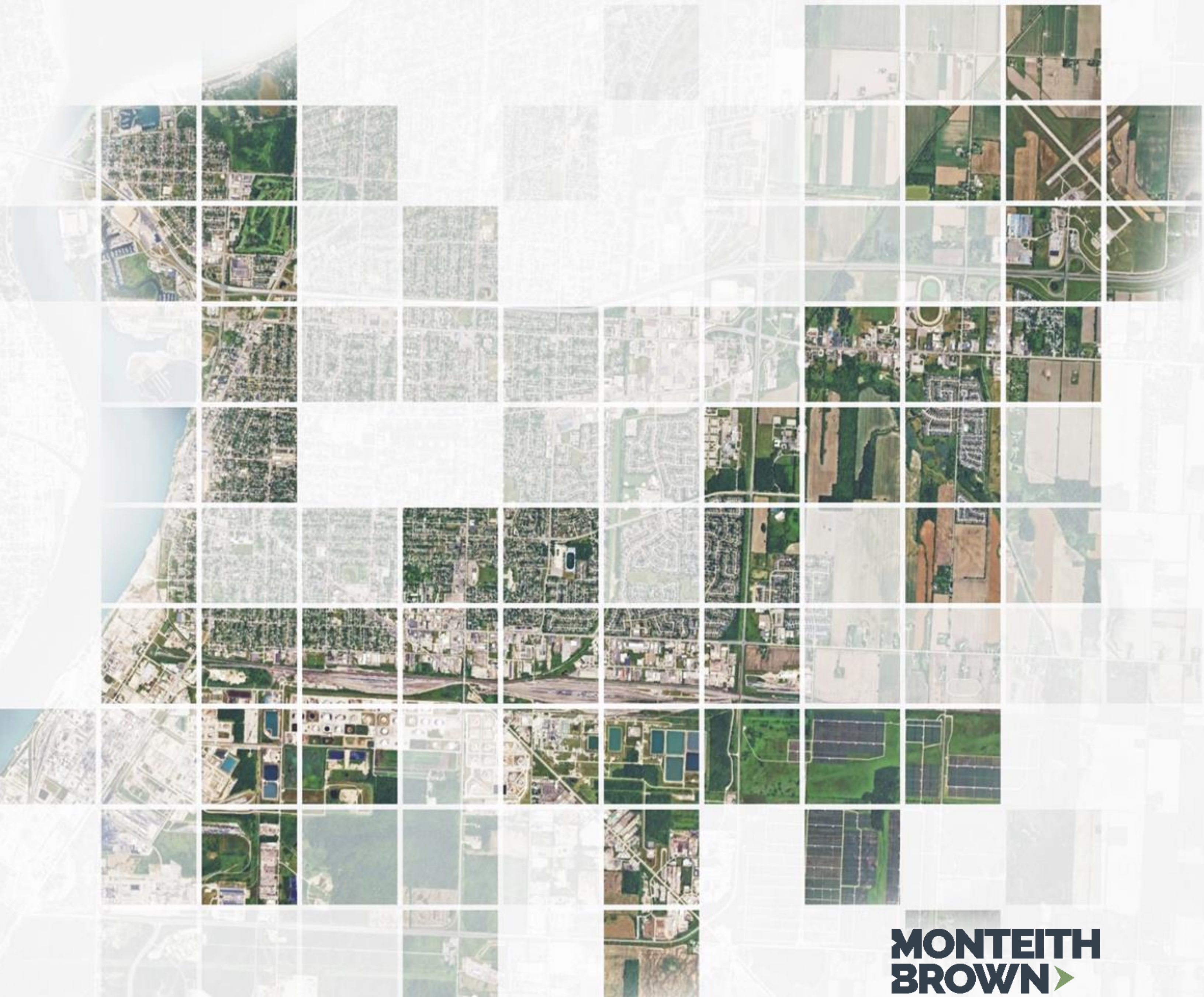
SARNIA
ONTARIO

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
Community Improvement Plan

July 2026



MONTEITH BROWN
PLANNING CONSULTANTS

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Long recognized for its leadership in petrochemical innovation, the City of Sarnia (the City) is now leveraging this legacy to accelerate growth in emerging sectors including bio-industries, sustainable chemistry, advanced manufacturing, logistics, research and technology, and tourism. With a diversifying economy, a skilled labour force, and an available inventory of strategically located employment lands, Sarnia offers investors a unique blend of stability, opportunity, and future-focused potential.

To strengthen its economic base, Sarnia has advanced numerous strategic initiatives including the Economic Development Master Plan 2025–2035. Developed through extensive engagement with local businesses and the broader community, the Master Plan identifies priorities and sets actionable goals for future economic growth. A key recommendation was the creation of this **Economic Development Community Improvement Plan** (EDCIP) as a tool to attract investment, retain businesses, and support sustainable economic development.

At the centre of this vision is a portfolio of City-owned strategic assets: the Sarnia Business & Research Park, the 402 Business Park, the Chris Hadfield Airport, Sarnia Harbour, and the downtown waterfront. Sarnia also benefits from direct access to an international border crossing, major transportation corridors, a deep-water harbour, and international rail networks that provide opportunities to attract and retain industries into the future.

The EDCIP is Sarnia's strategic response to these opportunities and challenges. By aligning with provincial legislation and best practices from leading Ontario municipalities, this EDCIP will introduce a suite of targeted incentives including tax increment grants, development charge incentives, and grants aimed to increase tourism, which are designed to unlock investment, stimulate job creation, and catalyze development within the City's strategic assets and across its industrial and employment lands.

1.2 Purpose

The City of Sarnia retained Monteith Brown Planning Consultants (MB) to prepare this EDCIP to achieve the goals identified in provincial and local policies. This EDCIP will provide a structured, policy-based approach to address these barriers by offering targeted incentives that promote investment in priority areas, leverage strategic municipal assets, and reinforce the city's position as a competitive location for industrial, commercial, and innovation-oriented development.

A Community Improvement Plan (CIP) is a planning instrument used by municipalities to guide long-term development and revitalization within defined areas. It sets clear objectives and policy directions, supported by financial incentives such as tax assistance, grants, or loans, to encourage private investment in targeted sectors and locations. Overall, the purpose of the EDCIP is to create a cohesive, implementable framework that aligns municipal goals, planning tools, and financial incentives as a tool that can be utilized to attract new business, support existing industry, generate jobs, and advance Sarnia's long-term economic resilience.

1.3 Methodology

The EDCIP was developed using a multi-phased, structured approach designed to ensure that the Plan reflects requirements set out in applicable planning legislation and policies, best practices of CIPs that have been implemented in comparable municipalities, and the needs and goals of the community. The specific steps undertaken in the development of the EDCIP are described below.

1.3.1 Background Review

The first step of the development of the EDCIP included a review of relevant provincial legislation, provincial and local planning policies, and City-wide strategic documents. Additionally, a jurisdictional scan of comparable municipalities that share similar characteristics as the City of Sarnia was conducted. This review was undertaken to identify the best practices and inform the framework of incentive programs and implementation for the City's consideration.

1.3.2 Needs Assessment & Policy Context

Based on the research and background review conducted, a Needs Assessment & Policy Context Report was developed to present key findings and recommendations. The report provided context on the purpose of developing a community improvement plan and established a legislative and policy framework for its development. The report identified a number of key opportunities and challenges set out in relevant strategic planning documents. This included the identification of strategic assets that the city possesses including the City-owned assets and business parks, availability of vacant industrial land, a skilled workforce, and proximity to border crossings and transportation corridors that provide connectivity for trade and commerce.

The report provided a collective summary of common types of financial incentive programs provided within the community improvement plans reviewed, including grants to offset increases in municipal taxes, development charge grants, and planning fee incentives. The report also identified best management practices used by other municipalities, including a review eligibility criteria and monitoring policies used to support the effective implementation of community improvement plan incentives.

The Needs Assessment & Policy Context Report was received by the City of Sarnia Council on January 19, 2026, and informed the scope and key questions guiding subsequent public and stakeholder consultation.

1.3.3 Stakeholder & Public Consultation

A detailed consultation program was developed to ensure that the EDCIP is informed by the needs of Sarnia's business community, economic partners, and residents. Input was sought from stakeholders using a variety of engagement tools, including two online surveys; interviews with members of Council, staff, and economic development partners/agencies; an in-person stakeholder workshop for local business owners, economic development partners, and industry representatives; and a statutory public meeting held on June 22, 2026. Feedback was sought on support for the use of financial incentives to stimulate growth, existing opportunities to attract investment, strategic areas of focus, and the types of incentive programs that would be effective.

The input gathered from stakeholders (included in Appendix A – Stakeholder Engagement Summary, which does not form part of the EDCIP) in addition to the initial findings and considerations of the Needs Assessment & Policy Context Report, were used to inform the focus and priorities of the EDCIP.

1.3.4 Program & Eligibility Criteria Development

Input collected through the public consultation process was aggregated and analyzed to inform the development of incentive programs and eligibility criteria within the EDCIP. Using this information, potential incentive tools were identified and evaluated to advance the goals and priorities established through the background review and stakeholder consultation. Drawing on best practices from other jurisdictions and alignment with local objectives, incentive programs, eligibility requirements, and target areas were refined to respond to identified economic needs and opportunities.

This process also helped define the geographic areas to which the EDCIP will apply, as well as program and eligibility parameters. An administrative and monitoring framework was established to guide effective implementation of the EDCIP, support accountability, and enable future refinement or modification as conditions evolve.

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2.0 LEGISLATIVE & POLICY FRAMEWORK

The City of Sarnia's authority to prepare, adopt, and implement a CIP, including the provision of financial incentives, is established through provincial legislation and directed through policy at the provincial, county, and local level. This section outlines the legislative basis for a community improvement plan and sets out the policy rationale for the preparation of the EDCIP, highlighting opportunities to strengthen and diversify the city's economy. It demonstrates how the Plan aligns with provincial policy and conforms to applicable local planning policies and strategic initiatives.

2.1 Municipal Act, 2001

The *Municipal Act* is the principal legislation governing the creation, administration, and operation of municipalities in Ontario. Under Section 106(1) and (2), municipalities are prohibited from providing direct or indirect financial assistance to businesses through incentives such as bonuses. This includes actions like granting or lending money, leasing or selling property below fair market value, or offering full or partial exemptions from any levy, charge, or fee. Notwithstanding the above, Section 106(3) of the *Municipal Act* provides a specific exemption from this bonusing prohibition in cases where a Community Improvement Plan has been prepared, as permitted under Section 365.1 of the *Municipal Act* and Section 28 of the *Planning Act*. This includes grants and financial incentives offered through the implementation of a community improvement plan.

Section 107 of the *Municipal Act* further stipulates that under the permissions of Section 106, a municipality may make grants for any purpose that council considers to be in the interests of the municipality, which includes the use of incentives to stimulate economic growth and job creation. These grants may include the ability of a municipality to:

- Guarantee a loan and to make a grant by way of loan and to charge interest on the loan.
- Sell or lease land for nominal consideration or to make a grant of land.
- Provide for the use by any person of land owned or occupied by the municipality upon such terms as may be fixed by council.
- Sell, lease, otherwise dispose of at a nominal price, or make a grant of, any personal property of the municipality or provide for the use of the personal property on such terms as may be fixed by council.

In addition, section 365.1 of the *Municipal Act* gives municipalities the ability to pass a by-law that would provide tax relief or assistance for eligible properties for the purpose of supporting the redevelopment of contaminated properties. The *Municipal Act* stipulates that the land must be subject to a community improvement plan adopted under Section 28 of the *Planning Act* and that environmental remediation is taking place.

2.2 Planning Act, 1990

The *Planning Act* establishes a legal framework for land use planning decisions in Ontario. It ensures that development is consistent with provincial interests and priorities, and governs how land may be developed, used, and divided.

