
HALDIMAND COUNTY

Report EDT-07-2024 Rural Business and Tourism Community Improvement Plan Application – 243 Haldimand Highway 54, Cayuga

For Consideration by Council in Committee on October 29, 2024



OBJECTIVE:

To seek approval of an application for funding made under the Haldimand County Rural Business and Tourism Community Improvement Plan.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. THAT Report EDT-07-2024 Rural Business and Tourism Community Improvement Plan Application – 243 Haldimand Highway 54, Cayuga, be received;
2. AND THAT the project as outlined in Report EDT-07-2024 be approved for a grant to be funded from the Community Improvement Plan Reserve, to a maximum of \$15,379;
3. AND THAT the Mayor and Clerk be authorized to execute the Rural Business and Tourism Community Improvement Plan Financial Incentive Program Agreement with the respective property owner.

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Reviewed by: Lidy Romanuk, BA, EcD, Manager, Economic Development and Tourism

Respectfully submitted: Mike Evers, MCIP, RPP, BES, General Manager, Community & Development Services

Approved: Cathy Case, Chief Administrative Officer

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Ruthven Park National Historic Site (Ruthven) is seeking to renovate the Coach House Served (Kitchen) for the development and expansion of tourism experiences on site. The project proposes improvements to the existing heating, plumbing and electrical systems to accommodate appropriate refrigeration and dishwashing equipment needed to meet Health Department standards for food handling. Economic Development and Tourism staff recommend that this application be approved for funding under the Rural Business and Tourism Community Improvement Plan Financial Incentives Program, as staff are of the opinion that program eligibility requirements have been met.

BACKGROUND:

In September 2013, following the successful implementation of the Downtown Community Improvement Project in 2008, Council subsequently approved the Rural Business and Tourism Community Improvement Plan (RBTICIP). The RBTICIP targets key Haldimand County economic objectives by supporting hamlets, commercial roofed accommodations and value-added agricultural businesses. This program provides Council with the ability to offer financial incentives to private

property owners to revitalize, redevelop, and renovate properties and buildings within the RBTCIP defined areas.

Economic Development and Tourism (EDT) staff continue to promote both financial incentive programs to the communities and stakeholders. EDT staff also assist proponents with their applications, in order to bring eligible projects before Council in a timely manner. Further, staff continue to work with applicants to ensure that their projects move forward to completion.

As of this report date, one hundred and fifty-nine (159) Downtown Areas CIP applications and thirty-one (31) RBTCIP applications have been approved. One hundred and fifty-two (152) of the previously approved Downtown Areas CIP applications have been completed; twenty-six (26) Rural Business and Tourism files have been completed; and the files have been closed on five (5) applications. Grants have been approved for a variety of RBTCIP projects across the rural areas of Haldimand County; as well, projects in the hamlets of Fisherville, Port Maitland, Rainham Centre and York have been approved under the RBTCIP.

Summary of the Downtown Areas CIP and RBTCIP Applications Considered by Council and GM delegated authority*:

Financial Incentive Program	Downtown Areas	Rural Business and Tourism
Application & Permit Fee Refund	\$ 220,221	\$ 39,508
Building Restoration, Renovation and Improvement	\$ 73,527	\$ 231,555
Downtown Housing Grant	\$ 235,438	N/A
Heritage Improvement Grant	\$ 20,000	\$ 49,923
Façade Improvement Grant**	\$ 913,990	\$ 139,592
Total value of CIP grants provided by the County**	\$ 1,463,176	\$ 460,578
Total estimated construction value of CIP Projects	\$11,899,290	\$1,421,578
Grant values as a percentage of construction Values***	12%	32%
Unallocated funds in the CIP Reserve	\$560,222	

* Summary includes grant amounts related to GM approved projects under \$10,000.

** The Caledonia Kinsmen Park Revitalization Project is not included in values presented above.

*** Grant as a % of Construction – This calculation shows the leveraging factor; basically, how much funding the County is contributing to the project compared to the total cost of the project. As it currently stands, for every dollar granted by the County, approximately \$7.00 of additional private funding has been invested in the Downtown Areas of the County.

ANALYSIS:

A final completed application for the property known as Ruthven located at 243 Haldimand Hwy 54, Cayuga was received in August 2024. This property is primarily agriculture and features historical sites. A location map has been included in this report as Attachment 1. Contact with the Economic Development and Tourism Division regarding this proposal began in March 2024. Since this time, staff

have assisted the proponent with preparing their Rural Business and Tourism Community Improvement Plan project for Council's consideration.

Ruthven is of significance to the County from a cultural and tourism perspective as a historical site open to the public. Ruthven is owned and operated by the Lower Grand River Land Trust. The Lower Grand River Land Trust is a volunteer-driven, not for profit, non-government, charitable organization whose purpose is to conserve the cultural and natural landscapes for the enjoyment of visitors to the site. While Ruthven is named a national historic site, they do not receive any government funding for the day-to-day operations of the site. Funding to maintain the property is provided through the interest of an endowment fund, rental of agricultural lands, admissions, special events, grants, memberships, filming revenue and donations.

Currently, Ruthven is open for mansion tours, hiking, bird watching, and special events adding value to the property in addition to land management and agriculture operations. As one of Haldimand County's prime tourist destinations, Ruthven welcomes over 6,000 visitors annually and runs a variety of popular events. Popular events include the Celtic Festival, For the Birds Festival and a variety of High Teas. Ruthven is seeking to expand events and offerings including the launch of new High Tea experiences. As they have received interest from the community to expand event capabilities and offerings, the requirements for proper catering, staging and dishwashing has exceeded the current kitchen design.

