

West Lincoln



The Township of West Lincoln *Affordable Housing Community Improvement Plan*

Community Engagement Summary Report

March 2026

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1. Introduction

Several opportunities for engagement and consultation were provided as part of the project development process for the Township of West Lincoln’s Affordable Housing Community Improvement Plan (CIP). Engagement activities were designed to obtain input from community stakeholders, members of the public, Township Council, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing and other interested parties on the proposed structure and implementation of the Affordable Housing CIP, including potential financial and non-financial programs.

The following engagement activities were undertaken:

- October 23 to November 13, 2025 – Initial Online Survey
- January 14, 2026 – Public Open House
- January 14 to 31, 2026 – Open House Survey
- February 9, 2026 – Statutory Public Meeting

This report summarizes each engagement activity, outlines the themes identified through public and stakeholder input, and provides an overview of what was heard throughout the consultation process.

2. Engagement Overview

Engagement activities were designed to provide multiple opportunities for community members and stakeholders to learn about the project and provide feedback at key stages of the study process. These activities included both early input on housing needs and later feedback on the proposed Community Improvement Plan structure and incentive programs.

A summary of each engagement activity, including format and level of participation, is provided below.

ACTIVITY	DATE	FORMAT	PARTICIPATION
BACKGROUND SURVEY	October 23 to November 13, 2025	Online	88 responses
OPEN HOUSE	January 14, 2026	In-person	9 attendees
OPEN HOUSE SURVEY	January 14 to 31, 2026	Online/In-person	20 responses
STATUTORY PUBLIC MEETING	February 9, 2026	Council	2 speakers

3. Survey Results

Section 3 summarizes the results of the surveys undertaken throughout the project. Two surveys were conducted at different stages of the process to gather input on housing needs, proposed program tools, and implementation considerations. The findings below present an overview of the findings for each survey.

These survey results provide important insight into community housing needs, preferred program tools, and the level of community interest in potential incentive programs. These results were considered alongside feedback received through other engagement activities when drafting the final structure of the Affordable Housing CIP.

3.1 Initial Online Survey

To launch the project, an online survey was conducted from October 23 to November 13, 2025, to gather input from residents, community partners, and stakeholders regarding housing needs and potential directions for the Township’s Affordable Housing CIP. A total of 88 responses were received.

A detailed summary of survey results is provided in the [Affordable Housing CIP Background Study Report](#) (December 2025). Key themes identified include:

- Strong support for increasing the supply of affordable rental units and attainable homeownership opportunities

- Emphasis on the need for family-sized housing
- Interest in expanding housing options for seniors and young adults
- Support for partnerships with non-profit housing providers and social services organizations
- Interest in both financial incentives (e.g., grants and fee reductions) and non-financial tools (e.g., streamlined approvals and zoning flexibility)

Survey responses regarding affordability thresholds generally identified:

- Homeownership affordability in the \$200,000–\$400,000 range
- Rental affordability in the \$1,000–\$1,500 per month range

The results of this initial survey informed the development of potential program options presented in the Background Report Study and subsequent engagement activities.

3.2 Public Open House Online Survey (January 14 to 31, 2026)

An online survey following the Public Open House was conducted from January 14 to 31, 2026 to gather additional feedback on the proposed Affordable Housing CIP. This included the proposed Community Improvement Project Area, incentive programs, and implementation framework. The survey was available in hard copy format during the Public Open House, and a hard copy was available at the Community Centre during the survey period. A total of 20 responses were received.

Community Improvement Project Area

Respondents were asked whether they agreed with focusing the CIP within the Community of Smithville.

- A majority of respondents indicated support for focusing the CIP within Smithville.
- A smaller number expressed uncertainty or opposition.

Overall, responses suggest continued support for concentrating the program within the Township's primary urban settlement area.

Support for Targeted “Top-Up” Grants

Respondents were asked whether they would support additional “top-up” grants for meeting specific criteria such as accessible units, seniors’ housing, or family-sized units.