Section 28 of the *Planning Act* specifically allows a local municipality to pass a by-law that designates either the entirety or a part of the municipality as a Community Improvement Project Area (CIPA), provided that the local municipality has community improvement policies within its Official Plan. Where a by-law has been passed and is in effect, the municipality may also create and adopt a community improvement plan that can be used to address specific challenges or opportunities within a CIPA. Sections 28(3), (6), and (7) provide for a range of actions and incentives that municipalities can utilize, including:

- The acquisition, holding, clearing, and grading of land.
- Construct, repair, rehabilitate or improve buildings on land acquired or held by it in the community improvement project area.
- Sell, lease or otherwise dispose of any land acquired or held by it in the community improvement project area to any person or governmental authority for use in conformity with the community improvement plan.
- Make grants or loans, in conformity with the community improvement plan, to registered owners, assessed owners and tenants of lands and buildings within the community improvement project area, and to any person to whom such an owner or tenant has assigned the right to receive a grant or loan, to pay for the whole or any part of the eligible costs of the community improvement plan.

Grants and loans may be used to cover a range of 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. However, Section 28(7.3) places limitations on the total amount of funds that can be included in a grant by ensuring the value does not exceed the total eligible costs of development under a community improvement plan.

Section 28(11) of the *Planning Act* allows a municipality to enter into agreement with a landowner for the provision of loans and grants. This agreement may be registered on title against the lands to which the grant or loan would apply, and the *Planning Ac*t gives municipalities the power to enforce the provisions of the agreement against any party to the agreement, subject to the provisions of the *Registry Act* and the *Land Titles Act*. This provision is often utilized by municipalities to apply, and ensure the fulfillment of, conditions of the making of grants that are awarded.

The *Planning Act* also grants municipalities with the authority to reduce or waive fees associated with processing planning applications when council is satisfied that it would be unreasonable to require payment. These considerations outlined in Section 69(2) of Act can be implemented without the adoption of a community improvement plan. However, many municipalities offer grants to reimburse applicants for planning application fees, either in part or in whole, after fees have been paid as a financial incentive through a community improvement plan.

On November 27, 2025, Bill 60: *Fighting Delays, Building Faster Act* received royal assent and included several modifications to Section 28 of the *Planning Act* affecting Community Improvement Plans. These amendments primarily focus on modifications to the authority of upper-tier municipalities in the CIP process. Previously, an upper-tier municipality was not able to pass a by-law to create a CIP without the involvement of a lower-tier municipality. Bill 60 now allows for upper-tier municipalities to both designate CIP areas and adopt CIPs. While these changes will likely not impact the creation of the EDCIP, the ability for an upper-tier municipality to offer its own CIP incentives will have positive implications on opportunities for future partnership and collaboration with higher levels of municipal government in meeting regional economic goals.

2.3 Development Charges Act, 1997

The *Development Charges Act* provides the legal framework for municipalities to impose development charges on new growth including residential and non-residential development. These development charges assist municipalities in funding capital costs related to growth. Section 5 of the Act describes the methodology that municipalities must use in preparing a development charge by-law and how development charges are to be imposed. This includes considerations for the full or partial provision of exemptions for types of development.

In January 2024, Watson & Associates was retained by the City of Sarnia to undertake a review of its Development Charges (DC) By-law. In accordance with Section 5 of the *Development Charges Act*, as noted above, Section 3.5 of the City's DC By-law included a non-statutory exemption of development charges for development within the 402 Business Park and the Sarnia Business Research Park. This exemption included a sunset clause that deems the exemption to no longer be in effect if a community improvement plan is approved by the City which includes a grant equivalent to the applicable development charge or portion thereof.

2.4 Provincial Planning Statement 2024

The Provincial Planning Statement 2024 (PPS) is a province wide planning policy document that sets out provincial priorities and key directions for land use planning. It provides guidance on creating opportunities for economic development and job creation, while fostering a strong, competitive, and investment-ready economy. Under Section 3(5) of the *Planning Act*, all land use planning decisions of a municipality must be consistent with the PPS.

While the PPS does not contain specific references to community improvement plans it does direct through policy 2.8.1 that municipalities promote economic development and competitiveness by providing for an appropriate range and mix of employment uses to meet the long-term needs of the municipality. The PPS also supports the diversification of the economic base including maintaining a range and choice of suitable sites for a range of employment uses and considers the needs of existing and future businesses.

The PPS requires that municipalities identify sites for strategic investment, including market-ready locations, and seek to address potential barriers to investment. It is the responsibility of municipalities to plan for, protect, and preserve employment areas for current and future uses, with particular emphasis on safeguarding those employment areas that are located close to major goods and movement facilities and corridors. These corridors include ports, airports, rail facilities, freight corridors, and haul routes.

Policy 2.8.2.3 speaks to additional requirements for municipalities, including designating and protecting employment areas in settlement areas by *"planning for employment area uses over the long-term that require those locations including manufacturing, research and development in connection with manufacturing, warehousing and goods movement, and associated retail and office uses and ancillary facilities".*

Employment area is defined by the PPS as: *"means those areas designated in an official plan for clusters of business and economic activities including manufacturing, research, and development in connection with manufacturing, warehousing, goods movement, associated retail and office, and ancillary facilities. An employment area also includes areas of land described by subsection 1(1.1) of the Planning Act. Uses that are excluded from employment areas are institutional and commercial, including retail and office not associated with the primary employment use listed above".*

2.5 County of Lambton Official Plan, 2020

Section 24 of the *Planning Act* requires that where an official plan is in effect, no by-law shall be passed that does not conform to an official plan. As previously discussed, the *Planning Act* also requires that an Official Plan(s) contain policies that enable the passing of a CIP before it can be adopted by Council.

The County of Lambton functions as the upper-tier municipality for the City of Sarnia, with the County of Lambton's Official Plan (County OP) providing high level goals and policies for decision making on economic, environmental, and social priorities within each of the County's lower-tier municipalities. The County OP encourages economic growth in all the County's local municipalities and considers economic security and the range of employment opportunities for residents as an indicator of quality of life for residents within the County (s. 1.2, 2). The County also supports improving the competitiveness of local businesses and strengthening the economic base through developing infrastructure that supports growth and diversification (s. 2.1.10).

The lands within the City of Sarnia's Urban Boundary are primarily designated "Urban Centre with lands located south of CN Rail corridor as "Petrochemical Industrial Lands". The Official Plan directs the majority of growth and development into Urban Centres, which are areas that contain the widest range of residential, institutional, commercial, and industrial land uses and have full municipal services. Section 3.2.1 of the County OP specifically references Sarnia as the greatest service area within the County with the widest range of urban and employment uses. The intent of the "Petrochemical Industrial Lands" is to accommodate existing and future large-scale industrial uses that are not compatible with other more sensitive land uses. Local municipalities are encouraged to establish business parks and to permit a wide range of "*manufacturing, construction, wholesale establishments, truck terminals, research and development uses, and office development associated with these uses, as well as service type uses*".

Section 5.1 of the County OP speaks to a range of goals to encourage economic growth within the County. The policies of the County OP support the strengthening of the traditional sectors of the economy and the diversification of the economic base to attract new businesses. The County OP describes how the County will make efforts to increase the County's competitive advantage and attract and create new opportunities in a range of economic sectors including automotive, health care, software development, education, research and development activities, tourism, recycling, transportation, and renewable energy, and commercial scale biobased energy production (5.1, 5.1.1, 5.1.2).

The County OP also encourages the development of a strong, regional tourism industry in a variety of sectors as a means of job creation and economic development in different of locations throughout the County, including the pursuit of programs that rejuvenate local municipalities' waterfronts (s. 6.1, 6.3).

One method of aiding municipalities in achieving these goals is through supporting the development of local community improvement plans and incentive programs (5.2.8). The County OP recognizes and promotes the use of CIPs for a variety of reasons including the preservation of cultural and heritage assets, the delivery of affordable housing, and brownfield redevelopment and remediation (s. 2.7).

2.6 City of Sarnia Official Plan, 2022

The City of Sarnia, through its Official Plan, supports economic development by planning for a strong and healthy economy and collaborating with the County and neighbouring municipalities to provide a diverse range of future employment opportunities (Section 3.5b). The Official Plan establishes goals to retain and attract a skilled labour force with access to a variety of employment options. It also supports the objective of a strong and healthy industrial sector through the provision of appropriate servicing and transportation infrastructure to ensure that there is an effective land supply to accommodate future employment uses and investment.

Tourism will be supported as a vital role for economic development and promotes the creation of a vibrant downtown and waterfront through a range of amenities and accommodation opportunities (Section 3.5h). Section 8.7 of the Official Plan contains specific authorization for the City of Sarnia to utilize a range of planning tools to implement the policies of the City's Official Plan, including CIPs.

The Official Plan also contemplates a range of matters that can be addressed through a CIP, including the implementation of green building design, incentivizing the creation of affordable housing, the conservation of cultural heritage resources, brownfield remediation, and development or redevelopment by providing funding to stimulate private sector investment. The EDCIP will advance the objectives of the Sarnia Official Plan by establishing a framework for financial incentives aimed at reducing barriers to the development of the city's existing employment lands and strategic assets. This approach will aid in the ability to attract a diverse range of employment opportunities and support economic growth and tourism within the city.

2.7 City of Sarnia Strategic Plan, 2024

The City of Sarnia updated its Strategic Plan in 2024 to align with actions and priorities identified in other reports and plans developed by the City. The Strategic Plan sets out a long-term vision for the City to guide its decision-making to fulfill its goals and priorities. The vision for Sarnia places an emphasis on innovation, providing a range of job opportunities, and efforts to make the city a welcoming community.

The **Strategic Plan Vision**: Innovative city, diversified economy, welcoming community.

The Strategic Plan seeks to become forward thinking and foster a quality of life that connects the community to the future. This mission is framed with various guiding principles that encourage participation in municipal decision-making, collaboration and the development of strategic partnerships, practice reasonable financial restraint, and find solutions through innovative and progressive thinking.

Strategic priorities were developed to create a basis for how the City's goals and objectives can be actioned and implemented. These include:

- Asset Management
- Government Relations
- Community Wellbeing
- Economic Resilience

The goals of the City's Strategic Plan can be applied to the creation and implementation of CIP incentives. The Economic Resilience priority directly supports economic development and aligns with the objectives of the CIP. The CIP will aim to provide financial incentives to attract new investment and development, support the diversification of the local economy, as well as reinforce local industry including the petrochemical sector.

Through a CIP, the City can leverage and encourage development and redevelopment of industrial areas and employment lands. A CIP can be used as a tool to support the expansion and retention of existing businesses, as well as create a strong framework for aligning CIP incentives with measurable outcomes in economic development. Finally, the EDCIP can be used as a tool to build dialogue and partnerships with stakeholders and other levels of government with consultation built into the process of the development of the CIP.

2.8 Economic Development Master Plan, 2025

The purpose of the Economic Development Master Plan was to create a strategic approach to foster economic growth and diversification over the coming 10 years, while also aligning with the City's Strategic Plan. This includes goals for business support and programming, maximizing City-owned assets, amplifying the competitive advantage of Sarnia, and creating impactful and collaborative partnerships. The Plan recognizes that there is a role for increased strategic efforts to address infrastructure and servicing to provide shovel-ready sites that are attractive for private investments.

Of relevance to the development of the EDCIP are additional recommendations for delivering programs that encourage business retention and expansion, as well as the promotion of policies to increase Sarnia's competitive advantage. In both cases, the Master Plan lists a CIP as a tool to address the needs of businesses as well as promote advantages for investors to choose Sarnia over other competing jurisdictions. The Economic Development Master Plan is a key foundation for the development of this EDCIP, as the EDCIP is able to directly implement recommendations of the Master Plan.

