

Open House for Niagara Falls' New Community Improvement Plan

June 18, 2025, 6:00 - 8:00 PM

Please sign in and take a comment sheet.



What is a Community Improvement Plan?

The Province of Ontario allows municipalities to create incentive programs called Community Improvement Plans (CIPs). The purpose of a CIP is to encourage investments for community development.

CIPs help advance local goals, such as:

- Creating more housing
- Attracting businesses and jobs
- Promoting sustainable development
- Revitalizing neighbourhoods



Why is the City developing a new Community Improvement Plan?

- Our City is growing which brings opportunities to support local employers, build more diverse housing options, and shape a greener, more resilient future.
- The City's current CIP programs have had limited uptake and can be improved to better reflect today's priorities of Council and the needs of residents.
- We are looking for feedback on how the New CIP can address Environmental Sustainability, Urban Intensification, and Economic Prosperity Generation.



**Environmental
Sustainability**



Intensification



**Economic Prosperity
Generation**

Typical Incentive Programs

CIPs typically have the following general program types.

- **Tax Increment Grant:** A grant for part or all of the annual increase in municipal property taxes for a set period of time after construction is complete.
- **Grant:** A sum of money given for a specific purpose that does not need to be repaid.
- **Loan:** A sum of money given upfront that is repaid at a later date or over a period of time.
- **Fee Rebate:** Waives or reduces upfront costs of development applications.
- **Deferral:** Fee payments are accepted at a later date instead of being required upfront.

Environmental Sustainability

This priority area is focused on addressing ecological and climate change concerns through **sustainable design**. The New CIP may incentivize some of the actions recommended by the City's *Climate Change Adaptation Implementation Plan* including:

- Low impact development (LID)
- Green building practices
- Urban forestry improvements; and
- Brownfield remediation.

Urban Forestry

The urban forest is the tree canopy within the City's urban area. Trees provide many benefits in an urban setting such as:

- Reducing sound levels;
- Cleaning the air;
- Cooling the environment; and
- Stimulating the economy.



Brownfield Remediation

Brownfields are sites that may be contaminated and need to be cleaned up ("remediated") before they can be used for development. Brownfields are usually former industrial or commercial properties that are now vacant or underused. There are many benefits to renewing brownfields, such as:

- Removing pollutants from the environment;
- Improving neighbourhood appearance and community pride;
- Making efficient use of urban lands and existing infrastructure; and
- Providing commercial and housing opportunities.

What might brownfield remediation look like?

Before



Google street view, July 2023

After



Image generated using artificial intelligence

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Low Impact Development

Low impact development (“LID”) is a way of dealing with stormwater runoff that mimics the natural environment. It helps to prevent problems like flooding, erosion, and water pollution. There are many types of LID. Examples include:

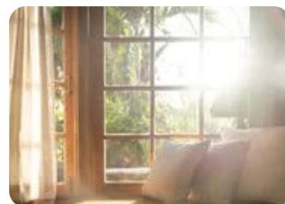
- Rain gardens;
- Green roofs;
- Permeable pavement; and
- Bioswales.



Green Building Practices

Buildings are one of the top greenhouse gas emitters in Canada. **Green building practices** can be used to improve the sustainability of new and existing buildings. Some examples of green building practices include:

- Upgrading light, water, and air fixtures to improve energy efficiency;
- Using locally sourced construction materials;
- Ensuring buildings have access to direct sunlight for passive solar heating; and
- Installing renewable energy sources like solar panels.



Urban Intensification

This priority area is focused on incentivizing growth in key areas that are appropriate for redevelopment and higher density development.

What is intensification?

Intensification is an urban planning term for how a city can grow without taking up more land. It means adding buildings in areas that are already built-up and have access to public services like water, sewage, transit, and schools. Focusing growth in smart areas can help to make neighbourhoods more vibrant and walkable.

People normally think about intensification as increasing the number of units on a property, like replacing a single-family home with a multi-unit building.



Did you know?

There are many other ways for increasing units, like:

- Adding more floors to an existing building.
- Converting surface parking lots to housing with parking underground.
- Building additional dwelling units like garden suites or basement apartments.
- Converting a large house into multiple units.
- Adapting heritage buildings for housing.

Intensification is about more than housing. Intensification can also look like:

- Investments in active transportation (walking, biking, rolling) and public transit to reduce traffic congestion.
- Upgraded and/or new community centres, schools, libraries and parks.
- Reductions in the amount of surface parking in favour of commercial space to increase daily shopping options.



Economic Prosperity Generation

This priority area is focused on stimulating the City's economy. The CIP will aim to:

- Diversify the City's tax base to create a resilient economy.
- Support job creation. The demand for employment increases as the City's population grows.
- Attract employers that offer higher-paying full-time jobs.

