

# Housing Community Improvement Plan (Housing CIP)

Prepared for the Town of Hearst

March 2024



SDL Solutions  
Consulting



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# 2. Introduction



## 2.1 Historical Context

The Town of Hearst is strategically located along Highway 11 Corridor, in Northern Ontario. The community was established in 1913 as a division point on the transcontinental railway system. Incorporated in 1922, Hearst has since grown into an entrepreneurial and dynamic community, predominantly Francophone, with a population of approximately 4,794 residents in 2021. Traditionally, Hearst's economy was rooted in the forestry sector; while this sector continues to be the core economic driver of the community, the Town's economy is now more diversified. According to the 2021 census, 16.2% of working-age residents were employed in the healthcare and services sector, followed by manufacturing (14.8%), retail trade (13.6%), construction (10.1%), educational services (8.9%), and agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting (5.9%). Hearst is also home to *l'Université de Hearst*, with campuses in Hearst, Kapuskasing, and Timmins, and to *Collège Boréal*, which offers local programs.

## 2.2 Economic Challenge

The statistics on employment in Hearst presented in the previous paragraph do not paint the full picture of the actual and current situation in Hearst. The community is experiencing an unprecedented phase in its existence in terms of housing and workforce needs, as demonstrated in the document "Housing and Workforce Assessment Report," produced for the Town of Hearst in November 2023. Part of the report's conclusion reads as follows:

*The portrait painted by this preamble document for the Housing Community Improvement Plan highlights the pressing challenges that the Hearst community faces in terms of housing and workforce. The housing crisis, marked by a shortage of units and economic challenges, constitutes a major obstacle to the town's growth. Concurrently, the workforce crisis, resulting from massive retirements and a decline in the labor force, poses significant challenges to maintaining a stable local economy.*



## 2.3 Community Improvement Plan (CIP)

In response to this complex situation, the Town of Hearst has prepared a Community Improvement Plan focused on housing (Housing CIP). The Housing CIP is a planning and economic development tool for the Municipality that promotes opportunities for economic revitalization and serves primarily as a catalyst for achieving economic, community planning and urban development goals.

### 2.3.1 What is a CIP?

Community improvement plans are widely used in Ontario to stimulate rehabilitation initiatives and encourage the development and redevelopment of an entire community or a specific area. Once implemented, the Plan enables municipalities to provide tax assistance, grants or loans to aid in the rehabilitation of land and buildings within the defined area of the community improvement project.

### 2.3.2 Objectives of the Housing CIP

The main objectives of the Town of Hearst's Housing CIP are as follows:

- Stimulate the development of housing units;
- Examine challenges, opportunities, and obstacles associated with housing supply development;
- Gain a better understanding of housing and workforce gaps and propose solutions.

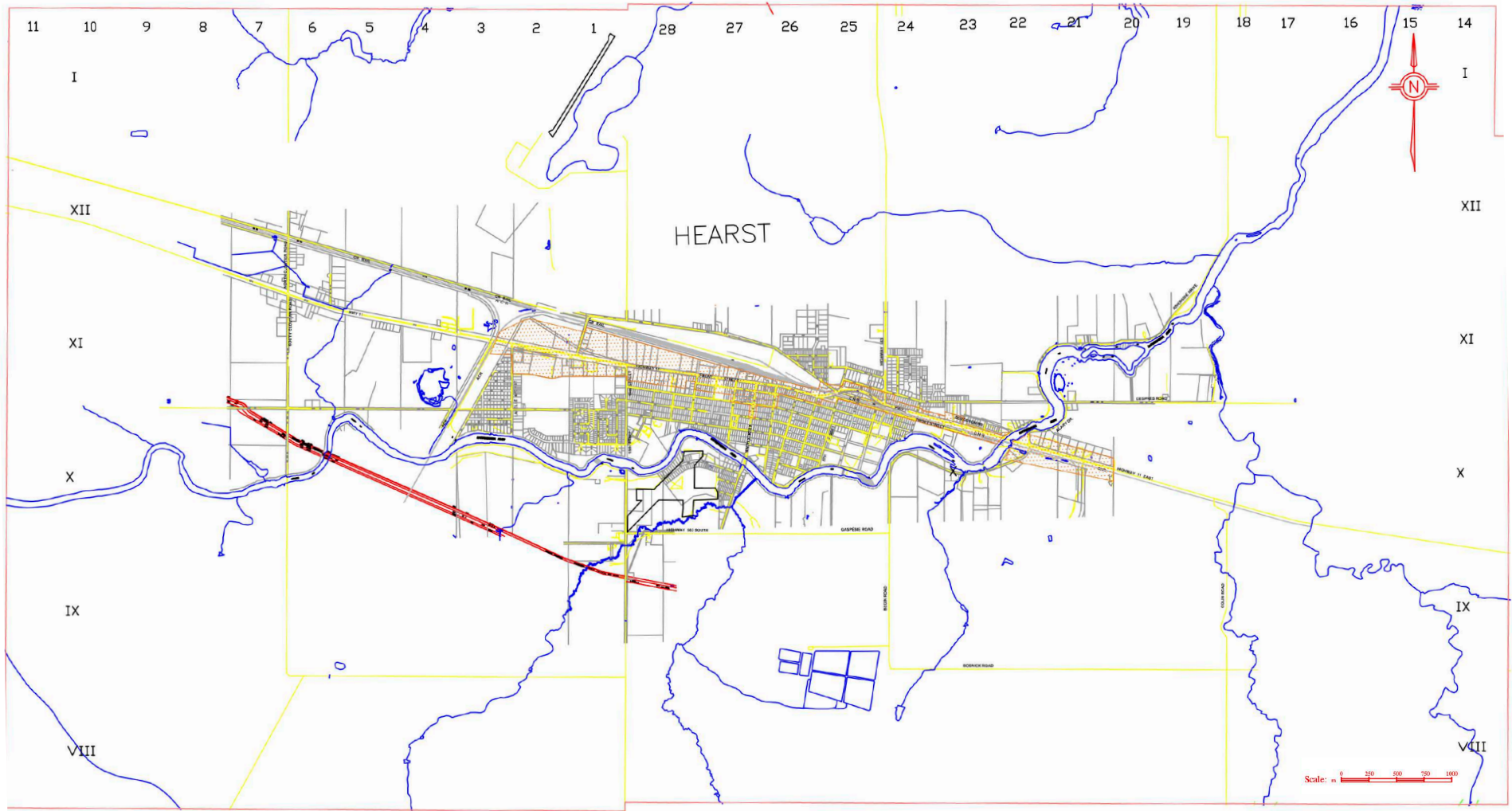
### 2.3.3 Community Improvement Area

The community improvement area for the Housing CIP includes the entire territory of the town of Hearst, as presented in Figure 1-1: Annex E.1 (Schedule E.1) of the Official Plan, identified as the town boundaries. However, all proposed projects will be evaluated based on eligibility criteria and the general and specific conditions of the CIP programs, and shall comply with the policies of the Official Plan of the Hearst Planning Area and the Town of Hearst Zoning By-law.

*While the project area covers the entire town, the Municipality encourages the creation of "infill" and "intensification" housing units in the urban residential district. Projects outside this district may qualify if they comply with applicable laws.*



**Figure 1-1: Schedule E.1 of the Official Plan of the Hearst Planning Area**



**HEARST PLANNING AREA  
OFFICIAL PLAN**

**Schedule E.1:  
Priority Community Improvement  
Project Areas - Town of Hearst**

**LEGEND:**



Downtown and Front Street Corridor



Town Boundary

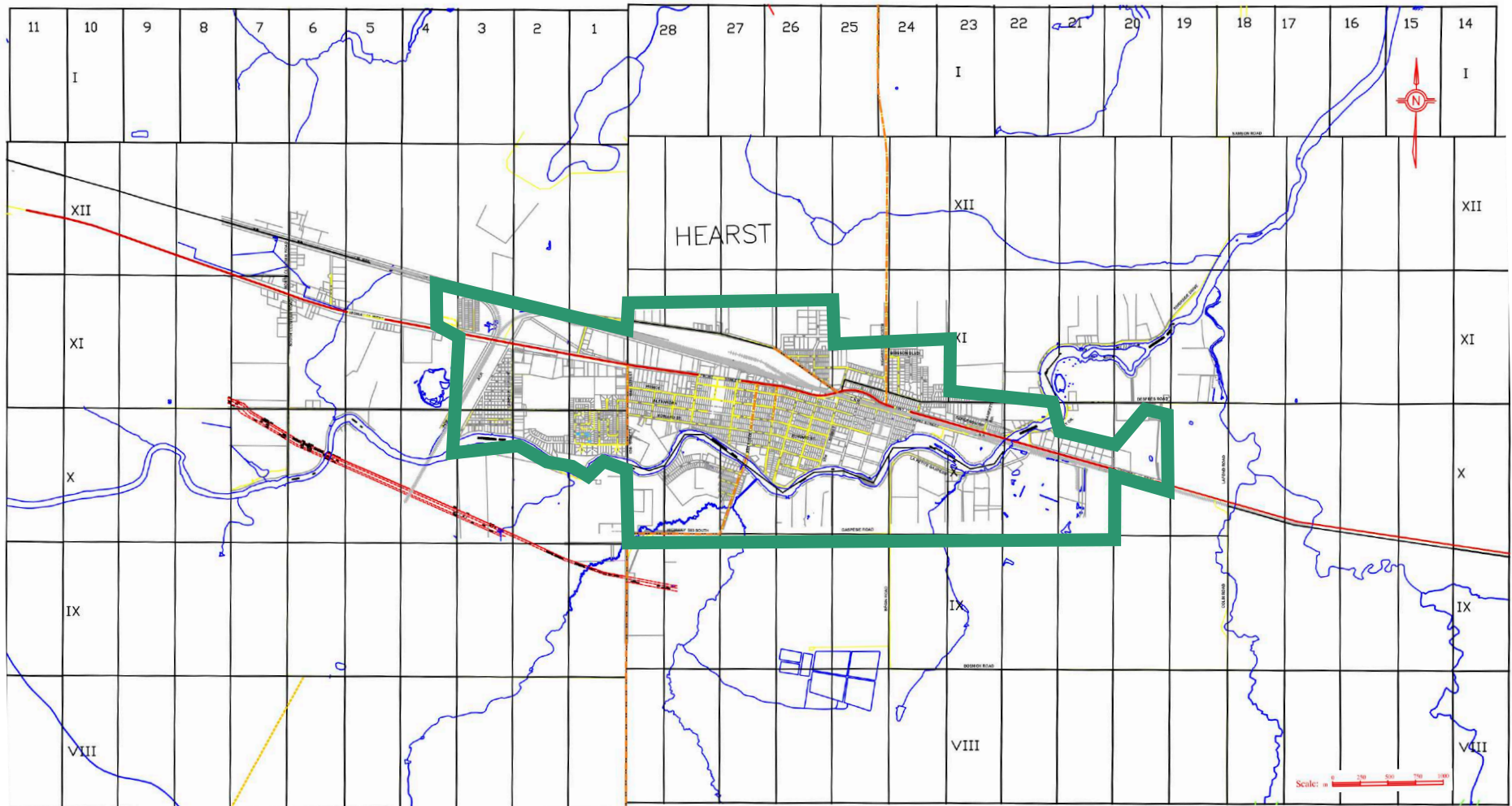
**Schedule Notes:**

This map is for general illustration purposes only. For boundary interpretations please contact the Town of Hearst.

February 2017

For reference, the Official Plan of the Hearst Planning Area defines the settlement area of the town of Hearst, as presented in Schedule C, Figure 1-2. Please note that the green line delineates the settlement area in the figure below.

**Figure 1-2: Schedule C of the Official Plan of the Hearst Planning Area**



**HEARST PLANNING AREA  
OFFICIAL PLAN**

**Schedule C.3: Settlement Area Plan  
Town of Hearst**

LEGEND:

 Settlement Area Boundary

**Schedule Notes:**

This map is for general illustration purposes only. For boundary interpretations please contact the Town of Hearst.



# 3. Legal Framework



The Housing Community Improvement Plan (Housing CIP) was developed in accordance with Section 28 of the Planning Act and Section 106 of the Municipal Act, as well as the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS), 2020. The PPS, enacted under the Planning Act, serves as the primary provincial policy document on land use planning and applies to all of Ontario. The Housing CIP is also aligned with the Northern Ontario Growth Plan, Bill 23, More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022, the Official Plan of the Hearst Planning Area and the Town of Hearst Zoning By-law.

## 3.1 Planning Act of Ontario

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

Section 28(1) of the Planning Act defines community improvement as follows:

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



Section 28(2) of the Planning Act allows municipalities whose Official Plan contains provisions relating to community improvement, to prepare and adopt community improvement plans for designated community improvement project areas.