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3.0 EDCIP GOALS & OBJECTIVES

3.1 EDCIP Goals

Community Improvement Plans are flexible tools that can be used to achieve a variety of outcomes. The goals of this CIP have been developed through a comprehensive review of relevant policy frameworks, strategic documents, and data collected through the consultation process. Through this review, several key themes emerged and were refined. These themes form the foundation of the CIP goals and are intended to guide the design and purpose of the CIP's policies and incentive programs, as well as the City's broader strategic directions related to growth and community improvement. The goals outlined in this section establish the direction for how this CIP will be used and implemented, and they provide a clear framework for the policies and programs intended to contribute toward achieving these outcomes.

Drive Private Investments

Stimulating private investment by reducing development costs and encouraging construction, expansion, and modernization of employment-related facilities.

Strengthen Local Economy

Strengthening the local economy by attracting innovative, technology-oriented, and research-driven sectors.

Expand Employment Opportunities

Expanding employment opportunities for residents by improving the investment readiness of key employment areas.

Support Business Retention & Expansion

Supporting business retention and expansion (BR&E) efforts by providing tools that help existing businesses grow and remain competitive.

Stimulate Tourism

Stimulate tourism by encouraging new businesses, facilities, and nodes that attract visitors to Sarnia.

3.2 EDCIP Objectives

The following objectives translate the EDCIP goals into clear, actionable directions that guide how the Plan will be implemented and evaluated. The objectives provide the policy basis for the design of financial incentive programs, establish expectations for development outcomes, and inform the criteria used to assess and prioritize applications. Collectively, they ensure that incentives are applied strategically to advance the City's economic development priorities, support measurable public benefits, and enable consistent monitoring of performance over time.

Goal 1: Drive Private Investment – Objectives:

- Reduce financial barriers to development and redevelopment through targeted tax- and fee-based incentives.
- Leverage municipal incentives to attract capital investment in industrial, employment, and tourism-supportive development.
- Prioritize projects that demonstrate meaningful private-sector investment and long-term increases in assessed value.

Goal 2: Strengthen the Local Economy – Objectives:

- Encourage investment in targeted and emerging sectors identified in the City's Economic Development Master Plan.
- Promote innovative, research-oriented, and technology-driven uses that contribute to economic diversification.
- Support development patterns that enhance economic resilience and reduce reliance on a limited number of sectors.

Goal 3: Expand Employment Opportunities – Objectives:

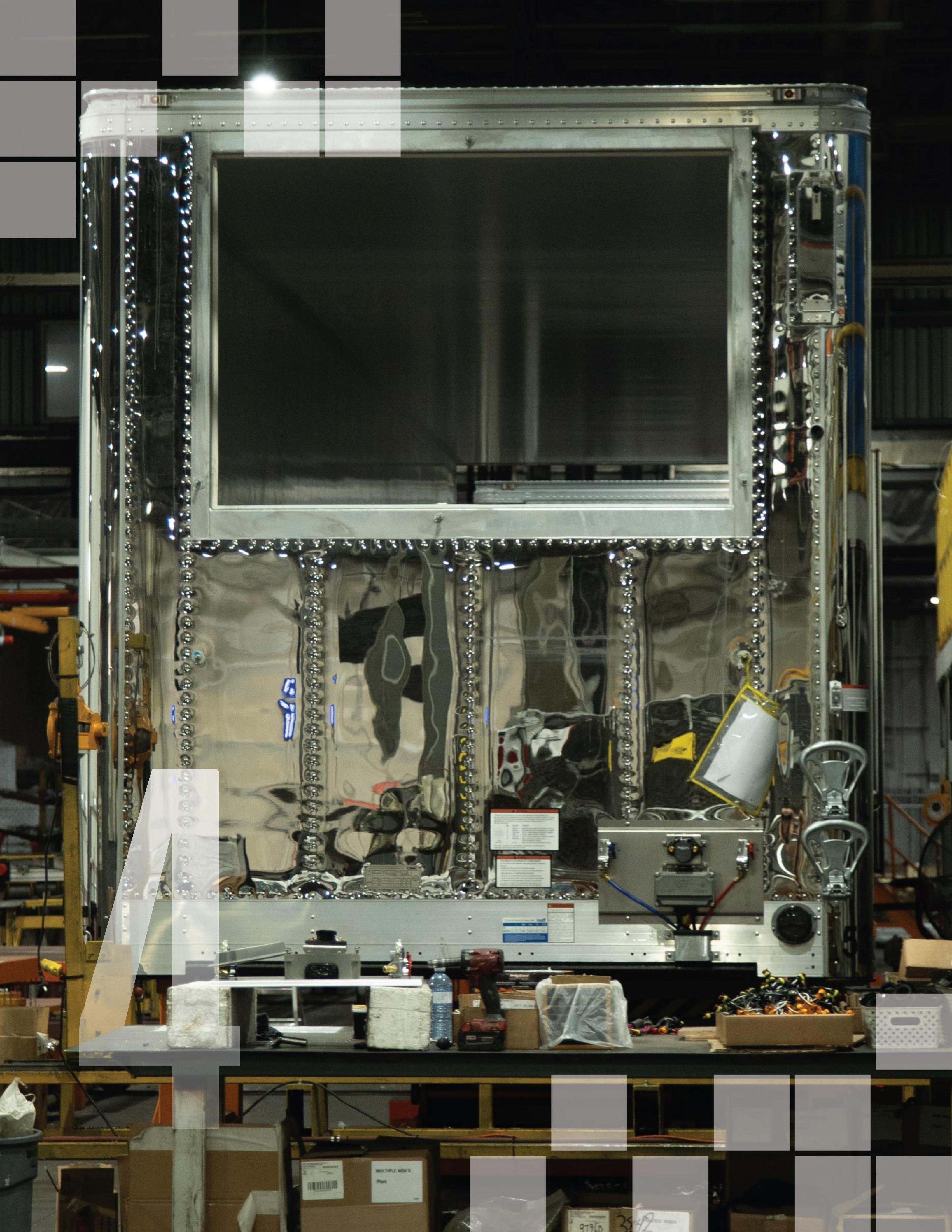
- Increase the readiness of employment lands and facilities through strategic investment incentives.
- Support projects that generate measurable employment outcomes, including the increased assessment value and job creation.
- Align financial incentives with employment creation through transparent evaluation and scoring criteria.

Goal 4: Support Business Retention and Expansion – Objectives:

- Assist existing businesses in expanding, modernizing, or reinvesting in their operations.
- Encourage the redevelopment or adaptive reuse of underutilized employment and industrial properties.
- Provide flexible incentive tools that respond to the evolving needs of local businesses while supporting long-term competitiveness.

Goal 5: Stimulate Tourism – Objectives:

- Support the development and expansion of significant tourism-supportive uses that attract visitors and generate economic activity.
- Encourage private investment in destination-oriented facilities, accommodations, event venues, and recreational assets.
- Prioritize tourism-related projects that enhance the visitor experience, activate spaces, and contribute to year-round tourism activity.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4.0 COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN AREA

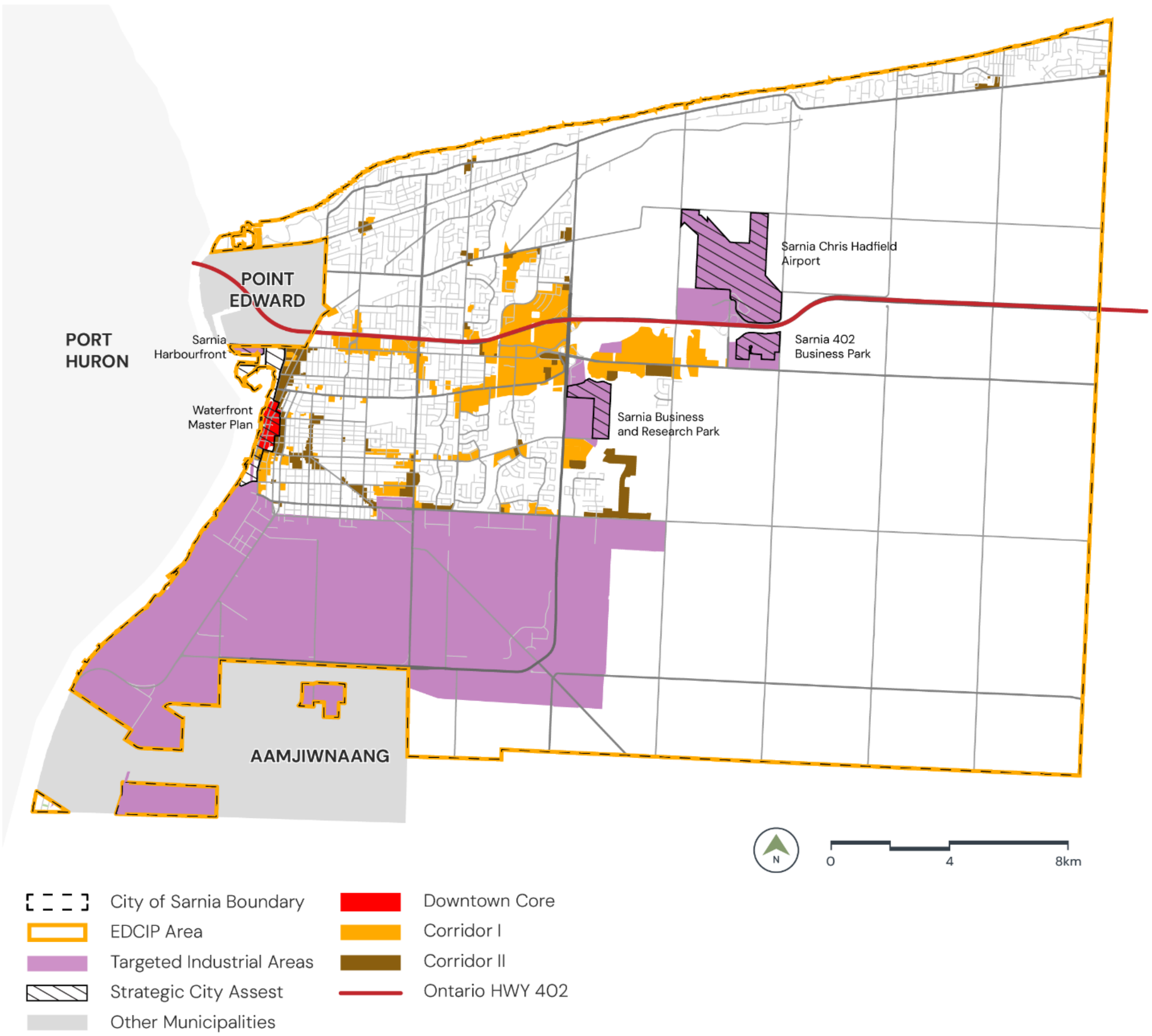
Section 28 of the *Planning Act* states that where a municipality has community improvement policies in its official plan, that municipality may, by by-law, designate the whole or any part of the area covered by their official plan as a community improvement project area. The City of Sarnia Official Plan extends over the entirety of the municipality and contains policies that authorize the use of community improvement plans as a development tool to implement the objectives, principles, and policies of the Official Plan within the city.

When considering the boundaries of areas that would be appropriate for the offering of financial incentives it is important to consider the goals of the EDCIP. The purpose of the proposed EDCIP is to implement the City's economic development priorities including stimulating wide-spread business retention and expansion, fostering opportunities for larger scale job creation, diversifying the local economy, and supporting the development of tourism opportunities.

Based on a review of the City's strategic documents, as well as feedback received through consultation, several key assets were identified including primarily the City-owned 402 Business Park and Sarnia Business & Research Park, Sarnia Harbour, Chris Hadfield Airport, the city's supply of vacant industrial land, and the Downtown Waterfront. As identified in Figure 1 below, these areas are dispersed throughout the geographic area of the city.