Increasing and improving events and new activities would positively impact the tourism sector, as Ruthven would be able to host more patrons on site with an improved kitchen space. Longer events (such as dinners and all day workshops) may result in more overnights stays in the region and visitor spending.

The application, if approved, will utilize the Building Restoration, Renovation and Improvement and Development Charge, Planning Fees and Building Permit Grant. A previous application was approved at this property in 2018 under the Façade, Landscape & Signage Improvement and Development Charge, Planning Fees & Building Permit Fees Grant related to the building addition of the administration and orientation centre.

Proposed Work

Building Restoration Renovation and Improvement Grant

The Building Restoration, Renovation and Improvement Grant provides a matching grant of 50% up to a maximum of \$25,000 for a variety of interior building renovations, improvements, and additions/expansions to existing buildings. The grant seeks to aid property owners with costs associated with materials, labour, equipment, internal building works, including major fit-up to meet the future needs of tenants or activities/uses. This program intends to support agricultural, commercial and industrial use buildings on agricultural properties used for Value-Added Agricultural purposes and Experiential Activities.

To continue to attract not only the local community but also tourists to these successful events, the Coach House Served/kitchen space requires improvements to the existing heating, plumbing and electrical systems to accommodate appropriate refrigeration and dishwashing equipment and to ensure Health Department standards for food handling are met, which are proposed under this program. These renovations involve the installation of a new electrical feed, new plumbing and water heater for a three-compartment sink. Additional project elements not eligible for funding include new custom cabinetry and appliances to better layout the space and create efficiencies.

Development Charge, Planning Fees and Building Permit Grant

The Development Charge, Planning Fees and Building Permit Grant provides assistance for the development and redevelopment of sites by further reducing the cost of development. Applicants may receive an 100% rebate for eligible building permits such as renovation, plumbing and sewage permits.

Ruthven is designated under Part IV of the *Heritage Act* however, the scope of work outlined will not affect/impact the designated elements.

Summary

The table below outlines the anticipated value of each grant the applicants are eligible for under the two grant streams outlined above.

The improvements to the property at 243 Haldimand Hwy 54 intend to increase value added property features and scale tourism opportunities/experience that align with a number of tourism development initiatives including experiential tourism development. Improving existing tourism infrastructure is an objective of the plan and this application meets the intent.

Staff are recommending support of each grant as outlined:

Review Panel Recommendation:	The application is complete and recommended for approval.		
File No. RBTICIP 33	Project Value	Grant Value	Grant as a % of Construction
Address: 243 Haldimand Hwy 54, Cayuga	\$28,759	\$15,379	53%
Building Restoration, Renovation and Improvement Program Grant	\$14,379		
Development Charge, Planning Fees and Building Permit Grant	\$1,000		
Total Grant	\$15,379		
Project Description	The project includes improvements to the existing heating, plumbing and electrical systems to accommodate appropriate refrigeration and dish washing equipment needed to meet Health Department standards for food handling.		
Conditions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A grant agreement will be prepared for execution by the Mayor and Clerk. 2. Property taxes must be in good standing and the property must be in conformity with all County/Provincial/Federal by-laws and legislation throughout the term of the program – i.e., property standards, zoning by-laws, official plan, etc. 3. Building Permits are Required. 		

Note: For this project the building permits fees were estimated and will be officially calculated when drawings are reviewed at the time of building permit submission. As such staff propose a maximum value of \$1,000 be considered as eligible project payouts are the lesser value between the actual costs and approved values.

FINANCIAL/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:

The Downtown Areas Community Improvement Plan (CIP) was established in 2008, with an annual allocation of \$100,000 contributed to a Community Improvement Plan Reserve to be used to fund approved grant applications under the financial incentives' component of the Downtown Areas CIP. In 2013, the annual contribution was increased to \$150,000 to incorporate the Downtown Areas CIP and the Rural Business and Tourism Community Improvement Plan. To date Council has approved a total of \$1,826,156 from this reserve. The current CIP reserve stands at \$600,977. The proposed application

would require \$15,379 in funding from the reserve, with an additional \$40,755 in committed projects still awaiting completion. If all commitments are fully funded, the reserve balance would be reduced to \$544,843. Please note the reserve balance continues to be higher than normal due to under subscription in 2020 to 2022 as a result of the pandemic and the impact to local businesses. In addition, the challenging business environment including high interest rates, rising construction costs and availability of contractors are also currently impacting uptake in this program.

A grant agreement will be prepared for execution by the Mayor and Clerk should Council approve this application. The CIP/RBTCIP grant agreement was reviewed and updated by legal counsel in the Spring of 2024 to ensure it still meets County requirements.

STAKEHOLDER IMPACTS:

All Community Improvement Plan projects are circulated and reviewed by a staff committee that consists of representatives from Building & Municipal Enforcement Services, Planning and Development, Community Development and Partnerships (Heritage and Culture) and Finance Divisions.

REPORT IMPACTS:

Agreement: Yes

By-law: No

Budget Amendment: No

Policy: No

REFERENCES:

1. [Rural Business and Tourism Community Improvement Plan Program](#)

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Location Map.
2. Existing Conditions.