A community improvement project area is the area to which the Community Improvement Plan applies and is adopted by Municipal Council in the form of a by-law.

A zone may be designated as a community improvement project area for various reasons, including:

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

The broader definition allows municipalities to adapt to specific local community improvement issues, such as downtown revitalization, as well as to issues more generally present in a municipality as a whole.

Once a by-law designating a community improvement project area has been adopted, Municipal Council may adopt a plan in accordance with certain paragraphs of Section 17 of the Planning Act. Section 17 outlines the legal process of adopting the document, including holding at least one public meeting, which must occur at least 20 days after the notice

of the public meeting is published, and making the Community Improvement Plan available for public review.

Pursuant to Section 17(15) of the Planning Act, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the upper-tier municipality, where applicable, must be consulted when developing a community improvement plan. However, once a community improvement plan comes into effect, the approval of the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing is no longer required for the municipality to acquire land, provided that the Plan includes provisions for land acquisition and improvement (Section 28(3)). The Community Improvement Plan can be used by the municipality to:

**"... construct, repair, rehabilitate or improve buildings on land acquired or held by it in the community improvement project area in conformity with the community improvement plan, and sell, lease or otherwise dispose of any such buildings and the land appurtenant thereto" (Section 28(6a)), and**

**"... 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" (Section 28(6b)).**

This allows the Municipality to take direct actions to improve properties or to construct new buildings and facilities as needed.



Pursuant to Section 28(7), the Municipality may provide grants to owners and tenants to help pay eligible costs. Eligible costs are broadly defined and include "costs related to environmental site assessment, environmental remediation, development, redevelopment, construction and reconstruction of lands and buildings for rehabilitation purposes or for the provision of energy efficient uses, buildings, structures, works, improvements or facilities" (Section 28(7.1)). In no case shall the amount of a grant made in respect of particular lands and buildings exceed the eligible costs of the Community Improvement Plan with respect to those lands and buildings (Section 28(7.3)).

The Planning Act also contains provisions allowing the Municipality to enter into agreements regarding the grants it may award, and said agreements may be registered against the land to which it applies. The Municipality shall be entitled to enforce the provisions thereof against any party to the agreement and against any and all subsequent owners or tenants of the land (Section 28(11)).

Once Council is satisfied that a Community Improvement Plan has been carried out, it may adopt a municipal by-law dissolving the community improvement project area. Upon dissolution of the project area, all previously made community improvement plans become inapplicable (Section 28(13)).

Section 69 of the Planning Act allows municipalities to reduce or waive the fees for the processing of applications made in respect of planning matters, where such fees are considered to be unreasonable. Many community improvement plans offer application fee refunds as a financial incentive.

## 3.2 Ontario Municipal Act

Section 106(1) of the Municipal Act prohibits municipalities from directly or indirectly assisting any manufacturing business or other industrial or commercial enterprise through the granting of bonuses. Pursuant to Section 106(2), prohibited actions include:

- a) Giving or lending any property of the Municipality, including money;
- b) Guaranteeing borrowing;
- c) Leasing or selling any property of the Municipality below its fair market value;
- d) Granting a total or partial exemption from any levy, charge, or fee.



Section 106(3) of the Municipal Act provides an exception to the above, stating that a municipality may exercise the powers set out in Sections 28(6), (7), or (7.2) of the Planning Act or Section 365.1 of the Municipal Act.

By including an exception to Section 106(1), the Municipal Act grants municipalities powers and tools for community improvement. Under Section 365.1 of the Municipal Act, municipalities may provide tax assistance to eligible properties to offset all or part of the costs. The Municipal Act also grants municipalities the power to cancel or defer the municipal portion of property taxes on eligible properties.

It is worth noting that this section of the Municipal Act does not specifically provide for the provision of financial assistance to residential properties. Community improvement plans are generally intended for commercial properties, but there are examples of community improvement plans that offer limited funding opportunities for certain types of residential properties (e.g., to assist in preserving historic residential properties or creating new residential units).

Section 107 of the Municipal Act outlines the powers of municipalities to grant subsidies, including the power to grant a subsidy in the form of a loan or guaranteeing a loan, subject to the criteria set out in Section 106. Additional powers include:

- Selling or leasing land for a nominal consideration or granting land;
- Providing land owned by the Municipality and occupied by it for use by all, on terms established by Council;
- Selling, leasing, or transferring any municipal property at a nominal price or through a grant, to enable the use of the property on terms established by Council.



## 3.3 Provincial Policy Statement (PPS), 2020

The Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) is issued under the authority of Section 3 of the Planning Act and provides guidance on matters of provincial importance related to land use planning and development. The Planning Act requires that "decisions affecting planning matters shall be consistent with policy statements issued under this Act." The land use planning vision in Ontario in the PPS states that "the long-term prosperity and social well-being of Ontario depends upon planning for strong, sustainable and resilient communities for people of all ages, a clean and healthy environment, and a strong and competitive economy."

The PPS supports the preparation of a Housing CIP directly linked to intensifying housing options, stating that "planning authorities are encouraged to permit and facilitate a range of housing options, including new development as well as residential intensification, to respond to current and future needs." The PPS also indicates that a coordinated, integrated, and comprehensive approach should be used when managing planning issues within municipalities, across municipal boundaries, and with other orders of government, agencies, and boards, including:

- a) Managing and/or promoting growth and development that is integrated with infrastructure planning;
- b) Strategies for economic development;
- c) Managing natural heritage, water, agriculture, mineral, and cultural heritage and archaeological resources;
- d) Infrastructure, multimodal transportation systems, public service facilities and waste management systems;
- e) Issues related to ecosystems, shorelines, watersheds, and the Great Lakes;
- f) Natural and human-made hazards;
- g) Population, housing and employment projections, based on regional market areas;
- h) Addressing housing needs in accordance with provincial policy statements such as the Policy Statement: Service Manager Housing and Homelessness Plans.



## 3.4 Growth Plan for Northern Ontario, 2011

The Growth Plan for Northern Ontario is a 25-year plan that came into effect in 2011. It was prepared pursuant to the *Ontario Places to Grow Act, 2005*, which allows the Province to identify and designate regions for which strategic growth plans can be developed. The Growth Plan for Northern Ontario focuses on attracting and retaining growth in northern communities and serves as a strategic framework to guide decision-making in northern Ontario over the next 25 years. The Official Plan of the Hearst Planning Area was developed with the policies of the Growth Plan for Northern Ontario in mind, such as the designation of areas conducive to local economic opportunities and housing, support for small businesses, and the establishment of a local framework to facilitate the implementation of regional economic plans.

The Growth Plan for Northern Ontario is structured around six key policy areas that contribute to the long-term sustainability and prosperity of the region: the economy, the population, the community, Indigenous peoples, the infrastructure, and the environment.

The Growth Plan for Northern Ontario focuses on the following six key guiding principles:

- Creating a highly productive region, with a globally competitive and diversified economy offering a range of career opportunities for all residents;
- Developing a highly educated and skilled workforce to support an evolving knowledge-based economy and excellence in trades;

- Partnering with Indigenous peoples to increase educational and professional opportunities;
- Establishing a comprehensive network of transportation, energy, communications, social, and educational infrastructure to support strong and dynamic communities;
- Demonstrating leadership in sustainable growth and environmental management;
- Establishing innovative partnerships to maximize resources and ensure that this Plan achieves its ambitious vision and is financially viable.

Several of the six key policy areas contain policy directions that directly or indirectly support the Housing CIP initiatives. In the economic domain, the Growth Plan for Northern Ontario supports the development of a strong, resilient, and more diversified northern economy through policies aimed at fostering growth and diversity in the region's traditional resource-based industries, as well as the development of new emerging economic sectors with the most potential to foster growth and employment opportunities in the North.



In the community domain, the Growth Plan for Northern Ontario supports community planning that balances human, economic, and environmental priorities. Official plans, community economic development plans, and participation in community planning efforts are identified as effective tools to ensure that future economic and long-term sustainability of communities reflect the views of citizens and businesses. Municipalities are encouraged to align their Official Plan with strategies focused on achieving specific goals related to community improvement planning, such as optimized use of existing infrastructure and the creation of a quality environment.

## 3.5 Bill 23, More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022

On November 28, 2022, *Bill 23, More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022* received Royal Assent. This plan is part of a long-term strategy to build more homes and make life more affordable for Ontario families.

Initiatives outlined in the plan include:

- Addressing the missing middle issue;
- Building more homes near public transportation;
- Supporting the growth and standardization of affordable and rental housing;
- Freezing, reducing, exempting fees for building attainable, affordable and non-profit housing;
- Streamlining bureaucratic processes to get more homes built faster;
- Improving the Ontario Land Tribunal to support building more homes faster;
- Creating a new attainable housing program;
- Protecting Ontario homebuyers from unethical developers;
- Taking action to stop land speculation;
- Improving Ontario's heritage and growth planning;





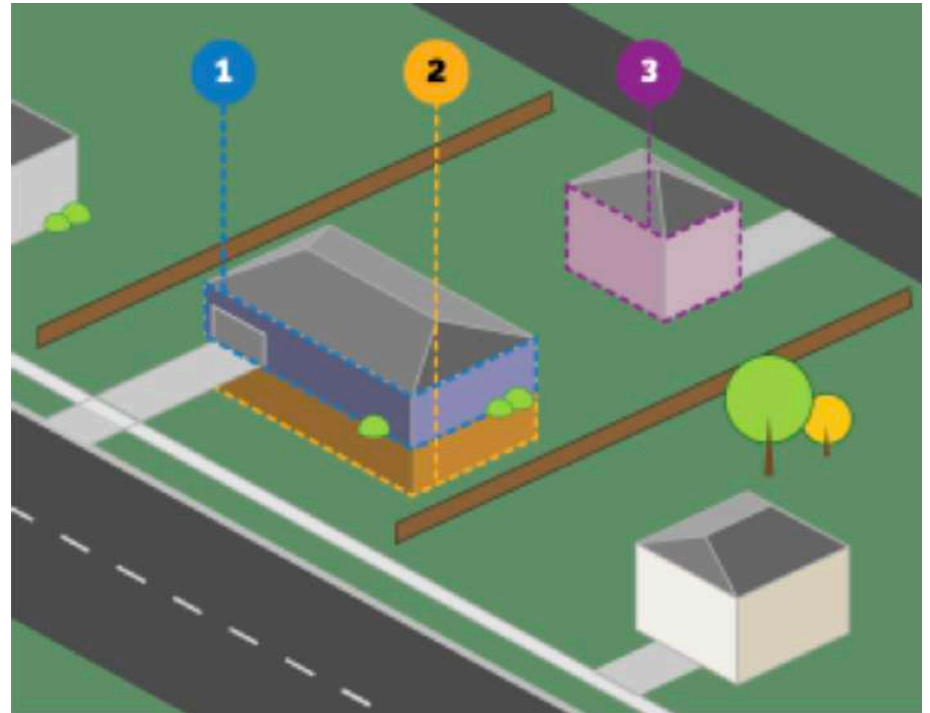
- Calling for federal action on GST/HST;
- Promoting fairness to support affordable and other rental housing;
- Helping homebuyers and renters: addressing vacant homes;
- Strengthening the non-resident speculation tax;
- Encouraging sustainable building practices.

Although Bill 23 primarily concerns and supports larger urban centres in Ontario, some proposed changes apply to rural municipalities, as presented in the table below. The following website provides complete details on *Bill 23, More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022*:

<https://www.osler.com/en/>

The image on the right illustrates a residential lot showing three permitted housing units indicated by numbers:

- 1) A principal residence;
- 2) A basement apartment;
- 3) A garden suite or laneway house.