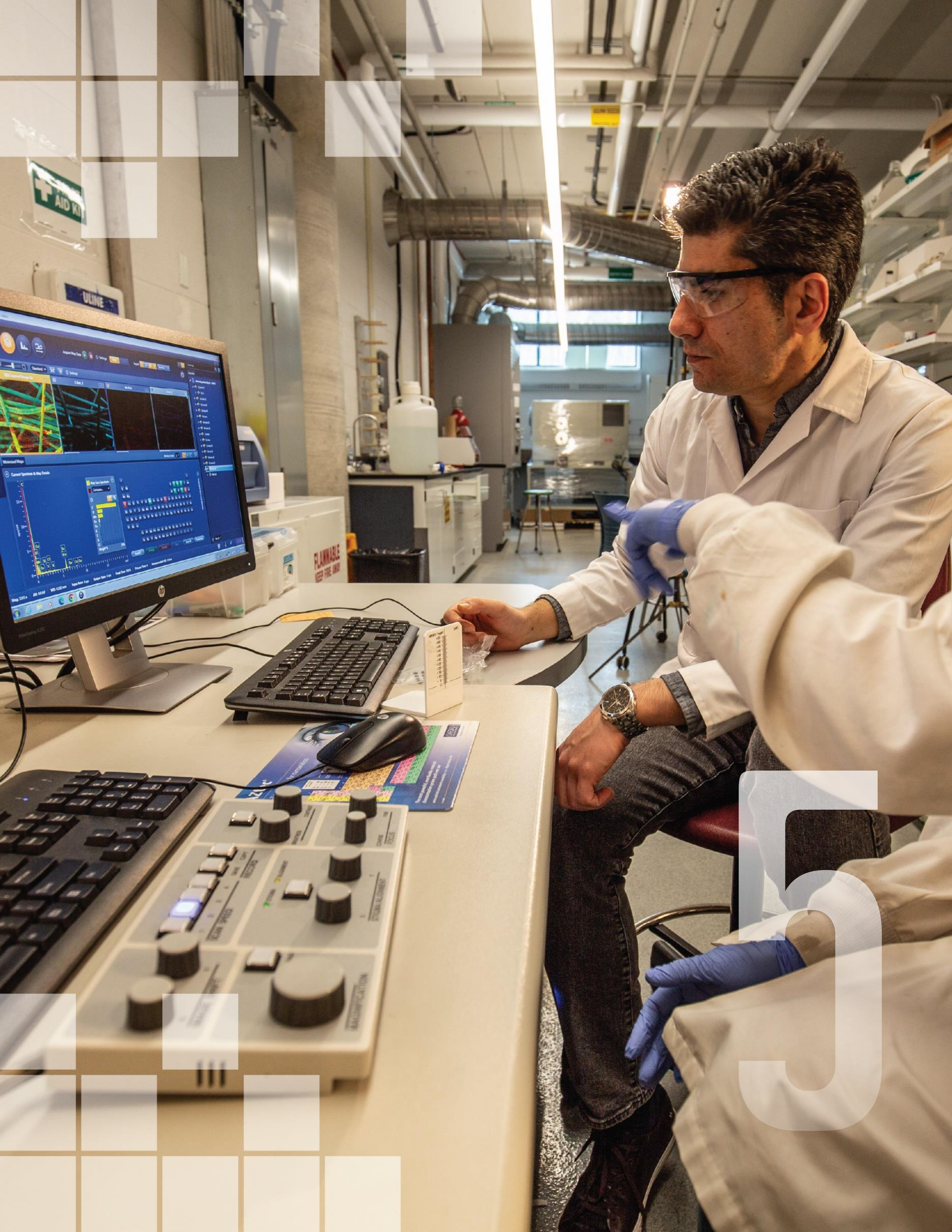
To support economic development opportunities across the municipality, the CIP Area for the EDCIP will be designated as the entire geographic area of the city. This approach offers several advantages. It ensures that financial incentives are targeted to properties with the capacity to support meaningful economic investment, while also eliminating the need for future amendments to the CIP should land use changes occur (e.g., conversions from employment uses to residential uses, or vice versa).

Figure 1 | Key Assets & Eligible Areas



Source: City of Sarnia, Official Plan Schedules, Parcel Fabric, Open Portal Data; (c) 2025

It is noted that the above Figure is provided for informational purposes and that the CIP Area will be delineated in the implementing by-law. Future changes to land use designations within the City of Sarnia will not require an amendment to this plan.



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5.0 FINANCIAL INCENTIVE PROGRAMS

This section provides a description of the financial incentive programs that have been developed to support the achievement of the goals and objectives identified within the EDCIP. The incentive programs have been divided into two separate streams with each stream having its own specific eligibility criteria.

Industrial Stream

The Industrial Development Stream is designed to provide financial incentive programs as tools that support the development of employment and industrial lands within Sarnia, attract new investment, stimulate growth, and revitalize targeted areas. This stream offers programs designed to offset costs related to increases in municipal tax assessment, development charges, building permit fees, and planning application fees.

Tourism Stream

The Tourism Stream is designed to enhance the City of Sarnia’s current tourism efforts by increasing the number of tourism-based businesses that attract visitors to the city that support the local economy during their stay. The programs are also intended to leverage key areas of the city as core tourism assets. These programs are intended to encourage the development or redevelopment of lands to support tourism activity and facilities of a significant scale that serve to strengthen Sarnia’s appeal as a destination for visitors that contribute to the cultural, recreational, and economic vitality of the community. This stream offers programs designed to offset costs related to increases in municipal tax assessment, building permit fees, and planning application fees.

5.1 General Program Eligibility Criteria

All financial incentive programs described in this Plan are subject to the general requirements outlined below. These requirements are not intended to be exhaustive. The City reserves the right to impose other reasonable requirements or conditions on a project-specific basis, as deemed appropriate:

Criteria	Requirements
Eligible Applicants	Applicants applying for a grant must be the registered owner of the subject property. Where an applicant is not the owner, the applicant must provide written authorization from the owner to proceed with an application.
Location	The subject property shall be located within the designated Community Improvement Project Area and meet all other grant program locational criteria.
Outstanding Taxes & Fees	A property owner who is in arrears of property taxes, development charges, water/wastewater charges, or any other municipal financial obligation will not be eligible for a program grant.
Compliance Orders	Any outstanding work orders or contraventions under municipal by-laws, the Building Code Act, or property standards, must be addressed to the satisfaction of the City prior to application for a grant.
Policy Conformity	Any proposed eligible works must conform to any applicable federal and provincial legislation, regulations, and policies, Official Plan policies, and municipal by-laws.
Timing of Works	A complete application must be submitted and approved prior to the commencement of any works for which funding is sought. Retroactive applications are not permitted.

Criteria	Requirements
Eligible Costs	The total value of all grants provided in respect of the particular lands and buildings of which an application is made for under the programs contained in the EDCIP shall not exceed eligible costs with respect to these lands and buildings.
Application Submission	Applicants may be required to submit all required application forms, cost estimates for the proposed works, photos of the existing property, conceptual or professional design drawings, a business plan or proposal to demonstrate feasibility and alignment with CIP objectives, and any other supporting materials such as applicable technical reports and approvals. The information required for submission will be determined through pre-consultation with the City, which must be completed prior to an application submission.
Agreements	Successful applicants will be required to enter into an Agreement with the City of Sarnia and registered on the title of the land. This agreement will specify the terms, duration, and default provisions of the incentive that is provided, as well as require applicants to report key metrics tied to project performance over the duration of the grant. If the applicant is in default of any of the general or program specific requirements, or other requirements of the City, the City may delay, reduce, or cancel the approved grant, and any grant amount will be required to be repaid to the City. All works completed must comply with the description of the works as provided in the application form and contained in the grant agreement, with any amendments as approved by the City. The City has the right to perform inspections and require annual reports from approved applicants to ensure compliance with the agreement.

Criteria	Requirements
Funding of Grants	The inclusion of financial incentive programs within the EDCIP does not guarantee or provide obligation that funds will be available and funding will be subject to annual budget approvals. The City may discontinue any financial incentive program(s) at any time. The value of the total of all financial incentives granted by the City for an application under this EDCIP shall not exceed $1 million.
Project Audits	The City reserves the right to audit the cost of any and all works that have been approved for any of the financial incentive programs, at the expense of the applicant.
Project Timelines	Applicants approved for a grant under a program contained in the EDCIP may be required to complete the eligible works within specified timeframes as set by the City.
Additional Costs	The City is not responsible for any costs incurred by the applicant in the relation to any of the financial incentive programs.
Disclosure of Funding	Applicants will be required to disclose any additional external funding sources received or anticipated for the project, such as funding from other levels of government, at the time of application, or thereafter. Priority may be given to applicants that do not receive incentives through additional funding sources. Failure to disclose additional funding sources may result in an approved grant being reduced or canceled, and the applicant may be required to repay part or all of a grant.

Criteria	Requirements
Incentive Stacking	Applicants may apply for funding under one or a combination of incentive programs within one of the program streams provided in the EDCIP. When stacking EDCIP incentives, the total combined grant funding shall not exceed total eligible costs. Applicants will not be able to apply for grants from more than one program stream. Proposals that have received funding through another City of Sarnia CIP or other financial incentive offered by the City of Sarnia will not be eligible for programs in the EDCIP.
Demolition	If a building that was erected or improved with a program grant is demolished prior to the expiry of the grant period, the grant will be canceled, and the applicant will be required to repay the approved grant.

5.2 Targeted Sectors

The City of Sarnia's economic strategy is based on leveraging its established industrial strengths while intentionally seeking to diversify into resilient, innovation driven sectors. The Economic Development Master Plan, and the supporting Competitive Market Analysis, present an aligned set of priority sectors that build upon Sarnia's assets, including its skilled workforce, education and research network, strategic proximity to an international border, and transportation, as well as broader economic trends. The financial incentive programs available in the EDCIP will focus on these key sectors to provide greater leverage to private investment in areas that will be instrumental in growing and diversifying the local economy.

Advanced Manufacturing

Advanced Manufacturing is identified as the cornerstone of Sarnia's economy and remains the city's largest export generating sector. This sector builds upon Sarnia's long-standing petrochemical and chemical manufacturing base while supporting transition toward higher value, lower carbon and more technologically advanced production. Priority subsectors include petroleum products, chemicals, sustainable and bio-based materials, resins and synthetics, and metal and fabricated product manufacturing.

Advanced Manufacturing is also seen as a catalyst for spin-off activity in engineering, maintenance, logistics, and digital services. These related sectors will reinforce economic resilience during energy transition and market shifts.

Clean Energy, Bio Industries, and Sustainable Chemistry

Closely linked to advanced manufacturing, clean energy and bio industrial development represent a critical diversification pathway. Building on local expertise in chemistry and energy, Sarnia is positioned to attract investment in biofuels, biochemicals, hydrogen, low carbon fuels, and energy related technologies.

Transportation, Logistics, and Wholesale Trade

Sarnia’s border location, access to the Great Lakes, rail and highway networks, the Blue Water Bridge, harbour facilities, and the Oversize Load Corridor underpin its role as a regional trade and logistics hub. Transportation, logistics, and wholesale trade are identified as priority enabling sectors that support manufacturing, construction, and energy supply chains. Growth opportunities include specialized freight, industrial wholesaling, marine based shipping, and logistics services supporting large scale infrastructure and energy projects.

Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services (PSTS)

Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services are highlighted as essential to economic diversification and long-term resilience. These knowledge-based industries support advanced manufacturing, energy transition, and infrastructure development. These include engineering, architecture, environmental services, applied research, computer systems design, and technical consulting. The plan recognizes PSTS as a key growth sector tied to innovation, automation, data analytics, and digital transformation.

Value Added Agriculture and Agri-Food Processing

Agricultural production in surrounding rural areas creates significant opportunities for value added agri-food processing within the city. Target opportunities include plant-based ingredients, food processing, and industrial inputs derived from agricultural feedstocks.