City Council's priority sectors in the 2024-2029 Economic Development Strategy:

Information & Communications Technology

- Information and Communications Technology (ICT) is an emerging sector in Niagara Falls that the City wishes to grow.
- The University of Niagara Falls opened in September 2024 and has prioritized its degree offerings in ICT.
- The University is an "anchor institution", meaning it has the potential to support a wide variety of economic development in the City.
- E.g. Downtown campus student population attracting more investment and reducing vacancy rates.



Advanced Manufacturing

- Niagara Falls is an ideal location for manufacturing, as products manufactured or warehoused in the City can reach more than 150 million consumers in less than one day's drive.
- The City has seven established Employment Areas that accommodate a variety of manufacturing and other industrial uses.
- The City is exploring opportunities to expand employment lands.



Healthcare & Life Sciences

- Healthcare and life sciences is a growing sector in Niagara Falls. In fact, the City's share of residents with a healthcare related education is higher than the national average. However, it is apparent that many of these residents are commuting elsewhere for work.
- The new South Niagara Hospital is an "anchor institution" and will provide increased opportunities for health care and related workers.
- The CIP could help to incentivize the development of a medical business park near the new hospital.



Tourism

- Niagara Falls is one of the world's largest tourism hubs, generating over 12 million visitors and \$2 billion each year (Niagara Tourism).
- Tourism contributes to much of the City's employment, but the jobs in this sector tend to be seasonal and lower paying.
- The CIP could help to incentivize the creation of year-round tourist attractions, helping to create employment opportunities for workers in this industry.



Next Steps

Phase 1: Project Initiation & Background Study

- Complete background research and explore current conditions & needs assessment to determine priorities for each key Council priority area to inform the Plan's goals.
- Project Initiation Report to Council: May 27, 2025

Phase 2: Program Options

- Based on the findings of the background study and develop potential incentive program options for the Council priority areas with community and stakeholder input.
- Public & Stakeholder Engagement: June 2025
- Determine preferred program options.

Phase 3: Draft Community Improvement Plan

- Present the draft Community Improvement Plan for community consultation and stakeholder consideration.
- Public & Stakeholder Engagement: Summer 2025

Phase 4: Final Community Improvement Plan & Approval Process

- Refine and finalize the Community Improvement Plan based on feedback received for final Council approval.
- Final CIP: Fall 2025

Ways to provide your feedback:

- Fill out a comment sheet and return it to the sign-in table.
- Send an e-mail to niagarafallscip@landwise.ca
- Visit the Let's Talk Niagara Falls project page at letstalk.niagarafalls.ca/community-improvement-plan or scan the QR code.



Interactive Stations

The Open House had six interactive stations. A summary of the stations is provided below.

Interactive Station 1: Sustainability Priorities to Consider

Participants were asked to use stickers to tell us what types of sustainability initiatives the New CIP should incentivize out of the following four options:

1. Brownfield Remediation
2. Green Certified Buildings such as LEED
3. Adaptive Reuse of Buildings
4. Studies for Sustainable Design, such as Low Impact Development

Interactive Station 2: Environmental Sustainability Questions

Participants were asked to leave a comment using sticky notes. The prompts “What does sustainability mean to you? How can the City make it happen?” were given.

Interactive Station 3: Urban Intensification Priorities to Consider

Participants were asked to use stickers to tell us what types of intensification the New CIP should incentivize out of the following six options:

1. Additional Dwelling Units
2. Create New Units by Conversion, such as converting a single family home to a triplex
3. Mixed Use Development
4. Redevelop Underused Lots such as surface parking lots
5. Create New Units in Key Areas such as near public transit
6. Provide a Mix of Unit Sizes including those with two or more bedrooms

Interactive Station 4: Urban Intensification Questions

Participants were asked to leave a comment using sticky notes. The prompts “How can your community benefit from intensification? Where do you think intensification should be incentivized? Areas with access to parks, public transit services, existing infrastructure etc.?” were given.

Interactive Station 5: Economic Prosperity Generation Priorities to Consider

Participants were asked to use stickers to tell us what types of sustainability initiatives the New CIP should incentivize out of the following four options:

1. Large Employers, both Attracting and Retaining Businesses
2. Downtown Development
3. Streetscape Improvements

4. New Tourism Uses in both Rural and Urban areas

Interactive Station 6: Economic Prosperity Generation Questions

Participants were asked to leave a comment using sticky notes. The prompts “What challenges or opportunities are there for starting or growing a business here? What industries should the City try to attract?” were given.