**Table 1**

Challenge	Proposed Changes	Effective Date
Inclusion zoning/ Affordable and income-accessible housing	<p>Exemption for affordable housing (generally defined as having a price not exceeding 80% of the average price/rent in the year of leasing or selling a housing unit) and units associated with inclusion zoning from development charges (DC), community benefits charges (CBC), and land dedication for park creation.</p> <p>Introduction of a category for "income-accessible housing," to be defined in a future regulation.</p> <p>A cap of 5% of the total number of units in a development project that must be affordable under inclusion zoning, and a maximum period of 25 years during which the units must remain affordable (this is a proposed amendment to the regulation, not the law itself).</p>	<p>Nov. 28, 2022</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To be determined</li> <li>• To be determined (regulation not yet in effect)</li> </ul>
Modest density (gentle density)/ Intensification	<p>As of right zoning to allow up to three residential units per lot (two in the main building and one in an accessory building), with no minimum size requirement.</p> <p>New units built under this permission would be exempt from requirements related to development charges (DC), community benefits charges (CBC), and park creation, and no more than one additional parking space can be mandated.</p>	<p>Nov. 28, 2022</p>
Subdivision approvals	<p>Public meetings will no longer be required for approval requests of a subdivision plan project.</p>	<p>Nov. 28, 2022</p>
Site plan regulations	<p>Development projects with up to 10 residential units will be exempt from site plan regulations.</p> <p>Architectural details and landscaping aesthetics will be removed from the scope of site plan regulations.</p>	<p>Nov. 28, 2022</p>



## 3.6 Official Plan for the Hearst Planning Area

The Official Plan of the Hearst Planning Area, as amended, presents approaches to the Hearst and Mattice-Val Côté Municipal Councils for building sustainable economies in their communities, promoting opportunities for economic development and community investment readiness, fostering a sense of belonging and preserving elements that define the character of the community. Moreover, Section 5.3.1 of the Official Plan specifies the following:

*“In designated “Community Improvement Project Areas”, the preparation of a “Community Improvement Plan” will provide the Town of Hearst and the Township of Mattice-Val Côté with various powers to address infrastructure deficiencies and facilitate beautification projects and other identified community improvements. These include incentives to stimulate or encourage other private and/or public investments where they advance the public interest. It shall be the objective of the Town of Hearst and the Township of Mattice-Val Côté to achieve functional, attractive and well-maintained living and working environments for residents and businesses in Hearst and Mattice.”*

Section 5.1.3.1 outlines the following:

- i) To encourage the provision of a broad mix and range of housing to meet the needs of present and future households in the Hearst Planning Area;
- ii) To foster and promote the development of specialized and accessible housing to accommodate the needs of the Hearst Planning Area’s aging population, thereby enabling seniors and residents with disabilities to remain in their communities;
- iii) To facilitate and support the development and redevelopment of affordable housing to meet the needs of low and moderate income households as defined and envisioned by the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS).

Section 5.1.3.2 further elaborates and specifies on housing needs planning, stating:

“Within the Planning Area, the Town of Hearst shall be the focus for housing development. New housing units will generally be developed through the replacement or redevelopment of existing housing units, the construction of new units on vacant lands as infilling, or the creation of second units on existing residential properties.”

## 3.7 Town of Hearst Vision (2002):

The prosperity of Hearst has been considered through strategic development sessions, and it is essential to understand and uphold it. The vision statement for the Town of Hearst, as found in the economic development report *'Perspective 20-20 Insight: An economic development strategy for the Corporation of the Town of Hearst, Ontario,'* is as follows:

*"We, the community of Hearst, through this 20-year economic strategic plan, aspire to be the community of choice for ourselves and future generations. We will achieve our vision through a healthy economy based on our forestry heritage and the development of our natural resources, sustainable secondary business sectors, strong and diverse tourism related businesses, vital neighbourhoods, excellent schools, and extensive recreational, social and health services and cultural opportunities. We will preserve and cherish our rich cultural roots, welcome our aboriginal neighbours and celebrate the diversity of our people."*



# 4. Methodology



The Housing Community Improvement Plan (Housing CIP) for the Town of Hearst was developed by the research team consisting of SDL Solutions Consulting and the *Centre régional de recherche et d'intervention en développement économique et communautaire*. The research team employed various data collection methods between the months of July and December 2023 to gain a better understanding of the current housing crisis and labor shortage in Hearst. This process was conducted in collaboration with key stakeholders from the Town of Hearst, particularly the Housing Committee and the Economic Development team, who contributed in validating each stage of the project.

The Housing CIP was developed in three main phases:

- 1) Project conceptualization and initiation
- 2) Development of the Housing and Workforce Assessment Report
- 3) Formulation of strategies and the Housing Community Improvement Plan

## 4.1 Project Conceptualization and Initiation

In the project conceptualization and initiation stage, the research team first gathered information on the current housing and labor situation in Hearst by conducting online research, consulting existing reports, and analyzing relevant documents to extract useful information. The team examined various reports specific to the Hearst region, as well as demographic, economic, and social data from the 2021 census. They also studied community improvement plans from other locations to identify best practices adaptable to Hearst's reality.

Subsequently, the research team identified around thirty key stakeholders playing a significant role in the housing and workforce sectors in Hearst. The team initiated initial contact with each, informing them about the project and involving them in developing solutions. Among these stakeholders were landlords, municipal officials, representatives from local organizations, major employers and real estate developers from Hearst and Kapuskasing. Individual interviews were conducted with each key stakeholder considered to possess in-depth knowledge of housing and labor issues. These interviews were conducted in person, by phone, or through an online questionnaire. While in-person interviews were preferred to obtain in-depth information, the online questionnaire helped reach a larger number of key stakeholders.



## 4.2 Development of the Housing and Workforce Assessment Report

The results of research and interviews were then analyzed and compiled to be presented at the housing and labor Forum "*Mijotons notre futur ensemble*", organized by the research team and the Town of Hearst Economic Development Service. The same stakeholders consulted previously were invited to participate in this three-hour forum, generating ideas to address housing and labor challenges in Hearst. The forum also briefly presented the Housing CIP project, its objectives, progress, and conclusions drawn so far.

Subsequently, a survey on housing named "Hearst in Search of Solutions", was developed and targeted the general population aged 17 and above, living in the Hearst area. Individuals over the age of 17 from outside the region, but interested in settling in Hearst, could also take the survey. The survey presented a set of questions to help identify housing needs and assess interest in potential new housing investments in Hearst. In total, the survey collected 557 responses during a two-week period.

Finally, with all this data in hand, the research team drafted a comprehensive assessment report, integrating consistent information from the various sources mentioned earlier, including perspectives from key stakeholders and the local population.



## 4.3 Formulation of Strategies and the Housing Community Improvement Plan

After drafting the assessment report on housing and workforce in Hearst, the research team continued analyzing the data collected, further researching community improvement plans from other communities and examining other important online resources, all the while keeping in mind the results of interviews and the survey. The team drew conclusions regarding the number of people needed to address the labor shortage, heavily relying on data provided by the Far Northeast Training Board (FNETB). The team also identified the most pressing housing needs in Hearst by estimating the demand. Subsequently, the team developed general strategies on how the Town of Hearst could address the housing shortage. From these strategies came action plans and a list of potential incentive programs that could be used by the Town of Hearst to improve the housing situation. The analysis, strategies, action plans, and potential incentive programs were then consolidated into a Housing CIP. Other tools related to the Housing CIP were also developed to ensure its effective use and optimize its impact on the housing shortage.



# 5. Analysis



The next section proposes a course of actions based on the data gathered during the collection phase with various key stakeholders and residents of Hearst. Many of these data are represented in the Housing and Workforce Assessment Report.

## 5.1 Housing

Firstly, regarding housing, the objective was to determine gaps in terms of housing, including the number of available units, the average rental prices, and the profile of individuals searching for rental housing. Analyzing these gaps helps understand the current needs of the community and its future requirements. The data collected provides a fairly accurate picture and allows for projections in terms of housing needs in Hearst.

### 5.1.1 Analysis 1

Table 2 presents the types of housing in immediate demand, according to population categories and the replacement of an aging workforce. Note that this table serves as a guide and not as an absolute reference. Data and conclusions should be used with caution.



**Table 2**

Immediate Housing Needs		Housing Category				Housing Preference			
Current Population	Housing Needs	Private Residence	Market Rental	Affordable Rental	Accessibility Rental	Studio / Bachelor	1 Bedroom	2 Bedrooms	3 Bedrooms
Senior (Low Income)	80	n/a	n/a	80	7	5 %	10 %	75 %	5 %
Senior (Middle Income)	22,22 %	According to the survey, 22.22% of individuals aged 65 and older would tend to seek rental housing. In 2021, there were 1,135 people in this age category.				5 %	10 %	75 %	5 %
Low-Income Household	40	n/a	n/a	40	4	6 %	32 %	54 %	4 %
General Population (Rental Market)	25	n/a	25	n/a	2	4 %	20 %	60 %	13 %
Post-Secondary Students	34	n/a	21	13	3	21 %	47 %	26 %	5 %
<b>NEWCOMERS</b>									
Retirements to be filled by newcomers	62	38	21	3	2	4 %	20 %	60 %	13 %
Job positions to be filled by newcomers	55	33	19	3	2	4 %	20 %	60 %	13 %
<b>TOTALS</b>	296	71	86	139	20	Fourth	Second	First	Third
Ideal Vacancy Rate 3%	304	2	2	4	1				



Based on the data from Table 2, it can be inferred that the ideal housing supply situation for the coming years in Hearst should approach:

- 71 private houses;
- 225 rentals, including 139 affordable<sup>1</sup> and 86 market priced;
  - including a need for 20 accessible rentals;
  - including a need for 34 rentals for post-secondary students.

### 5.1.1.1 Course of Action 1

Promote the development of residential units with 1 to 2 bedrooms, encouraging rental options for seniors, affordable housing, and student rentals.

### 5.1.1.2 Survey Highlights:

- The Hearst population would like to see the addition of apartment buildings (68.15% of respondents), seniors' residences (53.70%), and affordable housing (51.48%).
- Only 36.67% of respondents said they would like to see the construction of student residences.

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<sup>1</sup> The definition of "affordable housing" in the Official Plan, as defined and contemplated by the Provincial Policy Statement, where affordable housing means either of the following: In the case of home ownership, housing for which the purchase price results in annual accommodation costs which do not exceed thirty per cent (30%) of the gross annual household income for low and moderate income households, or housing for which the purchase price is at least ten per cent (10%) below the average purchase price of a comparable resale unit in the community. In the case of rental housing, a unit for which the rental rate does not exceed thirty per cent (30%) of the gross annual household income for low and moderate income households, or a unit for which the rent is at or below the average market rent of a comparable unit in the community.

Affordable housing, as described in *Bill 23, More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022*, is generally defined as having a price not exceeding 80% of the average price/rent in the year of rental or sale of a housing unit.



## 5.1.2 Analysis 2

Table 3 presents the difference between the current rental rates and the rents of new constructions for different population segments. Note that this table serves as a guide and not as an absolute reference. The data and conclusions should be used with caution<sup>2</sup>.

<b>Table 3</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>G</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>I</b>
<b>Rental population</b>	Median Rent Rate(StatCan 2021)	"Willing to Pay" Median Rent Rate (Survey 2023)	Rent at 30% of Household Gross Income (Full-time employment) (StatCan 2021)	Market Rate Rent (New Units) 1 Bedroom	Market Rate Rent (New Units) 2 Bedrooms	Difference between B and D	Difference between B and E	Difference between C and D	Difference between C and E
Students	705 \$	590 \$	n/a	1 000 \$	1 750 \$	(410 \$)	(1 160 \$)	n/a	n/a
17 to 24 years old	705 \$	725 \$	880 \$ (Median Rent Rate for a Single Person)	1 000 \$	1 750 \$	(225 \$)	(1 025 \$)	(120 \$)	(870 \$)
25 to 54 years old	705 \$	833 \$	1 913 \$ (Median Rent Rate for a Household)	1 000 \$	1 750 \$	(167 \$)	(917 \$)	913 \$	163 \$
55 years and older	705 \$	763 \$	1 397 \$ (Median Rent Rate for 1.5 Persons)	1 000 \$	1 750 \$	(237 \$)	(987 \$)	397 \$	(353 \$)
<b>Private Owners Population</b>	Median Value of Private Property (StatCan 2021)	Average "Willing to Pay" Price (Survey 2023)	Median Monthly Rate (StatCan 2021)	Cost of New Private Residence (1,000 square feet @ \$275/sq ft)	Cost of New Private Residence (1,500 square feet @ \$275/sq ft)	Cost of New Private Residence (2,000 square feet @ \$275/sq ft)	Difference between B and D	Difference between B and E	Difference between B and F
	220 000 \$	250 000 \$	890 \$	275 000 \$	412 500 \$	550 000 \$	(25 000 \$)	(162 000 \$)	(300 000 \$)

<sup>2</sup> Warning: These data should be considered valid in the current economic context that includes high inflation and high interest rates, and a decrease in purchasing power for most households. If this situation persists, the data in the table may lose its accuracy.

The following observations can be made based on the data from Table 3:

- Most households with full-time employment (1,335 full-time jobs in the town of Hearst) invest in rental properties below the affordability threshold of 30%;
  - Single-person households could afford an average of up to \$880, which is \$175 more than the 2021 median;
  - Two-person households could afford an average of up to \$1,913, which is \$1,208 more than the 2021 median;
  - Households with individuals aged 55 and older could afford an average of up to \$1,397, which is \$702 more than the 2021 median.
- It's also worth noting that at the provincial level in October 2023, the average rental rate for housing was \$2,492.
- The rates for newly constructed rentals will be up to 200% higher than the current median rate, meaning many households, especially students and seniors, will fall into the affordable housing category.