Tourism, Placemaking, and Quality of Life Industries

The EDMP identifies tourism and waterfront oriented placemaking as supportive economic sectors that complement industrial growth. Tourism, culture, events, and hospitality enhance Sarnia’s external image, attract talent, and improve livability—key factors in workforce attraction and retention. Investments in tourism development are positioned as long-term contributors to economic resilience and population growth.

FINANCIAL INCENTIVE PROGRAMS
Industrial Development Stream

5.3 Financial Incentive Programs – Industrial Development Stream

5.3.1 Tax Increment Grant Program

5.3.1.1 Purpose

A Tax Increment Grant (TIG) is a financial incentive designed to help offset the long-term costs associated with development or redevelopment. When a property is improved, its assessed value typically increases resulting in higher property taxes. Under this program, grants may be provided equal to all or a portion of the municipal portion of a tax increase that is directly attributable to the approved project.

By helping to offset these increased costs, the TIG Program encourages private investment in new development or in the expansion of existing businesses. The intended outcomes include job creation, a stronger local economy, and increased diversity in business and employment opportunities.

5.3.1.2 Description

This program provides grants equivalent to the tax increase in property tax assessment. The value of the incentive will be determined by the project's overall scoring:

Points	Level of Incentive
7-9 Points	1 Year Grant – 20% of the increases in municipal taxes.
10-12 Points	2 Year Grant – 40% reduction and decrease in 20% annually
13-15 Points	3 Year Grant – 60% reduction and decrease in 20% annually
16-18 Points	4 Year Grant – 80% reduction and decrease in increments of 20% annually
19+ Points	5 Year Grant – 100% reduction and decrease in increments of 20% annually

5.3.1.3. Program Specific Requirements

1. To be eligible for this grant, the subject property must be located on a parcel of land that is designated in the City of Sarnia Official Plan or zoned within the City of Sarnia Zoning By-law to permit industrial uses.

2. Eligible works for this program will include development, redevelopment, construction, reconstruction, rehabilitation, or adaptive reuse for an industrial development that results in an increase in the assessed value and property taxes on the property.

3. Applicants shall submit a detailed proposal that includes a description of the project and why it should be considered for a grant funding including, but not limited to, the number of new full-time permanent jobs that will be created, the level of investment/construction cost, and the sector the development is associated with.

4. The value of the grant will not exceed the incremental increase in property assessment and municipal property tax resulting from the improvements.

5. The grant is provided to the owner/applicant after the taxes have been paid in full for the calendar year to which the application for the annual instalment applies.

6. The grants will be provided after the improvements to the property are complete and after the reassessment of the property by the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC) has demonstrated an increase in the assessed value of the property.

7. The pre and post improvement assessment and tax values will be used to calculate the incremental increase in municipal property tax revenue and the total value of the grant.

8. The awarding of grants and the size of grants awarded for the TIG will be informed and evaluated by staff using the following scoring matrix. Notwithstanding the criteria contained below, the City at its discretion, may consider additional information when evaluating an application for a financial incentive program:

Scoring Matrix

Construction/Investment Value	Points
$1,000,000 - $1,999,999	1
$2,000,000 - $4,999,999	2
$5,000,000 - $9,999,999	3
$10,000,000+	4
Full Time Jobs Created	**Points**
10-24 Jobs	1
25-49 Jobs	2
50-74 Jobs	3
75-99 Jobs	4
100+ Jobs	5
Targeted Sector	**Points**
No	0
Yes	4
Servicing Status	**Points**
No Municipal Services Available at Site	0
Partial Municipal Services Available at Site	2
Full Municipal Services Available at Site	3
Located within Key City-Owned Asset (Sites Include: City-owned business parks, Sarnia Harbour, Chris Hadfield Airport, etc.)	**Points**
No	0
Yes	1

Site Improvements / Redevelopment Proposed	Points
No	0
Yes	3
Total	**20 Points**

5.3.2 Development Charges Grant Program

5.3.2.1 Purpose

The intent of a development charges grant program is to encourage the development or redevelopment of vacant or underutilized lands by reducing development charge costs, which are often identified as a barrier to new development. By lowering these costs, this type of incentive can help in attracting new businesses to the area and support the expansion of existing businesses.

5.3.2.2 Description

The Development Charges Grant Program shall be administered as a grant-based incentive program under which eligible businesses may receive a grant equal to a percentage of the Development Charges payable for the development or redevelopment of buildings or lands that comply with the goals and requirements of the EDCIP. The value of the grant shall be determined based on the project's overall evaluation and scoring, as established by the Program's eligibility criteria and scoring framework:

Points	Rebate Amount on DC Charges
10-11 Points	20% Rebate
12-13 Points	40% Rebate
14-15 Points	60% Rebate
16-18 Points	80% Rebate
19+ Points	100% Rebate

5.3.2.3 Program Specific Requirements

1. To be eligible for this grant, the subject property must be located on a parcel of land that is designated in the City of Sarnia Official Plan or zoned within the City of Sarnia Zoning By-law to permit industrial uses.

2. The Eligible works for this program will include development, redevelopment, construction, reconstruction, rehabilitation, or adaptive reuse for an industrial development that results in the application of development charges.

3. Applicants shall submit a detailed proposal that includes a description of the project and why it should be considered for a grant funding including, but not limited to,

the number of new full-time permanent jobs that will be created, the level of investment/construction cost, and the sector the development is associated with.

4. Development charges will be required to be paid in full to the satisfaction of the Municipality prior to the issuance of the grant.

5. The grant will be paid to the owner upon project completion.

6. Projects that have been approved for any other development charge reductions under the City of Sarnia's Development Charges By-law will **not** be eligible for the Development Charges Grant Program.

7. The awarding of grants and the size of grants awarded for the Development Charge Grant will be informed and evaluated by staff using the following scoring matrix. Notwithstanding the criteria contained below, the City at its discretion may consider additional information when evaluating an application for a financial incentive program:

Scoring Matrix

Construction/Investment Value	Points
$1,000,000 - $1,999,999	1
$2,000,000 - $4,999,999	2
$5,000,000 - $9,999,999	3
$10,000,000+	4
Full Time Jobs Created	**Points**
10-24 Jobs	1
25-49 Jobs	2
50-74 Jobs	3
75-99 Jobs	4
100+ Jobs	5
Targeted Sector	**Points**
No	0

Yes	4
Servicing Status	**Points**
No Municipal Services Available at Site	0
Partial Municipal Services Available at Site	2
Full Municipal Services Available at Site	3
Located within Key City-Owned Asset (Sites Include: City-owned business parks, Sarnia Harbour, Chris Hadfield Airport, etc.)	**Points**
No	0
Yes	1
Site Improvements / Redevelopment Proposed	**Points**
No	0
Yes	3
Total	**20 Points**

5.3.3 Building Fee Grant Program

5.3.3.1 Purpose

The intent of this program is to provide a financial incentive that refunds the costs of municipal building fees for qualifying industrial land development projects.

5.3.3.2 Description

The Building Fee Grant Program will provide funds to offset a portion of the costs of building permit fees to a maximum of 50% associated with a project. The value of the building permit fee grant shall be determined based on the project’s overall evaluation and scoring, as established by the Program’s eligibility criteria and scoring framework:

Points	Rebate Amount on Building Fees
7-9 Points	10% Grant
10-12 Points	20% Grant
13-15 Points	30% Grant
16-18 Points	40% Grant
19+ Points	50% Grant

5.3.3.3 Program Specific Requirements

1. To be eligible for this grant, the subject property must be located on a parcel of land that is designated in the City of Sarnia Official Plan or zoned within the City of Sarnia Zoning By-law to permit industrial uses.

2. Eligible costs include City application fees for Building Permits, as set out in the City of Sarnia Fee By-law, required for development, redevelopment, construction, reconstruction, rehabilitation or adaptive reuse for an industrial development. This does not include fees associated with water meters, signs, tents, plumbing/septic fees charged by the County of Lambton, limiting distance agreements, or conditional foundation permits.

3. Applicants shall submit a detailed proposal that includes a description of the project and why it should be considered for grant funding including, but not limited to, the number of new full-time permanent jobs that will be created, the level of investment/construction cost, and the sector the development is associated with.

4. Building permit fees will be required to be paid in full to the satisfaction of the Municipality prior to the issuance of the grant. Funding will be provided at time of project completion.
5. The awarding of grants and the size of grants awarded for the Building Fee Grant will be informed and evaluated by staff using the following scoring matrix. Notwithstanding the criteria contained below, the City at its discretion may consider additional information when evaluating an application for a financial incentive program:

Scoring Matrix

Construction/Investment Value	Points
$1,000,000 - $1,999,999	1
$2,000,000 - $4,999,999	2
$5,000,000 - $9,999,999	3
$10,000,000+	4
Full Time Jobs Created	**Points**
10-24 Jobs	1
25-49 Jobs	2
50-74 Jobs	3
75-99 Jobs	4
100+ Jobs	5
Targeted Sector	**Points**
No	0
Yes	4
Servicing Status	**Points**
No Municipal Services Available at Site	0
Partial Municipal Services Available at Site	2
Full Municipal Services Available at Site	3

Located within Key City-Owned Asset (Sites Include: City-owned business parks, Sarnia Harbour, Chris Hadfield Airport, etc.)	**Points**
No	0
Yes	1
Site Improvements / Redevelopment Proposed	**Points**
No	0
Yes	3
Total	**20 Points**

5.3.4 Planning Fee Grant Program

5.3.4.1 Purpose

The intent of this program is to provide a financial incentive that refunds the upfront costs of municipal planning fees for qualifying industrial land development projects.

5.3.4.2 Description

The Planning Fee Grant Program will provide funds to offset 100% of planning application fees associated with a project.

5.3.4.3 Program Specific Requirements

1. To be eligible for this grant, the subject property must be located on a parcel of land that is designated in the City of Sarnia Official Plan or zoned within the City of Sarnia Zoning By-law to permit industrial uses.
2. Eligible costs include City planning application fees for Official Plan Amendments, Zoning Bylaw Amendments, Site Plan Approvals, Minor Variances, Consents, Plans of Subdivision, as set out in the City of Sarnia Fee By-law, required for development, redevelopment, construction, reconstruction, rehabilitation or adaptive reuse for an industrial development.
3. Applicants shall submit a detailed proposal that includes a description of the project and why it should be considered for grant funding including, but not limited to, the number of new full-time permanent jobs that will be created, the level of investment/construction cost, the sector the development is associated with.
4. Planning fees will be required to be paid in full to the satisfaction of the Municipality prior to the issuance of the grant. Funding will be provided at time of project completion.

FINANCIAL INCENTIVE PROGRAMS
Tourism Stream

5.4 Financial Incentive Programs – Tourism Stream

5.4.1 Tax Increment Grant Program

5.4.1.1 Purpose

A Tax Increment Grant (TIG) is a financial incentive offered to help reduce the long-term costs of development or redevelopment. When a property is improved, its assessed value, and therefore property taxes, typically increase. Under this program, grants may be provided equal to all or a portion of the municipal portion of a tax increase that is directly attributable to the approved project. By offsetting these additional costs, the TIG Program encourages private developers to invest in new projects or expand existing businesses.

5.4.1.2 Description

This program provides grants equivalent to the tax increase in property tax assessment. The value of the incentive will be determined by the project's overall scoring:

Points	Level of Incentive
10-11 Points	1 Year Grant – 20% of the increases in municipal taxes.
12-13 Points	2 Year Grant – 40% of the increases in municipal and decrease in increments of 20% annually
14-15 Points	3 Year Grant – 60% reduction and decrease in 20% annually
16-17 Points	4 Year Grant – 80% reduction and decrease in increments of 20% annually
18+ Points	5 Year Grant – 100% reduction and decrease in increments of 20% annually

5.4.1.3 Program Requirements

1. To be eligible for this grant, the project will support the development of tourism uses including but not limited to cultural facilities or event spaces, assembly halls, convention/conference centre/facilities, large-scale private recreational facilities, entertainment spaces, hotels and other large-scale tourist accommodations. Short-term accommodations will not be eligible for EDCIP grants.

