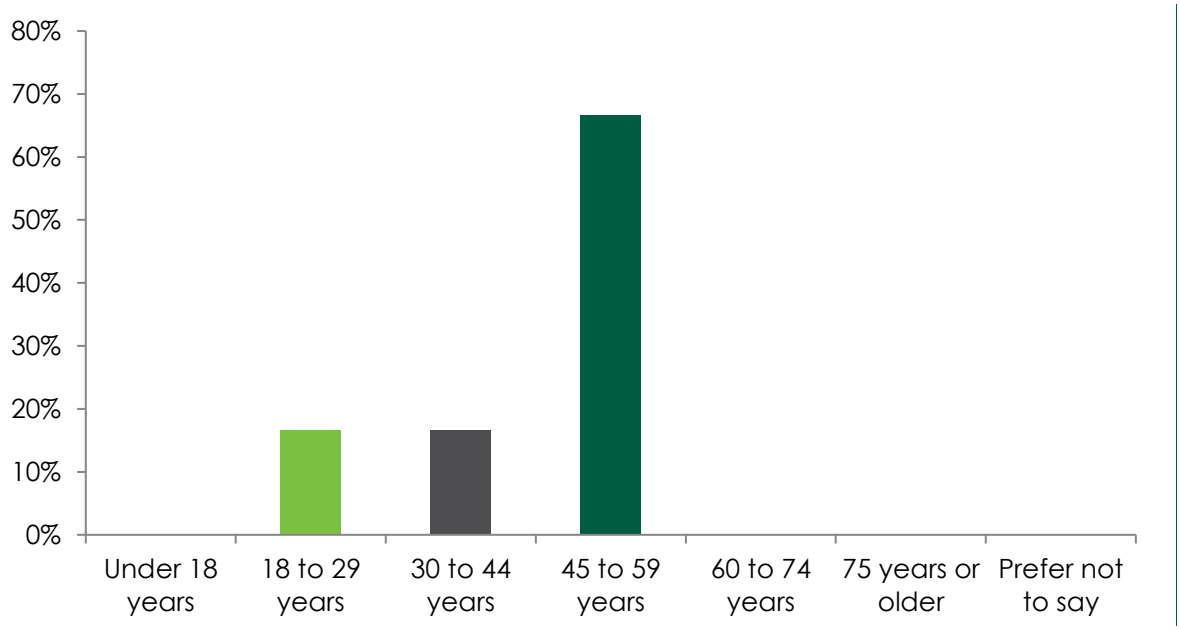
A separate CIP Prospective Applicant Survey was also available from June 2 to June 21, 2026, through the online platform, Survey Monkey. The Survey was directed to local property and business owners / operators as prospective applicants for the future Financial Incentive Programs in the updated CIP. Feedback was sought on the existing strengths, challenges, and opportunities facing property and business owners / operators in the Town. The Survey included questions to identify specific properties and areas in need of improvements, as well as ideas for specific Financial Incentive Programs that would be of interest for potential applicants.

A total of six (6) responses to the CIP Prospective Applicant Survey were received.

SUMMARY OF INPUT RECEIVED

Question 1: Please select your age range.

The majority of respondents (67%) were 45 to 59 years old.



Question 2: Which of the statements below best describe you? Choose all that apply.

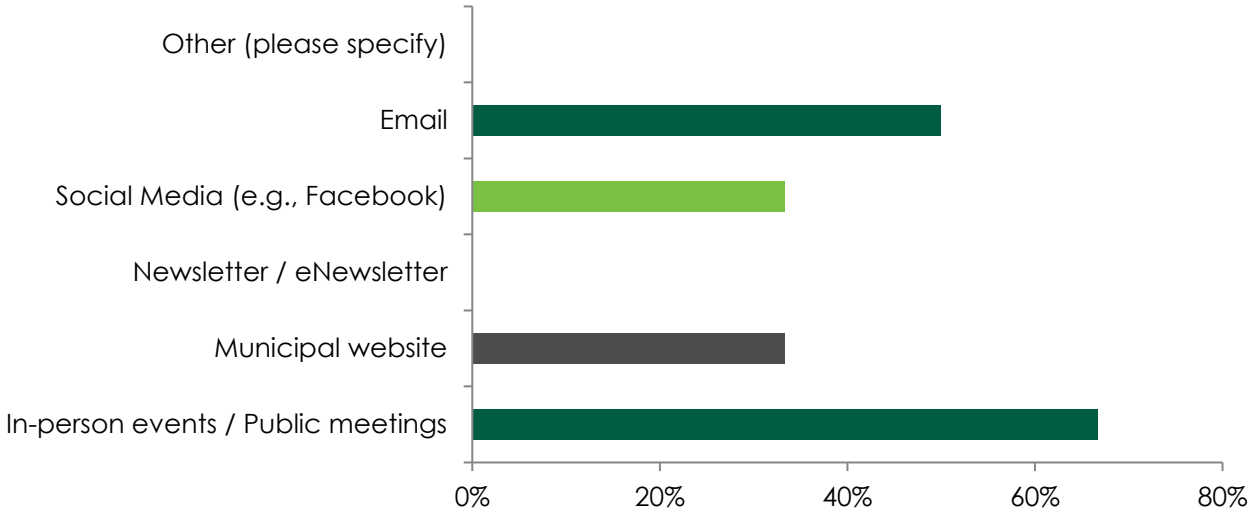
All respondents indicated they operate a business in Fort Frances (40%), and/or are an employee of a business in Fort Frances (60%)