### 5.1.2.1 Course of Action 2

Develop an awareness and communication program for the residents of the town of Hearst regarding housing needs, affordability thresholds, and local, regional, and provincial rental rates, targeting each demographic group.

### 5.1.2.2 Survey Highlights

Nearly 25 comments from respondents of the survey "Hearst in Search of Solutions" indicate that rental prices should be more affordable.

### 5.1.3 Analysis 3

Table 2 shows that the Hearst community will need to address a gap of nearly 300 housing units in the coming years to maintain economic and social balance, as well as a thriving and active population. In the following analysis, some ideal scenarios and alternative solutions are proposed.

#### 5.1.3.1 Ideal Scenario vs. Alternative Solutions

Ideally, a medium or large-scale real estate development project would quickly free up several rental units and some private residences. In return, this would encourage employers, employment support institutions, and the Town of Hearst Economic Development Service to launch an aggressive workforce attraction and retention campaign.



### 5.1.3.1.1 Real Estate Development 1: Seniors Housing Complex

The construction of a seniors housing complex, a growing need year after year, would reduce waiting lists and the current average waiting time of 1.5 years, according to the “Hearst in Search of Solutions” survey conducted in November 2023. The aging population ideally requires assisted-living services, affordable housing and accessible housing. Such a project has the potential to address multiple needs simultaneously.

#### **Advantages**

- Recent analyses for complexes of 36 and 54 units have been completed by the Town of Hearst and the Hearst Non-Profit Housing Corporation;
- The Town already has a non-profit housing corporation;
- The Town can rely on funding programs from the CDSSAB, the CMHC, and communicate directly with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing;
- The survey “Hearst in Search of Solutions” indicates that a total of 290 respondents, being 54% of respondents, state that the construction of a senior living complex is a priority.

#### **Disadvantages**

- Long-term project; anticipate 2 to 5 years before completion of the development;
- High interest rates and construction costs discourage potential investors.

### 5.1.3.1.2 Real Estate Development 2: Student Housing Complex

The construction of a students housing complex is also a development option that has the potential to free up a significant number of rental units. According to data from *l'Université de Hearst* and *Collège Boréal* obtained during the "Mijotons notre futur ensemble" Forum, the trend in international student enrollment for the Hearst campus is expected to increase over the next few years. In 2023, the number of new international students was about 34, and could reach 50 in the next five years, and even more in the next ten years.

According to the "Hearst in Search of Solutions" survey, students are willing to pay an average of \$600 per month for a housing unit. The survey also indicated that a total of 198 respondents, being nearly 40% of respondents, were in favor of prioritizing the construction of a student residence

.The Town of Hearst, through its incentive programs, could encourage the private sector to study different models of economical construction (low cost per square foot), such as modular constructions or other innovative real estate projects. The following article from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) addresses manufactured housing: [Manufactured Homes: Affordable and Quality Housing](#).

#### Advantages

- Brings students together, which is convenient for training (cultural differences, for example: reducing the risk of incidents);
- Faster return on investment, as students require a single room with study space, they can share a common kitchen and bathroom;
- An innovative modular model would allow the project to be completed quickly.

#### Disadvantages

- Public funds for the construction of student housing are currently not accessible through government programs;
- High interest rates and construction costs deter potential investors.





### 5.1.3.1.3 Real Estate Development 3: New Apartment Building

The construction of one or more new multi-residential buildings has proven to be the most popular option according to the “Hearst in Search of Solutions” survey. In fact, 368 respondents, being 68% of respondents, would like to see such a real estate project develop.

For this project, multiple options are available to investors. Market studies may be potentially necessary to assess the type of construction required to meet demand. Low-cost construction models would be favored to accommodate low-income households. To meet demand from newcomers and young professionals with higher income, some higher-end apartments would need to be prioritized.

Developers and investors will also need to assess the location of the new real estate, taking into account access to municipal public services, distance from downtown, schools, parks, health centers, and other factors that determine construction costs and rental appeal.

#### **Advantages**

- Different construction options and models to meet different needs, increasing the variety of offerings in the community;
- Construction of multi-residential housing can be done quickly, depending on the size of the project.

#### **Disadvantages**

- High interest rates and construction costs deter potential investors.

### 5.1.3.1.4 Real Estate Development 4: Rehabilitation of a Vacant Building

The conversion of a vacant residential or commercial building into housing units is another option aimed at increasing new housing units in Hearst. Such a project would accelerate the marketing of housing and reduce the total investment, according to the project.

The vacant building can be converted into housing for any household group, according to investor preferences or market needs.

#### **Advantages**

- The building already has access to public services;
- Development and marketing would be fast (1 to 3 years).

#### **Disadvantages**

- Few vacant buildings are available in Hearst;
- High interest rates and construction costs deter potential investors.



### 5.1.3.2 Course of Action 3

Encourage the production of market studies and studies of different construction and investment models for the implementation of a multi-residential real estate development in the town of Hearst.

### 5.1.3.3 Course of Action 4

Encourage networking and partnership opportunities to create potential investments between private and public-private sectors, considering a cooperative model.

### 5.1.3.4 Survey Highlights

- There are 90 people (16.42% of respondents) who claim to be willing to invest to create new rental housing in Hearst;
- Some 46 respondents out of 88 (52.3%) claim that with *Bill 23, More Homes Built Faster Act*, which allows the exemption of "site plan control" for new buildings with 10 rentals or fewer, motivates them to build buildings with more than 4 rentals.

#### 5.1.3.4.1 Alternative Solution 1: Additional Housing Units in the Residential Sector

In the short term, the Town of Hearst could strongly encourage the addition of housing units in private residences to quickly fill part of the current gap of 225 housing units. This would take advantage of the *Bill 23, More Homes Built Faster Act*, which now allows the addition of two (2) housing units on the same property, for a total of three (3) units.

Moreover, the "Hearst in Search of Solutions" survey indicates that 90 owners of private residences (28.94%) would be motivated to build or offer one or two rental units on their property through financial incentives from the Town of Hearst. Additionally, in response to the question "Do you believe that your residential lot would have the capacity to offer a rental (for example: a rental unit in your basement, a small house, etc.)?", 36 respondents indicated "yes" for the addition of one (1) unit, and 16 respondents answered "yes" for the addition of two (2) units.

#### 5.1.3.4.2 Alternative Solution 2: Additional Housing Units in the Commercial Sector

Another option that has been proposed by people in the community for several years, is to increase the number of housing units in the downtown area since several buildings have either reduced their business or simply closed their doors. This option is more complex as Section 6.7.3.2 of the Official Plan of the Hearst Planning Area and Section 5.2.3 of the Town of Hearst Zoning By-law stipulate:

*"Main floor commercial areas at street level may only be converted to one (1) residential dwelling unit, provided at least 60% of the commercial floor area directly adjacent to a public thoroughfare is maintained for commercial occupancies and use;"*



To this effect, Councillor Lanoix tabled a Notice of Motion in July 2023, so that a study be undertaken on the possibilities of increasing the percentage permitted for residential purposes on the ground floor of buildings in the downtown sector, increasing it from 40% to 60% for example. This change would require an amendment to the Official Plan of the Hearst Planning Area.

In the "Hearst in Search of Solutions" survey, some questions were addressed to business owners in order to gather data on this subject. The results obtained for these questions are presented below.

**Are you the owner of a commercial building located in Hearst? Please note that this refers specifically to a commercial property rather than a broader business entity (e.g., construction company), focusing on retail or service-oriented establishments.**

Yes	30	5,47 %
No	518	94,53 %

**Does your commercial building currently contain one or more rentals?**

Yes	17	60,71 %
No	11	39,29 %

**According to Section 5.2.3 of the Town of Hearst Zoning By-law, the occupancy rate on the ground floor must be at least 60% dedicated to commercial use and 40% to residential use. If the rate dedicated to commercial use were to decrease, would you consider adding residential housing units to your commercial building?**

Yes	11	39,29 %
No	17	60,71 %

**In which sector is your commercial building located?**

Downtown	15	53,57 %
Front Street	6	21,43 %
13th Street	1	3,57 %
583 South	1	3,57 %
6th Street	1	3,57 %
8th Street	1	3,57 %
Hwy 11	1	3,57 %
In the western sector of the town	1	3,57 %
Outside the town limits, with a Hearst address	1	3,57 %

**Does your commercial building or lot or land have the capacity to offer one or more additional rentals or housing units?**

Yes, one additional housing unit.	8	27,59 %
Yes, two additional housing units.	2	6,90 %
Yes, four or more additional housing units.	5	17,24 %
No	14	48,28 %
Total	29	100 %

# 5.2 Workforce

In terms of the workforce, the gaps between supply and demand identified during the data collection phase allow for analyses and projections for the coming years.

## 5.2.1 Analysis 1

Table 4 presents the workforce needs to be filled annually. It's important to note that this table serves as a guide and not as an absolute reference. Therefore, the data and conclusions should be used with caution.

As shown in Table 4, for the year 2024, a total of 117 individuals from various professional sectors will need to be recruited to meet the labor market demand in the Hearst community.

As additional information, to achieve an economic growth of 1%, which is the forecasted GDP for Canada for the year 2024, an additional 45 individuals would be required.

**Table 4: Workforce needs coming from outside (new arrivals)**

Workforce in Hearst		For the year 2023	Growing Economy (GDP 1% forecasted in Canada for 2024)	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	Totals (2024 to 2031)
A	Posted job positions: gap to be filled by newcomers	55	45	55	55	55	55	55	55	55	55	440
B	Local workforce eligible for retirement (per year)	90	n/a	90	62	62	62	62	62	62	62	n/a
C	Retirements filled by current and local workforce aged 15-29	28	n/a	28	28	28	28	28	28	28	28	n/a
D	Retirements to be filled by newcomers (B-C)	62	n/a	62	34	34	34	34	34	34	34	300
Totals	Net workforce need to be filled by newcomers (A + D)	117	162	117	89	89	89	89	89	89	89	740

### 5.2.1.1 Course of Action 5

Develop and coordinate a recruitment, retention and support campaign as soon as an adequate number of new housing units become available, in close collaboration with the private sector and public and employment support institutions.

### 5.2.2 Hearst's Economic Perspective: A Community at a Crossroads

The Town of Hearst and the Economic Development Service play a crucial role in the community in terms of promotion, communication, entrepreneurship, and networking between the private and public-private sectors. By focusing on a common vision, a strategic plan, and concrete and coordinated actions defined for short, medium, and long terms, municipal staff and Council will encourage and support entrepreneurs in their efforts to create wealth and local employment.

#### 5.2.2.1 Stable Economy

In the short term, over the next three years (2024-2026), municipal efforts should be directed towards promoting the development of housing units to meet the diverse needs of the current population and the workforce that will replace those retiring. Maintaining the local economy at a stable level will be a priority for the Municipality and employers. Given that the local economy depends heavily on

fluctuations in regional, national, and US markets, staying abreast of inflationary and recessionary trends will be crucial.

- Supporting and maintaining the capacity of local services and production will be paramount;
- Evaluating and encouraging opportunities for public-private partnerships, and private-private partnerships will be necessary.

#### 5.2.2.2 Growing Economy

In the medium and long term, if the local economy survives the current post-pandemic period, and the Housing CIP motivates efforts to reduce housing gaps, a scenario of local growth is conceivable. Hearst's entrepreneurial spirit will naturally activate, and investments in expansion, partnerships, new projects, and job creation will emerge.

#### 5.2.2.3 Declining Economy

Similarly, if the impact of the current crisis intensifies or persists for too long, a scenario of economic decline can be anticipated, affecting all economic and social sectors in a "snowball effect," impacting all families in the Hearst community. To avoid a catastrophic situation, the next two to three years will be crucial, and efforts should focus on collaboration, partnerships, and mutual cooperation.



# 6. Strategy



Having conducted an analysis on gaps, scenarios, and other potential solution paths, the Town of Hearst, its citizens, entrepreneurs, and institutions must take action with a well-defined vision and strategy. The last vision was defined in 2002 in the document "Perspective 20-20 Insight: An economic development strategy for the Corporation of the Town of Hearst, Ontario,"

*"We, the community of Hearst, through this 20-year economic strategic plan, aspire to be the community of choice for ourselves and future generations. We will achieve our vision through a healthy economy based on our forestry heritage and the development of our natural resources, sustainable secondary business sectors, strong and diverse tourism related businesses, vital neighbourhoods, excellent schools, and extensive recreational, social and health services and cultural opportunities. We will preserve and cherish our rich cultural roots, welcome our aboriginal neighbours and celebrate the diversity of our people."*



# 6.1 Housing Strategy

The strategic objective for the Town of Hearst is to provide a variety of housing options in anticipation of market needs in the short, medium, and long term.