2. Eligible works for this program will include development, redevelopment, construction, reconstruction, rehabilitation or adaptive reuse of land or building(s) that results in an increase in the assessed value and property taxes on the property.

3. Applications will be required to provide a proposal that includes information including but not limited to the anticipated number of annual visitors, duration that the tourism service/attraction will be provided (i.e. year-round vs. seasonal, number of operating days per year), estimated private investment and increase in assessed value, number of full time permanent jobs created, contributions to local culture and identity, project feasibility, and whether the proposed facility is open to the public without membership fee. Applicants shall submit a detailed proposal describing how the project meets these criteria and why the project should be considered for the grant.

4. The value of the grant provided is equal to the incremental increase in property assessment and municipal property tax resulting from the improvements.

5. The grant is provided to the owner/applicant after the taxes have been paid in full for the calendar year to which the application for the annual instalment applies.

6. The grants will be provided after the improvements to the property are complete and after the reassessment of the property by the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC) has demonstrated an increase in the assessed value of the property.

7. The pre and post improvement assessment and tax values will be used to calculate the incremental increase in municipal property tax revenue and the total value of the grant.

8. The awarding of grants and the size of grants awarded for the TIG will be informed and evaluated by staff using the following scoring matrix. Notwithstanding the criteria contained below, the City at its discretion may consider additional information when evaluating an application for a financial incentive program:

Scoring Matrix

Construction/Investment Value	Points
$250,000 - $999,999	1
$1,000,000 - $2,499,999	2
$2,500,000 - $4,999,999	3
$5,000,000+	4
Visitor & Tourism Impact	**Points**
Minimal visitor appeal	0
Moderate regional draw, primarily day-trip visitors	1
Strong regional attraction with some overnight potential	2
Full Time Jobs Created	**Points**
5-19	2 Point
20-49	3 Points
50+	4 Points
Year-Round Viability	**Points**
Shoulder-season extension (3-season operation) or indoor/outdoor hybrid	0 Point
Fully indoor; programming viable 12 months	3 Points
Placemaking & Cultural Value	**Points**
Moderate Level	1 Points
High Level	2 Points
Locational Criteria	**Points**

Outside Downtown Core, Mixed Use Corridor I & II designations, or Waterfront Master Plan Strategic Development sites	0 Point
Within Downtown Core, Mixed Use Corridor I & II designations, or Waterfront Master Plan Strategic Development sites	4 Points
Total	**19 Points**

5.4.2 Building Fee Grant Program

5.4.2.1 Purpose

The intent of this program is to provide a financial incentive that refunds the upfront costs of municipal building fees for qualifying tourism-supportive businesses.

5.4.2.2 Description

This grant will provide funds to offset a portion of the costs of City building permit fees to a maximum of 50% of building permit fees associated with a project. The value of the building permit fee grant shall be determined based on the project's overall evaluation and scoring, as established by the Program's eligibility criteria and scoring framework:

Points	Rebate Amount on Building Fees
10-11 Points	10% Grant
12-13 Points	20% Grant
14-15 Points	30% Grant
16-17 Points	40% Grant
18+ Points	50% Grant

5.4.2.3 Program Requirements

1. To be eligible for this grant, the project will support the development of tourism uses including but not limited to cultural facilities or event spaces, assembly hall, convention/conference centre/facilities, large-scale private recreational facilities, entertainment spaces, hotels and other large-scale tourist accommodations. Short-term accommodations will not be eligible for EDCIP grants.

2. Eligible costs include City fees for Building Permit, as set out in the City of Sarnia Fee By-law, required for development, redevelopment, construction, reconstruction, rehabilitation or adaptive reuse. This does not include fees associated with water meters, signs, tents, plumbing/septic fees charged by the County of Lambton, limiting distance agreements, or conditional foundation permits.

3. Applicants will be required to provide a proposal that includes information including but not limited to the anticipated number of annual visitors, duration that the tourism service/attraction will be provided (i.e. year-round vs. seasonal, number of

operating days per year), estimated private investment and increase in assessed value, number of full time permanent jobs created, contributions to local culture and identity, project feasibility, and whether the proposed facility is open to the public without membership fee. Applicants shall submit a detailed proposal describing how the project meets these criteria and why the project should be considered for the grant.

4. Building permit fees will be required to be paid in full to the satisfaction of the Municipality prior to the issuance of the grant. Funding for successful applications will be provided at time of project completion.

5. The awarding of grants and the size of grants awarded for the Building Fee grant will be informed and evaluated by staff using the following scoring matrix. Notwithstanding the criteria contained below, the City at its discretion may consider additional information when evaluating an application for a financial incentive program:

Scoring Matrix

Construction/Investment Value	Points
$250,000 - $999,999	1
$1,000,000 - $2,499,999	2
$2,500,000 - $4,999,999	3
$5,000,000+	4
Visitor & Tourism Impact	**Points**
Minimal visitor appeal	0
Moderate regional draw, primarily day-trip visitors	1
Strong regional attraction with some overnight potential	2
Full Time Jobs Created	**Points**
5-19	2 Point
20-49	3 Points
50+	4 Points

Year-Round Viability	Points
Shoulder-season extension (3-season operation) or indoor/outdoor hybrid	0 Point
Fully indoor; programming viable 12 months	3 Points
Placemaking & Cultural Value	**Points**
Moderate Level	1 Points
High Level	2 Points
Locational Criteria	**Points**
Outside Downtown Core, Mixed Use Corridor I & II designations, or Waterfront Master Plan Strategic Development sites	0 Point
Within Downtown Core, Mixed Use Corridor I & II designations, or Waterfront Master Plan Strategic Development sites	4 Points
Total	**19 Points**

5.4.3 Planning Fee Grant Program

5.4.3.1 Purpose

The intent of this program is to provide a financial incentive that refunds the upfront costs of municipal planning fees for qualifying tourism-supportive businesses.

5.4.3.2 Description

The Planning Fee Grant Program will provide funds to offset 100% of planning application fees associated with a project.

5.4.3.3 Program Requirements

1. To be eligible for this grant, the project will support the development of tourism uses including but not limited to cultural facilities or event spaces, assembly hall, convention/conference centre/facilities, large-scale private recreational facilities, entertainment spaces, hotels and other large-scale tourist accommodations. Short-term accommodations will not be eligible for EDCIP grants.

2. Eligible costs include City planning application fees for Official Plan Amendments, Zoning Bylaw Amendments, Site Plan Approvals, Minor Variances, Consents, and Building Permits, as set out in the City of Sarnia Fee By-law, required for development, redevelopment, construction, reconstruction, rehabilitation or adaptive reuse.

3. Applications will be required to provide a proposal that includes information including but not limited to the anticipated number of annual visitors, duration that the tourism service/attraction will be provided (i.e. year-round vs. seasonal, number of operating days per year), estimated private investment and increase in assessed value, number of full time permanent jobs created, contributions to local culture and identity, project feasibility, and whether the proposed facility is open to the public without membership fee. Applicants shall submit a detailed proposal describing how the project meets these criteria and why the project should be considered for the grant.

4. Planning fees will be required to be paid in full to the satisfaction of the Municipality prior to the issuance of the grant. Funding for successful applications will be provided at time of project completion.

6

6.0 ADMINISTRATION

6.1 Application Process

1. Application Pre-Consultation
2. Application Submission
3. Application Review & Evaluation
4. Council Decision
5. Execution of Agreement
6. Project Completion
7. Final Inspection and MPAC Reassessment
8. Issuance of Grants / Incentives

The following section outlines the general process of an EDCIP application submission:

1. **Application Pre-consultation:** A potential applicant requests pre-consultation with Economic Development staff prior to applying to discuss their project, confirm eligibility, review applicable program streams, receive preliminary feedback, and identify any additional information and materials required for a complete application submission.

2. **Application Submission:** Applicant submits a complete application along with any required supporting information and materials, including but not limited to conceptual or other professional design drawings, cost estimates, photos of the subject property, studies or reports, certifications, and a proposal of the proposed project to demonstrate feasibility and alignment with CIP objectives.

3. **Application Review & Evaluation:** Staff will review the application to determine completeness, screening for general eligibility criteria, and ensuring all required supporting information identified at the pre-consultation meeting has been included and is acceptable. Applications will be evaluated by staff using the general and program specific scoring included in this EDCIP.

4. **Decision:** Once a project has been scored and evaluated, staff prepare a staff report with a recommendation to approve or refuse the application to Council, or its delegated authority, for consideration and a final decision. If an application is refused, there is no appeal process for a decision on an EDCIP application.

5. **Execution of Agreement:** If the application is approved, a grant agreement is prepared for execution and registration on title. The grant agreement will specify the terms, duration, reporting requirements, and default provisions of the incentive(s) approved.

6. **Project Construction:** Upon approval of a grant and the grant agreement has been executed and registered on title, the applicant may initiate the works associated with the improvement project, in accordance with the provisions of the agreement.

7. **Final Inspection & MPAC Assessment:** Once the project is completed, the applicant submits information and materials documenting the completion of the project works including but not limited to photographs of the completed project, original invoices for all costs associated with eligible works, and any applicable certificates, licenses, or other approvals.

8. **Issuance of Grants/Incentives:** If, on conclusion of the final inspection and MPAC reassessment the works have been carried out in accordance with the grant agreement, and all provisions and obligations of the agreement have been satisfied, the City will organize the payment of the financial incentives in accordance with the grant agreement. The Tax Increment Grant will be paid on

an annual basis and only where all program and grant agreement requirements continue to be met. The amount of incentives granted may be adjusted where there is non-compliance with the grant agreement.

6.2 Program Monitoring

It is recognized that the EDCIP must be responsive to changing market conditions, economic priorities, and community needs over time. The EDCIP will be monitored on an ongoing and regular basis to assess the performance and impact of the incentive programs established under the Plan. Monitoring and reporting will provide the information needed to assess the Plan's effectiveness and enable adjustment of programs as necessary, ensuring the Plan remains relevant and effective. Regular monitoring will also help ensure transparency, accountability, and that the objectives of the EDCIP are being met.

The following program-specific information may be collected from applicants as required by agreement and reported on by City staff on an ongoing basis:

- Number of applications submitted and approved annually for each stream and program.
- Number of jobs created.
- Increase in assessed value of participating properties.
- Total value of incentives/rebates committed.
- Hectares of land developed.
- Square footage of new or revitalized industrial/commercial space constructed.
- Value of private sector investment leveraged.
- Number of tourism-based businesses supported
- Square footage or new tourism-based businesses constructed or revitalized Number of program defaults.

Information collected through monitoring will be used to evaluate program effectiveness and to identify opportunities for improvement. Monitoring and reporting activities will be completed on a continuous basis, with summary reports compiled and presented to City Council annually. These reports will be used to inform decisions related to potential adjustments to incentive programs and associated budget allocations.

Feedback from program users should also be collected to better understand how the implementation of financial incentive programs can be improved and where refinements or improvements may be beneficial. Post-completion monitoring requirements are recommended to be incorporated into the application approval process. These requirements will ensure that approved projects meet established metrics and key performance indicators associated with the incentives awarded, and that program outcomes align with the goals and objectives of the EDCIP.

In addition to ongoing monitoring, the EDCIP will be formally reviewed no less frequently than every five years. This review will evaluate the continued use and relevance of the Plan and consider:

- The continuation or modification of existing incentive programs;
- Revisions to eligibility criteria and program requirements;
- Adjustments to grant and incentive amounts; and
- Minor refinements to program details as appropriate.

This approach to monitoring and review will support continuous improvement and help ensure the EDCIP remains an effective tool for achieving economic development goals.

6.3 Amendments to the EDCIP

Based on the results of the monitoring exercises above, or feedback gathered throughout the implementation of the CIP, it may be necessary to modify or amend this plan from time to time as community priorities and goals change or as the plan is implemented. Additions to the types of financial incentive programs, as well as increases to grant amounts provided within financial incentive programs already provided will require a formal amendment to the EDCIP in accordance with Section 28 of the Planning Act. Minor and technical amendments (e.g., correcting typographical errors) may be made without Council approval.

