

2026 SAUGEEN SHORES MUNICIPAL CANDIDATE SURVEY

Section 3: Business Growth & Economic Development

Healthy local business areas contribute to employment, municipal assessment, tourism, investment, community identity and overall quality of life. As Saugeen Shores grows and evolves, municipal decisions can play an important role in creating an environment where independent businesses can continue to invest, adapt and compete.

QUESTION 11

Would you support reviewing or implementing Community Improvement Plan programs that could assist with façade improvements, accessibility, lighting, safety features, upper-floor redevelopment and heritage building improvements within the BIAs? Please explain.

Brian Putman (Not Putnam)

Mayor

Yes. I would.

Jeffrey J James

Mayor

Yes, I would absolutely support the continued reviewing and implementing of the Community Improvement Plan (CIP) programs for these improvements. The Town already has CIPs in place for downtown Southampton and Port Elgin that provide a framework for façade, accessibility, and public enhancements, and these could be strengthened and promoted more actively to help property owners revitalize their buildings and attract investment.

Luke Charbonneau

Mayor

Yes. I think that Council should ensure that we have Community Improvement Plan policies in place that would allow us to support businesses in these areas, should funding become available. I advocated for the development of Saugeen Shores' first CIP 20 years ago. Since that time we have enhanced and broadened the scope of our CIP to enable incentives that support affordable housing and business retention and expansion. Our CIP policies currently enable our businesses to access facade improvement grants through the County's Spruce the Bruce program. They also enable us to direct federal Housing Accelerator funding to encourage the construction of affordable housing in our community. In these ways, our CIP policies are enabling positive results and I support continuing and expanding those policies wherever possible.

Diane Huber

Deputy Mayor

Community Improvement Plans exist but as far as I know they haven't been that successful in terms of usage. Everything noted in the comment/question above could be possible. A review would show what has worked and what hasn't captured anyone's attention as an option yet. Is it that the programs are cumbersome to apply to, costly (for the applicant) or just not relevant anymore? A review that includes BIA members and possibly BIA colleagues from other jurisdictions who have successful CIP program will shed light on what will attract uptake and what will make the process work in Saugeen Shores.

Odette Bartnicki

Deputy Mayor

Yes. I would support reviewing Community Improvement Plan programs that encourage façade and heritage improvements, accessibility, better lighting and safety, and the redevelopment of upper floors. Any incentives should have clear eligibility requirements, measurable economic and community benefits and regular evaluation to ensure responsible use of public funds.

Don Matheson

Vice Deputy Mayor

Yes, I think it's something worth looking at.

There may be opportunities to help with things like accessibility, façades, lighting, upper floors and maintaining some of our heritage buildings.

I would want to sit down with the BIAs and our businesses, see where the needs are and then look at what programs make sense and what other funding may already be available.

We also have staff who can help businesses find and work through some of those grant opportunities.

For me, it's about finding practical ways to improve our downtowns while still being responsible with taxpayers' money.

Jordan MacKinnon

Port Elgin

Yes, based on the value that a good CIP brings. A CIP done well is a very useful because it provides clear direction for business and property owners who are looking to invest in their properties.

Upper-floor redevelopment is a no-brainer, as it helps our downtown buildings be used to their full potential, while also providing attainable housing units that are badly needed in our community.

Patricia Corrigan-Frank

Councillor Port Elgin Ward

Yes, as long as building heights remain the same.

Rachel Stack

Port Elgin Ward Councillor

I always open to reviewing existing programs that support various community interests, including supporting a vibrant business sector. There are several existing programs in place, such as Spruce the Bruce, which aim to support businesses; however, it is important to continue to improve our program offerings and I am happy to support regular review and consideration of future enhancements and improvements.

Tamara McDonald

Councilor- Port Elgin Ward

I would support. The Community Improvement Plan is a fantastic, cost effective tool because matching grants leverage private dollars to upgrade storefronts, improve accessibility, and create upper floor housing. It brings year round life to our BIAs while protecting municipal tax dollars through shared investment. I would want to see Council work towards cutting through the bureaucracy and simplifying paperwork so that local business owners can take advantage of these funds.

Eric Tolton

Saugeen Ward Councillor

Yes. Properly designed Community Improvement Plans can encourage private investment in facades, heritage buildings and improvements. Municipal incentives should have clear objectives and leverage greater private investment.

Neil Sarginson

Saugeen Ward Councillor

Yes, I fully support reviewing and expanding Community Improvement Plan (CIP) programs in Port Elgin and Southampton. CIPs directly trigger private investment, elevate street appeal, and increase downtown housing density. Some areas to explore are Façade & Lighting, Accessibility and Heritage Preservation

Brenda Reeves

Southampton Ward councillor

Yes. I support reviewing – and where financially responsible – implementing targeted community improvement plan incentives. These programs can improve accessibility and safety, preserve heritage buildings, activate upper floors, and encourage private investment. Any program should have clear criteria, firm budget limits, fair access for both BIA's and publicly reported results.

Cathe McIntosh

Councillor, Southampton Ward

Yes. If the CIP does not meet small business needs, and there are reasonable changes that could help it better support the BIAs, I would be open to discussing a review and potential changes.

Cheryl Grace

Southampton ward councillor

Yes. Council just heard a report in its August 24, 2026 meeting about the Town's review of its CIP from the perspective of housing initiatives. Several of the previous affordable housing-related development charges exemptions within the existing CIP are already provided for within provincial legislation, so it wasn't necessary for us to have those duplicated in the municipal CIP. Staff is preparing a draft CIP amendment which should include incentives to address industrial and commercial core (non-residential and mixed-use development). The Town's CIP already contains incentives for facade improvements, accessibility improvements and updating buildings, including vacant building conversions, etc. The Town's current CIP aligns with Bruce County's business support grant program. The CIP also offers incentives for community marketing and promotion.

Harry Mazmanian

Southampton Ward

Of course. I see this is being proposed presently. But we need to define and create a plan for what we, as a community, want our downtown cores to resemble. It is possible that Port Elgin and Southampton BIAs and residents may want different architectural heritage plans. Therefore, separate plans for each downtown core are required. Once this is done, then we can move forward with facade improvements and similar downtown core improvements/upgrades.

John Divinski

Councillor, Southampton Ward

Yes. Things are always changing and it's imperative that we at least listen to the plans that people have come up with. It doesn't mean blanket approval but information provided with which to make decisions that will be best for any downtown.

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