To ensure a housing supply for a community, it is essential to follow a well-defined strategy. The key steps below should be considered:

- 1) Needs Assessment: Understand the housing needs of the community, including the type of units required, the needs of the current and future population, and preferred locations.
- 2) Proper Planning: Ensure meticulous planning to determine the number of units to offer, associated costs, funding sources, and potential partnerships with real estate developers or government agencies.
- 3) Community Engagement: Actively involve community members in the planning and development process to ensure that local needs and concerns are taken into account.
- 4) Collaboration with Stakeholders: Work closely with local authorities, urban planners, architects and contractors to ensure that housing projects meet current standards and regulations.
- 5) Transparent Communication: Maintain open communication with the community throughout the process to ensure transparency and trust.





# 7. Action Plan



The current action plan has been developed taking into account the strategies outlined in the previous section. The majority of proposed actions are derived from online research, interviews with key stakeholders playing a role in housing or workforce issues in Hearst, ideas generated during the "Mijotons notre futur ensemble" Forum and results of the survey conducted among the residents of Hearst and those intending to settle in Hearst in the next two years.

## 7.1 Housing

The following action steps, gathered during the data collection, aim to address challenges related to the shortage of housing in the Hearst region. The action steps are grouped into three categories: short-term, medium-term, and long-term.

**Table 5: Action steps to address challenges related to the shortage of housing in the Hearst region**

### Short-Term Action Steps

Action	Description	Responsibility
Setting up a plan identifying housing needs (short, medium, and long term projections), as well as available lands and buildings for development or rehabilitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The identification of housing needs would determine the current demand in terms of types of housing (for example: number of rooms).</li> <li>A list of available lands and buildings would improve access to information for potential investors.</li> </ul>	Private sector initiative in collaboration with the Town of Hearst
Evaluating different economic models for building a residence for post-secondary students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>L'Université de Hearst</i> and <i>Collège Boréal</i> are welcoming an increasing number of students who are seeking housing. A student residence would help free up rental units for workers and families.</li> </ul>	Private sector initiative in collaboration with post-secondary institutions
Conducting a study to identify the monthly budget of community members towards housing expenses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifying the monthly budget that community members are willing to spend on housing expenses would help determine the type of housing to be developed (value and price).</li> </ul>	Private sector initiative in collaboration with the Town of Hearst
Identifying age groups that are more actively seeking housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The age groups in search of housing appear to be students and seniors. A brief analysis is needed to clearly understand this need in order to contribute to the development of housing solutions (for example: affordable housing, accessible housing, etc.).</li> </ul>	Private sector initiative in collaboration with the Town of Hearst
Informing the general population about incentives proposed by the Municipality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Informing the general population about the incentives offered by the Municipality would increase the utilization of these incentives for housing construction.</li> </ul>	Town of Hearst

### Short-Term Action Steps (continued)

Action	Description	Responsibility
Appointing a person at the Town of Hearst responsible for guiding individuals through the administrative process or refer them to programs, and supporting them in their next steps.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Having a person informed on the incentives and programs available at the municipal, provincial, federal, and private levels would potentially encourage entrepreneurs to utilize the incentives.</li> </ul>	Town of Hearst
Establishing a committee of property owners to discuss issues related to housing and potential solutions and partnerships.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The committee would help develop partnerships and thus realize projects and find solutions to the housing challenge more quickly. It would also create a network for sharing resources and information.</li> </ul>	Private sector initiative in collaboration with the Town of Hearst
Encouraging individuals who own their homes to add a second or third unit to their residence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adding units to residential homes would increase the number of rental units available in Hearst.</li> </ul>	Private sector initiative in collaboration with the Town of Hearst

### Medium-Term Action Steps

Action	Description	Responsibility
Modify the commercial zoning to allow more housing units in the downtown sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Modifying the commercial zoning would allow for more housing units in the downtown area.</li> </ul>	Town of Hearst
Encourage the renovation of unused commercial rentals to convert them into residential rentals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Renovating existing buildings to transform them into rentals is quicker and less expensive than building a completely new building. It would provide additional rental units in Hearst.</li> </ul>	Private sector initiative in collaboration with the Town of Hearst
Encourage intergenerational housing projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Intergenerational projects could address certain needs in regards to the high demand for seniors and students' housing.</li> </ul>	Town of Hearst, private sector initiative and post-secondary institutions



## Long-Term Action Steps

Action	Description	Responsibility
Developing a new mobile home park.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A mobile home park would increase the availability of more affordable homes, freeing up some rental units currently occupied by individuals able to purchase a mobile home.</li> </ul>	Private sector initiative in collaboration with the Town of Hearst
Building a residence for the elderly.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A residence for seniors could free up rental units and homes for workers and families.</li> </ul>	Private sector initiative
Building a residence for post-secondary students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A residence for students could free up rental units for workers and families.</li> </ul>	Private sector initiative in collaboration with post-secondary institutions
Increasing the supply of affordable housing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Affordable housing is in demand, and the waiting list for such housing continues to grow. Increasing the supply of affordable housing could reduce the waiting list and free up rental units, thereby contributing to the local economy.</li> </ul>	Private sector initiative in collaboration with the Town of Hearst and the Hearst Non-Profit Housing Corporation



# 8. Incentive Programs



This section establishes a comprehensive set of financial incentive programs aimed at achieving the goals of the Housing CIP by encouraging private sector development and investment in Hearst. The incentive programs presented are designed to address local needs and opportunities outlined in the Plan. They have been developed based on input from the community, Town staff, the Town of Hearst Housing Committee, as well as a review of successful best practices in other municipalities.

The financial incentive programs have been created to encourage the construction of housing units in Hearst, particularly with regard to residential and commercial areas of the town in terms of housing needs. Applicants can utilize individual incentive programs or combine multiple complementary programs for a single site or development. Eligible projects may also be complemented by other federal and provincial funding programs, which are outlined in the appendix to this document.

It is essential to note that all programs are subject to funding allocated by Municipal Council on an annual basis.

## 8.1 Housing Incentive Program

The housing incentive program consists of several different incentives addressing various housing-related challenges. The same person could be eligible for more than one different incentive program for the same project, unless stated otherwise.

Each incentive program is described in the following pages and the following elements are provided for each:

- A brief description of the incentive;
- Eligible properties and uses;
- Eligible costs;
- Grant value;
- Grant payment;
- Eligibility criteria.

Note that each submitted project, before acceptance, must meet general and specific eligibility criteria and undergo an evaluation to ensure compliance with the Official Plan of the Hearst Planning Area and the Town of Hearst Zoning By-law.

## 8.1.1 General Eligibility Criteria

### 8.1.1.1 General Eligibility

- The incentive programs were developed to encourage the construction and creation of additional rental housing units. The construction of a private residence (house) is not eligible for incentive programs.
- Designated representatives of the Town of Hearst reserve the right to inspect properties deemed eligible for incentive programs.
- The proposed projects must represent an improvement over existing conditions, not simply a replacement of materials, siding and roofing, or structures as part of a normal life cycle. Proposed projects must create a new unit.
- The property in question must be located in the CIP project area, as designated by the municipal by-law at the time of application.
- If the applicant is not the property owner, written consent from the property owner must be provided to submit a request.

### 8.1.1.2 Financial Situation

- The property must not be in a position where property taxes are unpaid at the time of the submission of the application and until the receipt of a grant through this incentive program.
- The total amount of incentives paid through this program must not exceed 50% of the eligible costs for the property. The calculation excludes the amount granted under the Tax Increment Equivalent Grant Program. The addition of the amount granted under the Tax Increment Equivalent Grant Program must not cause the total amount of incentives paid to exceed 100% of the eligible costs for the property.
- The Town of Hearst reserves the right to audit the costs of all work approved under any incentive program, at the applicant's expense.
- Any grant request must provide a project budget estimate. When other sources of funding or grants are planned or have been obtained, these sources must be declared as part of the application.
- In some cases, a lease agreement may be required.



### 8.1.1.3 Application Process

- An application can only be accepted before the start of improvement, rehabilitation, or construction work. Work and studies initiated before the application are not eligible.
- The Town of Hearst reserves the right to end its incentive programs at any time. However, eligible projects will continue to receive the approved incentives.
- The applicant must provide at least two (2) quotes for the work, plans, or required designs at the time of the financial incentive application, or the applicant must provide an explanation of why two (2) quotes are not possible. The calculation of granted subsidies will be based on the lowest quote at the time of the application. Some programs may only require one quote if it is a specialized service needed.
- Program applications will be submitted to staff and reviewed by the Municipal Council or delegated committee. Please refer to Section 10, "Implementation" of this document for more details.
- Photos or any other visual support demonstrating the current state of the eligible property must be provided and attached to the application form.
- Plans, reports, estimates, contracts and other relevant information will be required to understand the concept of the proposed development.

### 8.1.1.4 Fund Allocation

- Funds will be allocated on a "first-come, first-served" basis.
- All applications are subject to fund availability.
- The Town is not responsible for costs incurred by an applicant under additional financial incentive programs. Approved amounts will be determined based on the lowest quote at the time of the application, not the final invoice after the project or activity for which the application was submitted has been completed.
- The total grant amounts for the same project cannot exceed \$150,000. This excludes the amount granted under the Tax Increment Equivalent Grant Program.
- The grant will be issued after the work related to the grant has been completed, proof of payment and leasing has been presented, and final building inspections have taken place.
- Eligible applicants can apply for one or more of the incentive programs contained in this plan. No program can be used to pay the same eligible cost.
- The granted amount will be calculated before the application of any tax.





### 8.1.1.5 Regulatory Compliance

- The project must comply with all requirements of the Town of Hearst Zoning By-law and must conform to the Official Plan of the Hearst Planning Area.
- Properties targeted by projects must be located within the boundaries of the town of Hearst.
- Ontario Building Code requirements must be met and a building permit must be obtained.
- All approved work and improvements must comply with applicable laws.
- The Town will conduct a final assessment of the project to ensure that it matches the details provided during the grant application.

### 8.1.1.6 Terms and Penalties

- An agreement between the Town and the property owner will be required. If a rental property benefiting from an incentive program is sold, the new owner must enter into a new agreement with the Town.
- If an applicant fails to meet a program requirement or any other requirement of the Town of Hearst, the Town may delay, reduce, or cancel its approval for incentive programs.
- Additional residential units benefiting from the Secondary Units Addition Grant Program are not allowed to be used as short-term accommodation, such as Airbnb or similar.

- Approved grants apply to the registered owner or the owner or tenant of the land and building. The name of all owners must be listed on the application. A tenant must obtain approval from the property owner before submitting an application.
- A program commitment may be cancelled if the work has not started prior to the deadline date stipulated in the agreement or if the building permit for said work is revoked by the CBO.
- Individuals involved in the application, whether the main applicant or affected property owners, must not have any overdue payments (arrears) to the Town of Hearst. This may include unpaid taxes, fines, or other financial obligations. The scope of this requirement encompasses not only debts owed to the Municipality (Town of Hearst), but also to any businesses or corporations owned by the Town of Hearst.

## 8.1.2 Summary of Recommended Incentive Programs

**Table 6: Summary of Recommended Incentive Programs**

Program	Amount of the Grant
Feasibility Study Grant Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Up to 50% of eligible costs</li> <li>• Maximum grant of \$5,000</li> </ul>
Professional Services Grant Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Up to 50% of eligible costs</li> <li>• Maximum grant of \$10,000</li> </ul>
Tax Increment Equivalent Grant Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 100% reduction in the first year</li> <li>• 80% reduction in the second year</li> <li>• 60% reduction in the third year</li> <li>• 40% reduction in the fourth year</li> <li>• 20% reduction in the fifth year</li> </ul>
Administrative Fees Grant Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Up to 100% of eligible costs</li> <li>• Maximum grant of \$10,000</li> </ul>
Conversion of Rental Residential Spaces, Mixed-Use Buildings, or Commercial Spaces Grant Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Up to 50% of eligible costs</li> <li>• Maximum grant of \$10,000 per unit + Maximum grant of \$2,500 for the addition of accessible housing units, up to 50% of eligible costs.</li> </ul>
Secondary Units Addition Grant Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Up to 50% of eligible costs</li> <li>• Maximum grant of \$10,000 per unit + Maximum grant of \$2,500 for the addition of accessible housing units, up to 50% of eligible costs</li> </ul>
Multi-Residential Rental Housing Construction Grant Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Up to 50% of eligible costs</li> <li>• Maximum grant of \$25,000 per unit + Maximum grant of \$5,000 for the addition of accessible housing units, up to 50% of eligible costs</li> </ul>
Surplus Lands Allocation Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Up to 50% of market value</li> </ul>
Municipal Utilities Connection Fee Grant Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Up to 50% of eligible costs</li> <li>• Maximum grant of \$50,000 per property</li> </ul>
Waste Disposal Fee Grant Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Up to 50% of eligible costs</li> <li>• Maximum grant of \$10,000</li> </ul>



## 8.1.3 Feasibility Study Grant Program

### Description

Grant to assist eligible applicants in covering costs associated with a feasibility study before the construction of housing units.