Individual incentive programs may be discontinued, activated, or deactivated by Council without an amendment to this Plan.

6.4 Municipal Actions to Enable Economic Development

6.4.1 Property Acquisition & Disposition

The City of Sarnia may utilize the full abilities permitted under Section 28 of the *Planning Act* and other provincial legislation to implement the goals and objectives of the EDCIP.

The City of Sarnia may facilitate the assembly of land within the city boundaries in conformity with the CIP. Additionally, the City may acquire, hold, clear, grade or otherwise prepare the land for community improvement as defined by this CIP.

The City of Sarnia may also dispose of municipally owned land or buildings within the CIP Project Area in conformity with the CIP. Additionally, the City may sell, lease, or otherwise dispose of any land and buildings acquired or held by it provided the end use of the property and/or buildings remains in conformity with this CIP. The City may choose to dispose of municipally owned property or buildings at less than market value in order to facilitate the development, redevelopment or adaptive reuse of the property and/or buildings.

6.4.2 Development of Employment & Industrial Lands

The availability of a diverse and well-serviced supply of employment lands is a critical determinant of a community's competitive position in attracting and retaining business investment. The City of Sarnia plays a central role in strengthening its economic competitiveness by ensuring a sufficient inventory of "shovel-ready" employment lands, supported by timely and coordinated infrastructure provision to meet market expectations.

6.4.3 Effective Application Processing

For major development applications, the City will actively explore procedural and other development initiatives, including committing to a 'single point of staff contact' liaison model.

6.5 Program Funding & Budget

Council may choose each year, at its sole discretion, to allocate funding to any, all, or none of the incentive programs outlined in this CIP. At that time, Council will establish the total annual budget for the program. It is recommended that Council also determine how the funding will be distributed among the various incentive programs, either as a percentage or as specific amounts.

All decisions regarding funding under this CIP are at the sole discretion of Council. This includes the amount of funding to be provided, and any terms, conditions, or requirements that may apply to approved applications. Council also reserves the right to limit funding for individual applications or projects where it determines that doing so is necessary to ensure that funding remains available for other eligible projects throughout the year.

Recommendations for the funding of EDCIP programs have been included in Appendix B, which does not form part of this Plan, and can be modified without an amendment to the EDCIP.

6.6 Glossary

This section defines the terms used in the EDCIP and clarifies their meaning within the context of this document:

Adaptive Re-use: is the process of adapting old buildings by development, redevelopment, rehabilitation and/or construction for the purposes of using them for new eligible uses.

Applicant: may include registered owners, assessed owners and tenants of land and buildings within the community improvement project area, and to any other person to whom such an owner or tenant has assigned the right to receive a grant.

Development: means the construction of a new industrial building on previously undeveloped land.

Eligible Costs: are the costs related to development, redevelopment, rehabilitation and/or adaptive reuse of a building or property in conformity with the EDCIP and the Planning Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. P.13.

Eligible Works: includes all development, redevelopment, rehabilitation and/or adaptive reuse of a use that meets the eligibility criteria of one or more of the financial incentive programs described by this CIP.

Job: is a permanent full-time (minimum 30 hours per week) position created or retained directly as a result of the development, redevelopment, adaptive reuse or rehabilitation of the building or property.

MPAC: is the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation.

Municipal Taxes: is the City of Sarnia (i.e. the municipal) portion of property taxes payable and does not include the County portion or Educational portion payable to the Province.

Redevelopment: is the construction of a new building(s) and/or the expansion of or addition to an existing building(s) on previously developed land.

Rehabilitation: is the returning of an existing building and/or land to a useful state by adaptive reuse, development, redevelopment and/or construction.

Targeted Sectors: means an employment sector or industry that the City of Sarnia considers of significant importance to the diversification, growth, and resiliency of the local economy that has been identified in Section 5.2 of the EDCIP.

Tourism Use: means the use of land, buildings, or structures that attract, accommodate, or serve visitors from outside the municipality by providing experiences, services, or facilities that contribute to destination appeal. This includes, but is not limited to, hotel accommodations, cultural and heritage attractions, convention or conference facilities, recreational facilities, and tourism-supportive commercial uses, whether permanent or seasonal

APPENDIX A – STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

Economic Development Community Improvement Plan
City of Sarnia

1.0 Introduction

This report summarizes the public consultation phase of the development of the Economic Development Community Improvement Plan (EDCIP). A detailed consultation program was developed to ensure that the EDCIP is informed by the needs of Sarnia's business community, economic partners, and residents. Input was sought from stakeholders using a variety of engagement tools including:

1. Online Resident Survey (398 responses)
2. Online Targeted Partner Survey (77 responses)
3. One-on-one interviews with members of Council.
4. One-on-one interviews with targeted partners
5. Targeted Stakeholder Workshop

Comments were synthesized and summarized qualitatively, based on recurring themes and topics identified during the analysis.

2.0 Key Themes – Online Survey Engagement

There was strong agreement that encouraging private investment is important for Sarnia's future, and that any financial incentives offered by the City should be tied to clear, measurable outcomes. Participants consistently emphasized that incentives must deliver demonstrable public benefits and should not support projects that would proceed without assistance. This reflects a broad desire for accountability, transparency, and performance-based incentive structures.

A major theme throughout feedback received was the need to revitalize vacant, derelict, and underutilized properties, including greyfields and brownfields. Participants expressed strong support for incentives that encourage redevelopment, reuse, and rehabilitation of existing buildings and lands. Many preferred long-term cost reductions, such as multi-year property tax relief or reduced development fees, rather than upfront grants. There was also notable interest in incentives supporting environmental cleanup, energy efficiency, and green technologies.

Participants repeatedly identified slow, complex, and unpredictable approval processes as a major barrier to investment. Participants called for streamlined permitting, reduced fees, and improved coordination across departments. Many recommended adopting a single point-of-contact or project lead model to improve clarity and speed. Concerns about red tape, development delays, and lack of shovel-ready industrial land were common, highlighting the need for improved infrastructure readiness, including roads, servicing, and available employment lands.

Another strong theme was the importance of economic diversification. Participants emphasized opportunities in clean energy, green industries, technology, logistics, and advanced manufacturing, recognizing the risks of relying heavily on the oil and gas sector. Tourism also emerged as a key diversification opportunity, with widespread agreement that Sarnia's waterfront and harbour are underutilized assets. Participants supported creating destination-oriented uses, such as restaurants, entertainment, events, and marine-related activities, alongside broader downtown revitalization efforts.

Finally, participants highlighted the importance of quality of life in attracting and retaining both businesses and talent. Participants expressed a desire for more amenities, recreation, entertainment, and family-friendly offerings, noting that these factors influence economic competitiveness. Participants stressed the need to protect and leverage strategic assets such as the waterfront, harbour, airport, and research park, while improving marketing and promotion to better communicate Sarnia's strengths.

3.0 Key Themes – Interviews & Stakeholder Engagement

Across all interviews and input sessions, participants emphasized that Sarnia needs to take a more proactive and strategic approach to attracting private investment. There was broad agreement that financial incentives should be tied to clear, measurable outcomes, ensuring that public support leads to tangible community benefits. Participants consistently stressed that incentives should be used to support projects that would not otherwise proceed and should prioritize the revitalization of vacant, derelict, and underutilized properties.

Participants highlighted the need to streamline and modernize municipal approval processes. Participants described current processes as slow, complex, or unpredictable, and identified this as a significant barrier to investment. They called for clearer communication, reduced duplication, and more coordinated permitting, with many supporting a single point of contact or project lead model. Concerns about infrastructure readiness, including road conditions, servicing capacity, and the availability of shovel ready industrial land, were also frequently raised.

Participants also highlighted the importance of economic diversification and quality of life as essential components of long-term competitiveness. While traditional industries remain important, there was strong interest in expanding into clean energy, green technologies, logistics, advanced manufacturing, technology, and tourism. The waterfront and downtown were repeatedly identified as underutilized assets with significant potential for destination-oriented development. Many participants emphasized the need for more amenities, recreation, entertainment, and family friendly offerings to support talent attraction and retention.

Overall, the themes point to a collective belief that Sarnia should create the conditions for sustainable growth by improving its processes, investing in its core areas, diversifying its economy, and enhancing the amenities that make the community attractive.

APPENDIX B – BUDGETING FOR CIP INCENTIVES

Economic Development Community Improvement Plan
City of Sarnia

1.0 Introduction

The process for funding a community improvement plan within potentially constrained municipal budgets is a complex undertaking. Minimizing impacts on municipal ratepayers is of key concern, which is balanced with the need for municipal resources to stimulate economic and social investments within the community. There are also additional challenges due to uncertainty about the number, types, and sizes of projects that may seek funding through the EDCIP.

The Economic Development Community Improvement Plan (EDCIP) has been prepared as a tool for strengthening the local economy, attracting new investment, and supporting business retention. The EDCIP proposes the provision of financial incentives intended to reduce upfront costs for investors that are incurred at the earlier stages of development, such as building permit fees and development charges, as well as longer-term costs associated with increases in taxes resulting from the reassessment of a property due to its redevelopment. These programs are also intended to improve the City's competitive position relative to the offerings of similar incentive programs by its peer municipalities.

Based on the goals and objectives of the EDCIP, as well as a review of historic building permit fee and development charge data, recommendations for program budgeting have been provided. The provision of this funding for EDCIP programs can reasonably be expected to be recovered by the City through future tax revenues and other indirect benefits including job creation. The estimates provided below do not include costs associated with the administration of EDCIP programs, including but not limited to operational costs such as wages, financial or legal costs, or advertising or promotion of the EDCIP.

2.0 Industrial Stream - Budget Considerations

The Industrial Program Stream of the EDCIP includes a Tax Increment Grant, Planning Fee Grant, Building Permit Fee Grant, and a Development Charge Grant.

The Tax Increment Grant program provides successful applicants with an incremental tax grant for a period of up to five years based on the achievement of certain criteria. Based on initial consultation with City staff, the implementation of the Tax Increment Grant would be able to take place through the rebate of the post-project assessed value for the City portion of the tax assessment increase. After a five-year period, the City will receive the full value of the property tax assessment increase.

Planning Fee Grants would be able to take place through the waiving of fees. The estimated maximum amount of planning fees that could be waived per EDCIP application would be $10,000, if an industrial project required an Official Plan Amendment, a Zoning By-law Amendment, and Site Plan Approval.

The proposed Building Permit Fee Grant and the Development Charges Grant would require that fees be collected by the City at the time of issuance of a building permit with grant amounts paid back to applicants after works have been completed if approved for receiving an incentive. These grants would require funds to be allocated through the City's annual budget process.

A review of historical industrial building permit and development charge fee data collected since 2022 was undertaken to determine development activity within the City and provides a baseline for potential expectations of grant amounts and program uptake. Between 2022 and 2025, the City received a total of 42 industrial building permits and collected a total of $365,000 in building permit fees. This equates to an average of 10.5 permits processed and approximately $91,000 in building permit fees collected each year. For Development Charges, a total of approximately $1,203,000 was collected between 2022 and 2025, with an annual average of approximately $301,000 collected each year.

Assuming that all the industrial building projects had applied for and were eligible for CIP incentives and that the projects would have achieved the maximum scoring to receive a grant equal to the full amount of 50% of building permit fees paid, the estimated annual grant exposure for the City would be approximately **$45,000**. If half of the industrial building projects were eligible to receive the maximum grant amount proposed under the program, the estimated average annual exposure would be approximately **$22,500**.

Similarly, if all projects were eligible and received the maximum scoring to receive a grant for 100% of development charges paid, this would result in an average annual exposure of approximately **$300,000**. If only half of the projects met the criteria, the exposure would be approximately **$150,000**.