Question 3: How many years have you had your property / business in Fort Frances?

Half of the respondents (50%) indicated they have had their property / business in Fort Frances for 3 to 5 years, and the other half (50%) have had their property / business for over 10 years.

Question 4: What is your preferred method(s) of receiving communication and engaging on the CIP project? Select all that apply.

Respondents indicated they would prefer to receive communications via in-person events / meetings (67%), email (50%), social media (e.g., Facebook) (33%), or the Town's website (33%).



Question 5: Describe in 1-2 sentences the Town of Fort Frances as it is today. Consider what the Town offers to residents and visitors, and how you would describe its character.

One (1) response was received. The respondent described the character of Fort Frances as a gateway to an outdoorsman's paradise, while being on the cusp of being a leader in green energy and establishing itself as a bedroom community for the regional employers of mining, forestry, manufacturing, and energy.

Question 6: Describe in 1-2 sentences the Town of Fort Frances as you wish to see it in the future. Consider what will draw people and businesses to Fort Frances. How will the Town look and feel?

One (1) response was received. The respondent indicated a desire for the Town to continue investing strategically in families, amenities, and recreational activities, while enhancing and expanding the Town's existing community events and entertainment.

Question 7: On a scale of 1 to 3 (1 – very important, 2 – somewhat important, 3 – least important), how would you rank the following community improvements?

The highest rated community improvements included:

- Improving commercial building signage; and
- Redevelopment of former industrial or contaminated sites ("brownfields").

Question 8: Are there specific properties or locations in Fort Frances that you believe need improvement, redevelopment, or revitalization?

The following properties/locations were identified as priority areas:

- White Pine, Plaza Lanes and Dough and Deli lots;
- USA Entrance Gateway;
- Former Mill Yard;
- Shevlin Wood Yard;
- MSC expansion; and
- Tourism bureau.

Question 9: Why do you choose to locate your business in Fort Frances? (Select all that apply)

Respondents primarily choose to locate their business in Fort Frances because of personal ties to the Town.

Question 10: What are the existing strengths in Fort Frances that contribute to your business' success?

One (1) response was received, which indicated that the synergy amongst multiple small businesses in the Town is what contributes to their business' success.

Question 11: What are the top challenges for you as a property / business owner or operator in Fort Frances?

Challenges identified as a property / business owner or operator in Fort Frances included:

- The size of the community;
- Lack of staffing; and
- Challenges with support from the community.

Question 12: What opportunities do you see in Fort Frances that could encourage economic development, private investment, and tourism?

Opportunities identified included:

- Tourism product development on Rainy Lake, Rainy River, and in First Nation communities; and
- Growing hospitality and conference capabilities, which could lead to spin off developments.

Question 13: If Financial Incentive Programs were offered by the Town for property and business owners / operators in Fort Frances, what types of programs would you potentially apply for or be interested in to help you improve your property / building? Please rank your interest from high to low, with 1 being the highest and 10 being the lowest.

Respondents ranked their interest in the following potential Financial Incentive Programs:

- **Highest interest (ranked 1):**
  - Municipal Planning and Development Application / Building Permit Fees Grant;
  - New Housing / Accommodation Grant;
  - Signage Improvement Grant;
  - Small Business / Start-Up Grant;
  - Vacant Commercial Buildings Activation Grant;
- **Ranked 2:** Commercial / Industrial Building Improvement Grant;
- **Ranked 3:**
  - Building Façade Improvement Grant;
  - Energy Efficiency Grant; and
- **Ranked 4:** Accessibility Improvement Grant.

Town of Fort Frances

Community Improvement Plan Update

FINAL Community Improvement Plan
Background and Recommendations Report

July 2026