### Eligible Properties and Uses

Eligible applicants undertaking construction or improvement projects allowing the addition of housing units.

A maximum of one (1) study per project is eligible.

### Eligible Costs

The grant's value will be calculated based on the value of the following studies:

- Market analysis;
- Studies and plans related to real estate development, such as a business plan;
- Building condition report, in case of repurposing, significant modification, or renovation of an existing building;

- Capital equipment replacement plan, typically described as an inventory of major building components like windows, doors, roofs, exterior cladding, or heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems, used to calculate long-term expenses for future repair and replacement needs.

### Grant Value

Grant for 50% of eligible costs up to a maximum of \$5,000.

### Grant Payment

The grant will be issued after the submission of reports prepared by a qualified individual or organization and proof of payment. Note that the service provider must be approved in advance by designated representatives of the Town of Hearst.

Qualified professionals conducting this type of study must demonstrate expertise in the specific project domain. Supporting evidence may be required to confirm the adequate experience of selected professionals, such as references, a portfolio of previous projects, professional certifications, etc.



## Eligibility Criteria

Applicants must provide a copy of the quotations prepared by an individual or organization qualified in the relevant field.

Projects must meet the general eligibility criteria of this plan.

Once the feasibility study or any other type of study is completed, a copy of said study must be submitted to municipal authorities.





## 8.1.4 Professional Services Grant Program

### Description

Grant to assist eligible applicants in covering costs associated with professional services before the construction of housing units.

### Eligible Properties and Uses

Eligible applicants undertaking construction or improvement projects allowing the addition of housing units.

A maximum of one (1) service per project is eligible.

### Eligible Costs

- Professional fees related to hiring a professional engineer, architect, planner, or qualified designer to develop plans for new housing units.
- Note that legal professional services are not included in this program.

### Grant Value

Grant for 50% of eligible costs up to a maximum of \$10,000.

### Grant Payment

The grant will be issued after the submission of reports prepared by a qualified individual or organization and proof of payment. Note that the

service provider must be approved in advance by designated representatives of the Town of Hearst.

Qualified professionals conducting this type of service must demonstrate expertise in the specific project domain. Supporting evidence may be required to confirm the adequate experience of selected professionals, such as references, a portfolio of previous projects, professional certifications, etc.

### Eligibility Criteria

Applicants must provide a copy of a quotation prepared by a qualified individual or organization.

Projects must meet the general eligibility criteria of this plan.



## 8.1.5 Tax Increment Equivalent Grant Program

### Description

Grant to mitigate the impact of increased tax fees related to property value growth resulting from housing unit addition projects through residential unit intensification, development, redevelopment, and/or adaptive reuse of buildings.

The grant does not cover any increase or decrease in municipal taxes due to a general change in the property tax rate or assessment change for any other reason.

### Eligible Properties and Uses

Eligible applicants undertaking housing unit addition projects that raise the value of a property.

For grant calculation purposes, municipal property taxes include only the municipal portion of taxes and do not include education taxes or other special charges.

### Eligible Costs

- Renovation of a property for housing unit addition.
- Restoration or improvement of an existing building to make it compliant with housing unit addition.
- Expansion of a building leading to an increase in area for housing unit addition.
- Construction of new additional housing units.
- Infrastructure works, including improvement or reconstruction of existing on-site public infrastructure (water services, sanitary and storm sewers) as part of housing unit addition.

### Grant Value

The grant will be equivalent to a predetermined percentage of the municipal tax increase (i.e., net tax increase after project completion and reassessment by the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC)). The grant will be paid annually for 5 years as a percentage of the calculated increase in the first year, decreasing by 20% each year. Specifically:

- In the first year, a grant equivalent to 100% of the municipal portion of the tax increase will be granted to the owner.
- In the second year, a grant equivalent to 80% of the municipal portion of the tax increase will be granted to the owner.
- In the third year, a grant equivalent to 60% of the municipal portion of the tax increase will be granted to the owner.
- In the fourth year, a grant equivalent to 40% of the municipal portion of the tax increase will be granted to the owner.
- In the fifth year, a grant equivalent to 20% of the municipal portion of the tax increase will be granted to the owner.

## Grant Payment

When the Town of Hearst confirms the project's compliance with the grant description and receives a new valuation from MPAC, the adjustment calculation will be established at the beginning of the following year.

The Tax Increase Equivalent Grant will not be paid and will not accumulate for any year where taxes remain unpaid at the due date. Any failure to pay taxes for any year will disqualify the owner for new grant payments.

The grant will be issued after the grant-related works are completed, proof of payment and leasing is submitted, and final building inspections have taken place.

## Eligibility Criteria

Applicants must provide proof of ownership.

To be eligible for the Tax Increment Equivalent Grant, the property must be improved in a way that the undertaken works result in an increase of at least \$10,000 in property value.

If an eligible applicant is approved for the Tax Increment Equivalent Grant and the property is sold, in whole or in part, before the grant's expiration, payments will be transferable to the new owner, unless specified otherwise in the Financial Incentive Program Agreement between the original owner and the Town.

Projects must meet the general eligibility criteria of this plan.





## 8.1.6 Administrative Fees Grant Program

### Description

Grant to assist eligible applicants in covering administrative fees for the construction of housing units.

### Eligible Properties and Uses

Eligible applicants undertaking construction or improvement projects that add housing units.

### Eligible Costs

Municipal fees:

- Fees related to obtaining a construction, inspection, and/or demolition permit.

Planning fees:

- Fees related to site plan approval applications.
- Fees related to minor variance applications.
- Fees related to Zoning By-law amendment applications.
- Fees related to Official Plan amendment applications.
- Fees related to the administration of subdivision agreements.

### Grant Value

Grant for 100% of eligible costs, up to a maximum of \$10,000.

### Grant Payment

The grant will be issued after the project is completed and a final inspection is conducted. Specifically, an eligible applicant must initially pay the full fees associated with obtaining a construction permit, and the grant will be disbursed upon the successful completion of the project, following the submission of proof of payment and leasing.

### Eligibility Criteria

Projects must meet the general eligibility criteria of this plan.





## 8.1.7 Conversion of Rental Residential Spaces, Mixed-Use Buildings, or Commercial Spaces Grant Program

### Description

Grant to improve the condition/quality of housing units and facilitate the conversion of existing rental residential spaces, mixed-use buildings, or commercial spaces into additional housing units, including the conversion of vacant buildings into additional housing units.

Grant to increase the diversity of housing unit offerings, enhance unit value, make currently uninhabitable units habitable, or increase unit appeal for a wider range of income groups.

### Eligible Properties and Uses

Eligible applicants undertaking construction or improvement projects that add housing units.

Eligible applicants may receive grants for the rehabilitation of residential units or the conversion of non-residential or commercial spaces into residential units.

### Eligible Costs

- Work related to compliance with the Ontario Building Code or Fire Code, such as structural, electrical, safe evacuation, ventilation, fire protection works, including associated insulation, and similar improvements.

### Grant Value

Grant for 50% of eligible costs, up to a maximum of \$10,000 per housing unit.

- Additional option for accessible housing (for more details on accessibility rules applicable to new buildings and significant renovations in Ontario, please refer to the Ontario Building Code): grant for 50% of eligible costs, up to a maximum of \$2,500 for new accessible housing units.

In no case should the total grant exceed 50% of the total construction cost.

### Grant Payment

The grant will be issued after the grant-related work has been completed, proof of payment and leasing is provided, and final building inspections have taken place.

The Town will conduct a final project evaluation to ensure it aligns with the details provided in the grant application.

## Eligibility Criteria

Applicants must provide a copy of the quotations prepared by an individual or organization qualified in the relevant field.

Projects must meet the general eligibility criteria of this plan.





## 8.1.8 Secondary Units Addition Grant Program

### Description

Grant to facilitate the addition of up to two secondary units in a residence, such as through construction, renovation, or improvement.

As stipulated in *Bill 23, More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022*, this program allows:

- As of right zoning to permit up to three (3) residential units per lot (two (2) in the main building and one (1) in an auxiliary building).

For clarity, this program does not apply to eligible properties under the Conversion of Rental Residential Spaces, Mixed-Use Buildings, or Commercial Spaces Conversion Program.

### Eligible Properties and Uses

Secondary housing units can be created in the main building or built as an accessory building.

### Eligible Costs

- Development, redevelopment, and/or renovation creating new additional residential units.
- Commissioning of one (1) or two (2) additional residential units located in an auxiliary building (e.g., converted garage or garden house/cottage).

- Works may include improvements to address identified deficiencies, such as Building and Fire Code compliance.
- Infrastructure works, including the improvement or reconstruction of existing on-site public infrastructure (water, sanitary and storm sewers) as part of adding secondary housing units.
- In addition to the above eligible works, the following conditions apply: the additional residential units are permitted within or on the same property as the existing single or semi-detached house or townhouse on the street (row housing).

### Grant Value

Grant for 50% of eligible costs, up to a maximum of \$10,000 per housing unit.

- Additional option for accessible housing (for more details on accessibility rules applicable to new buildings and significant renovations in Ontario, please refer to the Ontario Building Code): grant for 50% of eligible costs, up to a maximum of \$2,500 for new accessible housing units.

In no case should the total grant exceed 50% of the total construction cost.

## Grant Payment

The grant will be issued after the grant-related work has been completed, and proof of payment and leasing is provided.

## Eligibility Criteria

Applicants must provide a copy of the quotations prepared by a qualified individual or organization, along with proof of payment.

The Town will conduct a final project evaluation to ensure it aligns with the details provided in the grant application.

Applicants must sign an agreement with the Town of Hearst stating that the secondary unit shall not be used for short-term housing (28 days or less).

Projects must meet the general eligibility criteria of this plan.





## 8.1.9 Multi-Residential Rental Housing Construction Grant Program

### Description

Grant for the construction of new multi-residential rental housing units.

Grant to encourage diversity in the housing unit supply to address the priority needs of the Town of Hearst community.

### Eligible Properties and Uses

Eligible applicants undertaking construction projects that add housing units.

### Eligible Costs

- Work related to compliance with the Ontario Building Code or Fire Code, such as structural, electrical, safe evacuation, ventilation, fire protection works, including associated insulation, and similar improvements.

### Grant Value

Grant for 50% of eligible costs, up to a maximum of \$25,000 per housing unit.

- Additional option for accessible housing (for more details on accessibility rules applicable to new buildings and significant renovations in Ontario, please refer to the Ontario Building Code): grant for 50% of eligible costs, up to a maximum of \$5,000 for new accessible housing units.

In no case should the total grant exceed 50% of the total construction cost.

### Grant Payment

The grant will be issued after the grant-related work has been completed, and proof of payment and leasing is provided.

### Eligibility Criteria

Applicants must provide a copy of the quotations prepared by an individual or organization qualified in the relevant field.

Projects must meet the general eligibility criteria of this plan.

The Town will conduct a final project evaluation to ensure it aligns with the details provided in the grant application.



## 8.1.10 Surplus Lands Allocation Program

### Description

Program to facilitate access to lands owned by the Town of Hearst deemed surplus. Lands identified as surplus will be offered through requests for proposals.

This program is intended as a significant incentive to offset the costs associated with acquiring lands for housing construction, where deemed appropriate or desirable by Council.

### Eligible Properties and Uses

Lands owned by the Town of Hearst will be deemed surplus if they exceed the community's needs.

### Eligible Costs

- The Town of Hearst will determine eligible costs on a case-by-case basis for each identified surplus land.

### Grant Amount

This program will allow eligible applicants to acquire lands at a lower cost, up to 50% of the market value.

### Grant Payment

Lands identified as surplus will be offered through requests for proposals.

### Eligibility Criteria

The Town of Hearst will determine eligibility criteria on a case-by-case basis for each identified surplus land.

Specific eligibility criteria may be identified in the request for proposals (RFP) that will be published by the town.

Submitted proposals will be evaluated based on the criteria identified in the RFP, and proposals that meet or exceed these criteria will be given preference.