Combining the exposure for both the Building Permit Fee Grant and Development Charge Grant, this would result in a total estimated annual exposure for the Industrial Stream CIP grants of approximately **$175,000 - $345,000**.

Historic data of annual average construction values was also reviewed between 2022 and 2025 to understand the relationship between the increase in potential tax assessment from development and the amount of building fee revenues collected. This comparison provides an indicator of a potential return on investment in increased assessment value and tax revenue for the City by providing grants to cover building permit fee costs.

The annual average construction value resulting from industrial permits (2022-2025) is approximately $17,718,000. After comparing the annual construction value against the individual tax rate each year between 2022 and 2025, it is estimated that the average annual total tax revenue (including the County and Education portion of the tax assessment) for industrial projects is approximately $681,000. When compared to the average building permits fees collected of $91,000, this represents a multiplier of up to seven to eight times the amount building permit fees in increased tax assessment.

Table 1 | Estimated Tax Revenue from Increased Construction Value - Industrial Occupied Tax Rate

	2022	2023	2024	2025	Average
Historic Construction Value	$40,601,368	$15,244,967	$1,860,000	$13,166,331	$17,718,167
Tax Rate	3.75%	3.84%	3.99%	4.12%	
Estimated Tax Revenue	$1,524,024	$584,743	$74,166	$542,010	$681,236

3.0 Tourism Stream - Budget Considerations

The Tourism Program Stream of the EDCIP includes a Tax Increment Grant, a Building Permit Fee Grant, and a Planning Fee Grant.

The Tax Increment Grant program provides successful applicants with an incremental tax grant for a period of up to five years based on the achievement of certain criteria. Based on initial consultation with City staff, the implementation of the Tax Increment Grant would be able to take place through the rebate of the post-project assess value for the City portion of the tax assessment increase. After the five-year period, the City will receive the full value of the property tax assessment increase.

Staff also commented that Planning Fee Grant would be able to take place through the waiving of fees. The estimated maximum amount of planning fees that could be waived per EDCIP application would be $10,000, if a commercial project required an Official Plan Amendment, a Zoning By-law Amendment, and Site Plan Approval.

The proposed Building Permit Fee Grant would require that these fees be collected by the City with grant amounts paid back to applicants if approved for an incentive. This would require funds to be allocated for these grants through the City's annual budget process.

As noted above, a review of historical commercial building permit and development charge fee data collected since 2022 was undertaken to determine commercial development activity within the City and provide a baseline for potential expectations of grant amounts and program uptake. Between 2022 and 2025, the City received a total of 23 commercial building permits and collected a total of $161,000 in building permit fees. This equates to an annual average of 5.75 permits processed and approximately $40,000 in building permit fees collected each year.

Assuming that all of the commercial building projects requiring permits were eligible for CIP incentives and all projects would have achieved the maximum scoring to receive a grant equal to the amount of 50% of building permit fees paid, the estimated annual grant exposure for the Tourism Stream CIP programs would be approximately **$20,000**. If only half of the projects met the criteria, the exposure would be approximately **$10,000**.

Historic data of annual average construction values was also reviewed between 2022 and 2025 to understand the relationship between the increase in potential tax assessment from development and the amount of building fee revenues collected. This comparison provides an indicator of a potential return on investment in increased assessment value and tax revenue for the City by providing grants to cover building permit fee costs.

The annual average construction value resulting from commercial permits (2022-2025) is approximately $6,183,730. After comparing the annual construction value against the individual tax rate each year between 2022 and 2025, it is estimated that the average annual total tax revenue (including apportioned to the County and Education taxes) for industrial projects is approximately $207,000. When compared to the average building permits fees collected of $40,000, this represents a multiplier of up to five times the amount building permit fees in increased tax assessment.

Table 2 | Estimated Tax Revenue from Increased Construction Value - Commercial Occupied Tax Rate

	2022	2023	2024	2025	Average
Historic Construction Value	$2,650,000	$ 5,758,000	$4,770,000	$11,556,921	$6,183,730
Tax Rate	3.16%	3.23%	3.35%	3.45%	
Estimated Tax Revenue	$83,833	$185,909	$159,763	$398,944	$ 207,112

4.0 EDCIP Budget Recommendations

Based on the analysis of permit activity from data available from the City, it is recommended that an annual budget of **$185,000 - $365,000** be allocated each year for the funding of the EDCIP programs.

Table 3 | EDCIP – Recommended Budget

	Industrial Stream	Tourism Stream	All Streams
Lower Funding Level	$175,000	$10,000	$185,000
Higher Funding Level	$345,000	$20,000	$365,000

This recommendation is based on considerations that only a portion of the industrial and commercial development would be potentially eligible for an EDCIP, while also taking into consideration a potential increase in industrial and commercial tourism development that may be incentivized through the EDCIP programs. This level of funding would also provide resources for larger-scale industrial or tourism-based businesses that may be attracted to locating in Sarnia which would generate higher grant amounts for building permit fees and Development Charge costs.

5.0 Implementation of EDCIP Financial Incentives

To reduce the budgetary impact of the funding of EDCIP incentives, it is recommended that consideration be given to a phased approach for the implementation of grant programs.

Year 1-2: Since the implementation of Tax Increment Grant and Planning Fee Grants of both streams do not require funding to be set aside in reserve and allocated separately during the budget process, it is recommended that these programs be initiated first and the initiation of the remaining grant programs be deferred until Year 3.

As there are greater financial implications to the City for the provision of the Building Permit Fee and Development Charge Grants, it is recommended that the City strategically delay the offering of these incentives and create a reserve fund that can be used to build up additional funds to finance the implementation of these incentive programs. For each of the first two years, an amount between $185,000 - $365,000 is recommended to be allocated in the City's budget from the general levy for the future provision of the Building Permit Fee and Development Charge Grants.

Year 3: Once a reserve has been established, it is recommended that the Building Permit Fee Grant be made available. In Year 3, it is recommended that the City would continue to allocate an additional $185,000 - $365,000 towards the funding of the Building Permit Fee Grant. Any residential funds not used for EDCIP grants are recommended to be carried over into the following year.

Year 4-5: As the program with the greatest financial implications for the City's budget process, it is recommended that the Development Charges Grant be implemented at a later stage of the process with the continued allocation of $185,000 - $365,000 made towards the funding of all of the CIP incentive programs.

It is noted that funding of the implementation of EDCIP programs in later years can be altered based on the priorities of Council or the level of uptake in EDCIP applications. An increase in applications and new investment may result in consideration of additional funds being allocated. Additionally, annual budget allocations may change based on the amount of carryover of residual funds that are not used in Years 3-5 of the EDCIP.

6.0 Recommended Program & Application Funding Caps

Where program stream caps are implemented, it is recommended that allocated funds be apportioned based on the proportion of potential exposure that each program stream has. Based on a review of historic fee data, the exposure of the Tourism Stream would represent approximately 6% of the total recommended funding for all programs. Since the potential exposure of the Industrial stream is significantly higher, it is recommended that a larger proportion of EDCIP funding be allocated to the industrial stream programs.

Based on a review of practices in other municipalities there are varying approaches to setting monetary funding caps for an individual application. Some municipalities do not include individual caps on CIP programs, while others implement caps ranging from $250,000 to $1.5 million. Considering the practices of other municipalities, as well as the recommended budget levels discussed above, it is recommended that the City implement a maximum funding cap of $1 million per project. This funding cap may be altered by the City subject to the ultimate amount of funding that is allocated towards the EDCIP. It is noted that regardless of an application funding cap, the total amount of funding granted to a project cannot exceed the total eligible costs of said project.

APPENDIX C – MARKETING PLAN

Economic Development Community Improvement Plan
City of Sarnia

1.0 Marketing Goals

The purpose of this Marketing Plan is to support the effective implementation of the Economic Development Community Improvement Plan (EDCIP) by proactively promoting the City of Sarnia as a competitive, investment-ready location for industrial development and large-scale tourism uses. The Marketing Plan is intended to increase awareness and uptake of the financial incentive programs offered under the EDCIP, as well as position the City as a collaborative partner for private-sector investment.

The goals of the Marketing Plan are to:

a) Promote the availability and value of financial incentive programs authorized under the EDCIP, including tax increment grants, development charge grants, and planning and building fee grants;
b) Support business expansion, redevelopment, and reinvestment within eligible Community Improvement Areas by driving businesses and investors to apply to the program;
c) Promote Sarnia's competitiveness relative to other Ontario municipalities offering industrial and tourism-related incentive programs;
d) Reinforce a clear, consistent message that the City of Sarnia is investment-ready and committed to support economic growth; and
e) Encourage engagement to obtain user feedback on the program.

2.0 Target Audience

Marketing efforts under this CIP shall be directed toward the following audiences:

a) Industrial developers, landowners, and investors;
b) Members of key targeted sectors including advanced manufacturing; bio-industries and sustainable chemistry; transportation, logistics, and wholesale trade; professional, scientific, and technical services; value-added agriculture and agri-food processing; and tourism, placemaking, and quality of life industries
c) Existing Sarnia-based businesses operating in the targeted sectors considering expansion or reinvestment;
d) Strategic partners, including local and regional economic development organizations, provincial and federal agencies, tourism organizations, and sector-specific industry associations.
e) Developers and operators of hotels, private recreational facilities, entertainment venues, and destination-scale tourism uses;
f) Commercial real estate brokers, site selectors, and investment consultants;

g) Residents and the general public

3.0 Marketing Strategy & Key Messages

The City should establish a clear and consistent brand for the EDCIP. This will include developing a simple, market-facing program identity that can be applied consistently across all communications and promotional materials. The City will implement a proactive, investor-focused marketing strategy that emphasizes the following key messages:

a) The EDCIP is a flexible and transparent tool designed to support significant development projects.
b) The City of Sarnia offers a comprehensive suite of financial incentives that reduce upfront development costs and long-term investment risk;
c) The City’s Economic Development Department provides coordinated municipal support to help facilitate project planning, approvals, and implementation through a “one-window” liaison service;
d) Sarnia has strategic advantages including vacant industrial land in its City-owned and private industrial parks, access to energy and transportation infrastructure, proximity to U.S. markets, and a skilled workforce;
e) The City supports large-scale, job-creating, and visitor-generating projects aligned with municipal priorities.

4.0 Marketing Tools

To implement this Marketing Plan, the City may utilize a range of tools, including but not limited to:

a) A dedicated EDCIP webpage providing clear program descriptions, eligibility criteria, application processes, and contact information;
b) Social media postings to advertise the availability of programs when they are offered;
c) Program guide or brochure that provides information on programs and the application process that can be distributed to potential applicants, as well as at investment attraction events, trade shows, industry conferences, and tourism investment initiatives;
d) Digital and print materials, such as targeted mailed newsletters and news outlet advertisements, outlining high level information on available incentive programs and investment opportunities;

e) Targeted outreach to industry leaders, developers, and investors, including direct relationship-based marketing; and

f) Use of case studies, success stories, and testimonials from CIP supported projects, where available, to demonstrate program effectiveness. Case studies should be featured on the EDCIP webpage and incorporated into social media posts to promote and encourage additional applicants.

5.0 Budget Resource Allocation

The implementation of this Marketing Plan is anticipated to be largely accommodated within the operations of the City's existing departments, with minimal incremental budget requirements. The majority of the identified marketing tools would be able to be delivered through current staff roles, including targeted outreach to industry members and the collection of success stories and testimonials, which would be integrated into the regular department workflows through the implementation of the EDCIP after adoption. Additional materials such as social media postings to advertise programs and testimonials, as well as creation and posting of content on the City's webpage would be developed through the current communications roles of staff.

Limited external costs associated with the preparation of print materials and brochures, as well as the advertising of EDCIP programs and initiatives in external outlets will be required. These costs are anticipated to be modest with an estimated budget of $1,000-$2,000, depending on scope and frequency.