Projects must meet the general eligibility criteria of this plan.





## 8.1.11 Municipal Utilities Connection Fee Grant Program

### Description

Grant to facilitate the connection to municipal utilities for properties not currently connected.

The program aims to increase the number of serviced properties in areas with potential for residential multi-residential development.

### Eligible Properties and Uses

Costs related to the connection of municipal utilities to an unserviced property located in proximity of municipal infrastructure.

### Eligible Costs

- Fees related to a request for connection to water and sewer services.
- Costs related to construction and engineering for connecting water and sewer services to previously unserviced properties.

### Grant Value

Grant for 50% of eligible costs, up to a maximum of \$50,000 per property.

### Grant Payment

The grant will be issued after the construction project is fully completed and proof of payment is provided.

### Eligibility Criteria

Applicants must provide a copy of the quotation prepared by an individual or organization qualified in the relevant field.

The Town will conduct a final project evaluation to ensure it aligns with the details provided in the grant application.

Projects must meet the general eligibility criteria of this plan.





## 8.1.12 Waste Disposal Fee Grant Program

### Description

Grant to facilitate the demolition process by providing a discount on waste disposal fees at the municipal landfill.

Grant reserved for multi-residential rental housing addition projects.

### Eligible Properties and Uses

Disposal fees related to the demolition of a building for the construction of housing units.

### Eligible Costs

- Landfill disposal fees.

### Grant Value

Grant for 50% of landfill disposal fees, up to a maximum of \$10,000.

### Grant Payment

The grant will be issued after the construction project is fully completed, proof of payment and leasing is provided, and final building inspections have taken place.

### Eligibility Criteria

The Town must determine if the completed project aligns with the description provided in the grant application.

Projects must meet the general eligibility criteria of this plan.







## 8.1.13 Land Banking Policy

### Description

It is provided in this Plan that Municipal Council, at its discretion, may purchase, sell, lease, prepare, and dispose of municipal properties at a price equal to or below market value to achieve the objectives of the Official Plan of the Hearst Planning Area and the goals of this Plan. This policy will specifically facilitate and enhance the Surplus Land Grant Program, as well as other financial incentive programs of this Plan more generally.

This program aims to reduce the number of vacant or underutilized lands.

### Eligible Properties and Uses

This program is reserved for the Town of Hearst and allows it to:

- Acquire, hold, clear, level, or otherwise prepare lands for the construction of housing units.
- Build, repair, rehabilitate, or improve buildings on lands acquired or held by it in accordance with the Housing Community Improvement Plan.
- Sell, lease, or otherwise dispose of any land and building acquired or held by it in accordance with the Housing Community Improvement Plan.



# 9. Budget



Preparing a budget for a Housing Community Improvement Plan (Housing CIP) is a complex and delicate exercise. Firstly, the Municipality plays the role of a lever to stimulate the private sector in maintaining a healthy local economy. The following points are important to remember and consider in any budgetary decision:

- A portion of municipal investment is reflected in foregone revenue:
  - Tax Increment Equivalent Grant Program;
  - Administrative Fees Grant Program;
  - Surplus Lands Allocation Program;
  - Waste Disposal Fee Grant Program.
- The other part of the municipality's financial support comes from taxpayer money or other funding sources (provincial/federal):
  - Feasibility Study Grant Program;
  - Professional Services Grant Program;
  - Conversion of Residential Rental Spaces, Mixed-use Buildings, or Commercial Properties Grant Program;
  - Addition of Secondary Units Grant Program;
  - Construction of New Multi-residential Rental Housing Grant Program;
  - Municipal Utilities Connecting Fees Grant Program.

- The Municipality directly influences private sector investment and should base its budget on the anticipated total direct impacts.
- For example, a small community with budget lines ranging from \$150,000 to \$250,000 per year should expect to see minimum private sector investments between \$300,000 to \$500,000.
- Political will is an important determinant of the extent to which a municipality is willing to invest and of the acceptable multiplier effect.

For the Housing CIP and its incentive programs, following thoughtful discussions and work sessions, the research team proposes that the Town of Hearst creates and administers two separate budget portfolios to encourage the rapid reduction of the housing gap by acting as a lever for both small-scale and larger-scale projects.

- Portfolio A: for the construction of 1 to 4 new housing units;
- Portfolio B: for the construction of 5 or more new housing units.

Finally, based on the findings of the current situation which demonstrates the alarming extent of the housing reality, and considering the population's significant interest in housing, the research team recommends a larger budget for the first year of the Housing CIP, which can be adjusted in the second year based on the analysis and results of the first year.



# 10. Implementation



To facilitate a rapid, transparent, fair, and efficient process for each incentive program application, a clear procedure must be established and adhered to. The following evaluation procedure is recommended for applications submitted under the Housing CIP:

- 1) Preliminary consultation with the Municipality;
- 2) Submission of a complete application file and all supporting documents;
- 3) Initial review of applications by the Municipality to confirm compliance with eligibility criteria and design guidelines provided in the Housing CIP;
- 4) Evaluation by the municipal committee appointed for this purpose;
- 5) The Municipality may require the signing of an agreement for programs subject to certain conditions;
- 6) Before disbursing funds, the Municipality will require proof of payment for all costs listed in the application file.

The review of applications will be coordinated by the Director of Planning/Chief Building Official and/or the Director of Economic Development Services, and will be assessed by the Municipal Council or delegated committee. Application files will be accepted and evaluated in the order they are received.

Funds allocated under each incentive program will be allotted to the Housing CIP budget in the calendar year in which the grant is approved, even when the funds are disbursed the following year. Projects must be completed within the year following approval, but

grant extensions may be requested. The Municipality will continue to accept applications for incentive programs until annual funds are exhausted, after which the programs will be "closed" until the approval of the next municipal budget.

Applications for projects eligible for multiple programs, up to the authorized maximum of \$150,000 per property (excluding the grant program for property tax increment and administrative fee reductions), are encouraged.

Municipal Council reserves the right to limit access to certain programs where it determines that certain grants are redundant and do not represent an adequate use of resources or when it deems that the value of a given project excessively restricts funds available for other community improvement projects in the community.

The principle of reciprocal grant means that Municipal Council will not fund more than 50% of eligible costs or more than the authorized maximums, whichever is lower.

Municipal Council may make any additions, revisions, or changes to this Housing CIP during the first five years of the program or thereafter, based on its objectives and outcomes achieved.

Any amendment to this Housing CIP requires the convening of a public meeting, for which sufficient notice must be given in accordance with the Planning Act.



# 11. Administration



This Housing Community Improvement Plan will be administered by the Town of Hearst as part of the implementation of the community improvement policies outlined in the Official Plan of the Hearst Planning Area.

To ensure the success of the Housing CIP, it is crucial to generate interest from private sector businesses, preferably at the local level. Each of the following incentive programs represents a budget line, and an annual amount should be allocated to each, based on a projection of expected applications for the following year.

**Table 7**

Program	Category	Portfolio A	Portfolio B
Feasibility Study Grant Program	Investment		
Professional Services Grant Program	Investment		
Tax Increment Equivalent Grant Program	Renunciation of income	n/a	n/a
Administrative Fees Grant Program	Renunciation of income	n/a	n/a
Conversion of Rental Residential Spaces, Mixed-Use Buildings, or Commercial Spaces Grant Program	Investment		
Secondary Units Addition Grant Program	Investment		
Multi-residential Rental Housing Construction Grant Program	Investment		
Surplus Lands Allocation Program	Renunciation of income	n/a	n/a
Municipal Utilities Connection Fee Grant Program	Investment		
Waste Disposal Fee Grant Program	Renunciation of income	n/a	n/a
<b>AMBITIOUS HOUSING BUDGET</b>		150 000 \$	350 000 \$
<b>MODEST HOUSING BUDGET</b>		75 000 \$	175 000 \$



These measures from the Housing Community Improvement Plan (Housing CIP) should allow for significant and direct improvement in narrowing the housing gap. As both the public and private sectors increase their investments in the Housing CIP, the improvements will become more substantial and indirectly enhance other economic and social sectors of the town of Hearst.

The recommended grant amounts are based on the expected demand for the development of new rental housing units, taking into account the likely limits of the municipal budget. It is impossible to predict exactly the number of applications or the scale of the projects that will be proposed. The recommended amounts should, therefore, be considered as the minimum amount to be spent each year to achieve the goals of the Housing CIP over five years. Subsequently, these amounts can be reassessed and adjusted.

The grants mentioned in this Housing CIP are subject to review and approval by Municipal Council. The proposed incentive programs are designed for a five-year cycle but can be reassessed annually based on the Municipality's annual budget.





# 12. Conclusion



The economic and demographic situation of the town of Hearst, rooted in a rich and evolving history, presents significant challenges in terms of housing and workforce. The housing crisis, marked by a shortage of units and economic challenges, along with the workforce crisis resulting from mass retirements and a decline in the active population, constitute major obstacles to the growth and stability of the town.

In response to these challenges, the Town of Hearst has responded proactively by developing a Housing Community Improvement Plan (Housing CIP). This plan, developed in collaboration with consultants, local stakeholders and active community participation, aims to stimulate economic development and address pressing housing needs. The Housing CIP's objectives focus on promoting the development of housing units, examining housing-related challenges and opportunities, and seeking solutions to bridge housing gaps.

The methodology for developing the Housing CIP has been rigorous, involving close collaboration with key community stakeholders, in-depth interviews, surveys, and thorough data analysis. The findings from the housing and workforce assessment in Hearst laid the necessary groundwork for the development of concrete strategies and action plans.

The detailed analysis of housing needs has led to specific action points, such as promoting residential development tailored to seniors, raising awareness about housing gaps and rental rates, and stimulating innovative real estate projects. Ideal scenarios, including the construction of housing complexes for seniors and multi-residential buildings, as well as alternative solutions like rehabilitating vacant

buildings, provide diverse perspectives to meet the growing demand for housing.

Incentive programs aimed at addressing the housing crisis include several initiatives to support the construction and improvement of housing units in the community.

In conclusion, the Town of Hearst's Housing Community Improvement Plan is an ambitious and necessary initiative to address current economic and demographic challenges. Its development has been guided by an inclusive approach and robust data, providing a solid foundation for the successful implementation of concrete solutions. By working closely with the community and partners, the Town of Hearst is well-positioned to overcome obstacles and create a prosperous and balanced future for its residents.



# TOOL 1: Best Practices and Partnership Opportunities

During the preparation of the Housing CIP for the Town of Hearst, an examination of comparable community improvement plans was conducted. The following table illustrates communities and some objectives of the CIP that can serve as a reference.

Community	Document	Year	Comparable Objectives
Town of Smooth Rock Falls	Community Improvement Plan	2014	Encourage residential intensification opportunities, such as mixed use and infill developments, accessory apartments, and residential conversion of upper floors of commercial buildings.
Town of Cochrane	Community Improvement Plan	2018	Stimulate the private sector investment in targeted areas through grants and loans provided by the Town.  Develop affordable housing.
Greater Sudbury	Affordable Housing Community Improvement Plan	2018	Increase the number of affordable housing units in the City.  Create a mix of unit types, including those suitable for seniors.
Town of the Blue Mountains	Housing Within Reach CIP	2021	Incentivize the development of attainable housing within the Town.  Encourage a mix of housing types and tenure.
Southwest Middlesex	Community Improvement Plan	2021	Increase opportunities for affordable housing options.
North Bay	Growth Community Improvement Plan	2020	Stimulate private sector investment and development in the housing market.  Encourage development of affordable home ownership opportunities as well as affordable rental opportunities.



			Encourage residential development which would encourage aging in place, affordable home ownership and rental and accessible units.
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## Best Practices

This next section proposes a series of best practices for the implementation of the Housing CIP, as well as for existing or future community improvement plans.

### Organizational Capacity

The municipality's organizational capacity should ideally be assessed before the development of a community improvement plan, but especially during its implementation. Key organizational characteristics, such as staff availability and resource accessibility, should be considered and evaluated before and during the development of a CIP to ensure its successful implementation. Since the CIP is a long-term project (lasting 5 to 10 years), long-term support from the Council, staff, and other stakeholders is crucial. A steering committee composed of various key community members would enable the continued steering of the process during times of change.

### Financial Capacity

The financial situation of the municipality should ideally be assessed before the development of a CIP. The feasibility and scope of the CIP are often measured based on the budget and available funding. All financial constraints must be taken into account throughout the development and implementation of the CIP. Given that CIPs can last up to 10 years, it is necessary to establish long-term financial plans. The treasurer, in particular, but also other municipal staff members, play a crucial role and should be included in the development and implementation process.

### Stakeholder Engagement

Sustained engagement from stakeholders and other key community actors is essential in the development of a CIP. It is recommended to ensure this engagement before allocating resources and funds for the development of a CIP. Communication and collaboration between different stakeholders must be accomplished in a timely manner. Lack of communication regarding expected outcomes could create obstacles when it comes to implementing the plan.

### Community Vision

Community vision is essential from the early stages of CIP development as it facilitates feedback and participation from taxpayers, ultimately fostering consensus. Dialogue with community members throughout the planning and development process of a CIP can reduce disagreements, confusion, or divergent understandings. During the development and implementation of a CIP, it



is essential to maintain public enthusiasm for the plan through marketing and communication campaigns. Community champions are needed to energize the development of a CIP, as they will provide a communication channel between the community and the municipality.

## Partnership Opportunity - Success Stories

During the development of the Housing CIP, the research team, in collaboration with the Town of Hearst Economic Development Service team, organized consultation sessions, data collection, and information exchange. Through these activities, partnership and networking opportunities were observed among certain entrepreneurs and key community and regional actors. Some have already reached out to the Town of Hearst to learn more about the Housing CIP tools and others to present their future projects. Town personnel must continue communication and follow-up to materialize these opportunities.

Moreover, to promote the Housing CIP and enhance its knowledge and experience in CIP management, the Town can organize experience-sharing sessions with communities that have success stories. The following table presents some of them:

Community	Website	Contact
Kenora, Ontario	<a href="#">Community Improvement Plans - City of Kenora</a>	<b>Megan Dokuchie</b> Economic Development Officer 60 Fourteenth Street North Kenora, Ontario P9N 4M9 Tel: (807) 467-2127
Perth, Ontario	<a href="#">Grants and Funding Opportunities - Town of Perth</a>	<b>Joanna Bowes, Director</b> Development Department 80 Gore Street East Perth, Ontario, K7H 1H9 Tel: (613) 267-3311, ext 2235 jbowes@perth.ca
Cochrane, Ontario	<a href="#">Economic Development   Ville de Cochrane</a>	Economic Development Officer 171 Quatrième Avenue Cochrane, ON P0L 1C0 Tel: (705) 272-4361



# TOOL 2: Government Programs / Public-Private Partnership

In order to support the investment efforts of the Town of Hearst, private businesses, and public institutions in Hearst in the construction of new housing units, here is a list of programs:

## Housing Programs:

### Federal

[Affordable Housing Programs Across Canada | CMHC](#)

[Housing in Ontario](#)

[Enhanced GST Rental Rebate to build more apartments for renters](#)

[Funding Programs for New Construction and Renovation Projects | CMHC](#)

[Rental Construction Financing Initiative | CMHC](#)

[Resources | Green Municipal Fund](#)

- [Capital project: New construction of sustainable affordable housing](#)
- [Case study: How one affordable housing provider created a net zero strategy](#)

### Provincial

[More Homes Built Faster](#)

[Reduced fees to build new homes](#)

[L'Ontario élimine la portion provinciale de la TVH sur les nouveaux logements locatifs | Crise du logement à Toronto | Radio-Canada.ca](#)

[Skills Development Fund: Capital Stream](#)

[Online Training – Construction Ontario](#)

[Provincial Building and Construction Trades Council of Ontario](#)

[Community Investments Grant Resources | Ontario Trillium Foundation](#)

[INVEST North Program | NOHFC](#)



[Financial Incentives for Affordable Housing - Smart Density](#)

[Ontario Priorities Housing Initiative \(OPHI\) 2023-24 Frequently Asked Questions](#)

## Private

[Savings by Design Program | Enbridge Gas](#)

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# TOOL 3: Communication and Marketing Strategy

## Introduction

The Housing Community Improvement Plan (Housing CIP) has been developed to address the housing and workforce needs of the town of Hearst. The effective use of the Housing CIP should, therefore, achieve the following main objectives:

- The Hearst community (town of Hearst) offers a variety of housing types to meet demand and address various market needs.
- The Hearst community (town of Hearst) provides a variety of housing types in anticipation of short, medium, and long-term demands.

To achieve these main objectives, it is essential for the Housing CIP to be well-shared within the target market, easily accessible, and available. The Town of Hearst must commit to actively sharing the plan by following a well-established communication and marketing strategy. This toolbox will serve as a guide to disseminate the plan to relevant stakeholders to optimize the implementation of strategies and actions and maximize the use of incentives.

## Target Market

To ensure the achievement of the plan's objectives, it is necessary to disseminate the Housing CIP to key stakeholders playing a role in its implementation and utilization. The target market for the Housing CIP must be defined, and strategies must be put in place to share the plan with these key stakeholders. This section will identify the primary target market of the Housing CIP. It is also important to note that the entire population of Hearst is affected by the plan and may have a role to play in its implementation. Therefore, it is necessary to ensure good information sharing about the plan.

## Town of Hearst

The Town of Hearst plays a very important role in implementing the Housing CIP. Its staff involved in the plan must be informed and prepared to answer questions related to it. The Town of Hearst must also implement strategies that will enable the population to use housing and workforce-related incentives. It must act as a guide and leader in using the plan and ensure its sharing through various media. The Town of Hearst is also responsible for undertaking certain proposed actions in the plan to promote housing development and attract workforce, either through immigration or by taking actions contributing to the retention of youth in schools and post-secondary institutions.





## **Owners of Rental Housing, Private Housing**

Owners of rental housing and private housing, as well as those interested in becoming such, play a significant role in the plan's implementation, especially concerning housing. Indeed, the development of housing in the Hearst region is an important strategy to address the housing shortage, whether by renovating existing buildings, constructing new buildings, or adding additional housing units to existing buildings. These new housing units will thus accommodate people from outside the area or students who can contribute to addressing the workforce shortage.

## **Business Owners**

Business owners have a significant influence on both the housing crisis and the workforce shortage. Their ability to consider integrating housing units within their establishments can have a positive impact by increasing the housing supply in the community. This approach helps alleviate the housing shortage by offering additional rental options. Simultaneously, the availability and diversity of businesses play a crucial role in the attractiveness of the community. For families considering settling in Hearst, the presence of diverse businesses creates an appealing environment. Additionally, it can contribute to the retention of youth, students, and workers by offering a range of professional opportunities and services.

## **Employers**

Employers must be involved in the plan's implementation regarding workforce recruitment and retention. Employers who choose to focus on immigration to attract workforce must try to optimize the process to ensure workforce retention, whether in the immigration process or in raising awareness among their current staff about cultural differences and new staff about the Canadian job market. Employers can also ensure youth retention by partnering with schools and post-secondary institutions.

## **Schools and Post-Secondary Institutions**

Schools and post-secondary institutions play an essential role in training young people, serving as a gateway to the job market. As places where students acquire essential skills and develop their knowledge, these institutions have a significant influence on preparing the future workforce. Their impact goes beyond simply transmitting knowledge, as they also serve as a direct entry point to the job market. Partnerships established between educational institutions and employers in the region are crucial to ensure a close alignment between the skills taught and the needs of the market. These collaborations can facilitate the recruitment of qualified talent and promote the retention of local workforce by creating internship opportunities, apprenticeship programs, and mentoring initiatives.



# Communication and Marketing of the Housing CIP

The following communication methods will allow the Housing CIP to be shared with as many people as possible and thus achieve its two main objectives.

## Website

Creating a website or a dedicated section of a website solely for the Housing CIP is a good strategy to inform the target market about important information that may concern them in the plan. A website containing not only the plan but also quick links, answers to frequently asked questions, downloadable documents, feedback or application forms, and summaries of available incentives improves accessibility to the plan and its information.

## Social Media

The use of social media is one of the preferred methods for sharing the Housing CIP and related information with the general population since it makes information easily accessible and engaging through reactions and comments. For example, links, infographics, posters, and even short videos on social media can reach a large part of the population. Indeed, according to the survey conducted in the fall of 2023 among the population of Hearst and those interested in settling in Hearst, 86.76% of respondents would like to receive information about the plan through the Town of Hearst's Facebook page. It is, therefore, essential to use this communication method to effectively share the plan.

## Public Meetings

The organization and holding of public meetings are a form of communication that allows engaging in discussions with those interested in the plan. It gives them the opportunity to ask more specific questions, provide them with resources, and, most importantly, obtain their feedback and suggestions for updating the plan or implementing other strategies to address the housing and workforce shortage. Public meetings also help explain the plan's objectives and available incentives further.

## Newsletter

Regular newsletters would keep community residents informed about the plan's progress, available incentives, upcoming events, and their opportunities for participation. According to the survey conducted in the fall of 2023, 64.46% of respondents would be interested in the idea of subscribing to a newsletter that would share updates on projects undertaken by the Town of Hearst. The Housing CIP could, therefore, be featured in a section of a Town newsletter.



## **Advertising in Traditional Media**

Advertising in traditional media is an important method to reach a part of the population that may not necessarily use social media for community news. Indeed, traditional media such as radio and the local newspaper are recognized as reliable sources of information providing community-related information. Using these media could be an effective method to share information about the plan and indicate to the general population the means of accessing the plan.

## **Town of Hearst**

The use of Town of Hearst offices and spaces to promote the Housing CIP is also an interesting communication method. Simply installing posters, making brochures or infographics available to visitors, and having informed staff on the plan can contribute to its effective sharing.

## **Integration into Community Events**

The participation of Town of Hearst staff in various community events such as fairs, workshops, or information sessions can attract attention to the plan and allow the community to learn about it. Networking, adding a short presentation by the Town of Hearst, or a booth can be methods to explore for sharing information about the plan.

## **Community Partnerships**

Collaboration is an important element of plan implementation. Developing community partnerships with local organizations, businesses, and other community partners extends the reach of promotion. Indeed, these partners can support the dissemination of information and encourage participation among their clientele and partners.

## **Celebration of Success Stories**

In the early years of the Housing CIP implementation, it is very important to celebrate success stories, whether by publishing written testimonials, video testimonials, photos, or texts about them to make them known to the community. This indicates to the community that the plan is maintaining its momentum and has a real impact. Highlighting successful candidates sparks positive discussions about the plan and encourages the submission of new applications.



## Recommended Marketing Tools

The following tools are recommended to promote the Housing CIP. Depending on the budget available, the elements below should be considered for a successful marketing and communication strategy. The following list is not absolute and limited to the proposed options. Any effective method of promoting the plan can be considered.

- Website
- Facebook Publications
- Virtual Information Resources
- Promotional Posters
- Brochures
- Infographics or One-page Documents
- Newsletters
- Press Releases
- Videos and Photos of Final Products



## TOOL 4: Targets, Performance Indicators, Monitoring, and Evaluation

Tracking progress through quantitative Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) allows the Town to understand the impact of specific investments, as well as their contribution to achieving the priorities and objectives of the Housing Community Improvement Plan (Housing CIP).

The main objectives of the Town of Hearst's Housing CIP are as follows:

- ❖ Stimulate the development of housing units, as well as the recruitment and retention of the workforce.
- ❖ Examine the challenges, opportunities, and obstacles associated with the development of housing supply and workforce recruitment and retention.
- ❖ Gain a better understanding of housing and workforce gaps and identify solutions to address them.

The frequency of monitoring reports enhances program integrity but also increases administrative costs and program labor intensity. At a minimum, staff should monitor the program quarterly. Council should receive at least an annual report well before the budget review process.

Municipal staff, specifically the Director of Planning/ Chief Building Official and/or the Director of Economic Development Services, will conduct periodic reviews of the Housing CIP's incentive programs and community improvement-related activities to assess their effectiveness and provide updates to the Municipal Council.

At the end of the program's first year, the Municipality should evaluate the effectiveness of the organizational and financial structures of the Housing CIP, application review procedures, and human resources necessary to administer, promote, and monitor the program.

Municipal Council may modify the Housing CIP if necessary to achieve the described objectives. However, any modification to this Community Improvement Plan requires the convening of a public meeting, for which adequate notice must be given in accordance with the Planning Act.

Extending a program for up to five years or reducing the budget allocated to a program does not require a modification to the Housing CIP. Any increase in funding allocated to programs under Section 28 of the Planning Act will result in a modification to the Housing CIP.



The Municipality will monitor the Housing CIP through the regular assessment of the following performance indicators:

	<b>Performance Indicator</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Measured Result</b>	<b>Responsible Person</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Portfolio A</b> Total amount of grants awarded each year			
<b>2</b>	<b>Portfolio B</b> Total amount of grants awarded each year			
<b>3</b>	Approval rate (number of submitted applications vs. number of accepted applications)			
<b>4</b>	Total value of private investment under the Housing CIP			
<b>5</b>	Property assessments			
<b>6</b>	Applicant satisfaction with the application and funding approval process			