- 14 respondents indicated yes
- 5 respondents indicated not sure
- 1 respondent indicated no

When asked what criteria they think should be prioritized, respondents answered family-sized units and seniors’ units. This reflects strong support among those surveyed for targeted incentives addressing specific housing needs.

Interest in Participation

When asked whether they would consider applying for an incentive if eligible:

- 13 respondents indicated yes
- 4 respondents indicated not sure
- 2 respondents indicated no
- 1 respondent did not provide an answer

These results indicate a moderate to strong level of potential program uptake.

Open-Ended Responses

Open-ended responses reinforced themes identified in previous engagement activities, including:

- The need to increase overall housing supply
- Interest in additional residential units (ARUs/ADUs)
- Support for senior-friendly and accessible housing
- Interest in smaller homes and family-sized units
- Support for multi-generational housing arrangements
- Recognition that affordability remains a pressing issue in West Lincoln

Overall, feedback from this survey was generally consistent with themes identified through the initial online survey and the Public Open House.

4. Public Open House

The Public Open House was held on January 14, 2026, at the West Lincoln Community Centre in Smithville, ON. The Open House provided an opportunity for residents, stakeholders, and interested parties to learn about the proposed Affordable Housing CIP, review and discuss draft incentive programs, and provide feedback prior to finalization of the draft Plan. A presentation of the draft was facilitated by Nethery Planning, to provide information about the CIP and its proposed programs. Printed copies of the Background Study Report, presentation slide deck, and the Open House Survey were provided to attendees.

Following the presentation, the project team facilitated a roundtable discussion of the draft and its proposed programs.

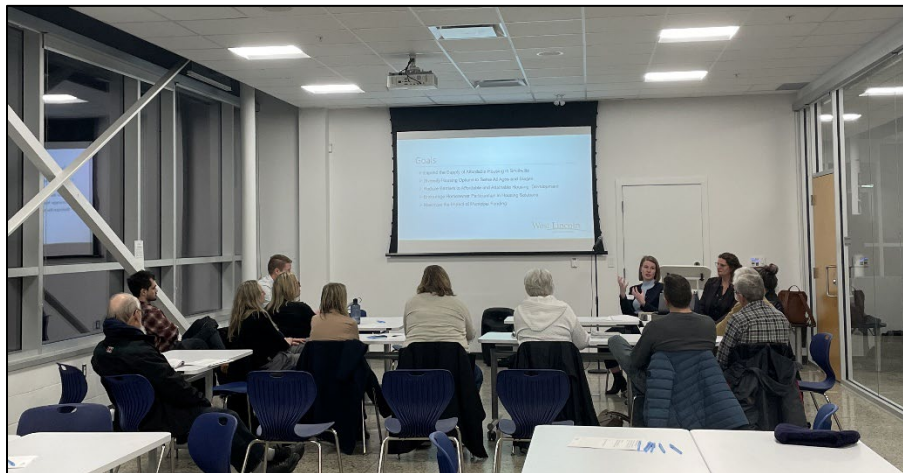


Figure 1: A photograph of the Public Open House in action.

Comments received at the Open House generally reflected the desire and support for the municipal fee grant program for affordable housing providers, with several stakeholders providing positive comments and participating in the roundtable discussion on how this program might be implemented. One participant spoke in support of providing accessible, supportive housing for seniors.

5. Statutory Public Meeting

A Statutory Public Meeting was held on February 9, 2026 as part of the Growth and Sustainability and Operations Committee. The purpose of the meeting was to present the draft Affordable Housing CIP and receive feedback from Council and the public prior to finalization. The meeting fulfilled the public consultation requirements under the Planning Act, R.S.O. 1990, for Community Improvement Plans.

The presentation provided an overview of:

- The proposed Community Improvement Project Area (Smithville)
- Draft financial and non-financial incentive programs
- Proposed eligibility criteria and implementation options
- Funding structure and administrative framework

This meeting was streamed live and is available for viewing on the Township's YouTube channel.

Council Discussion

Council discussion focused primarily on program structure, funding mechanisms, and implementation considerations.

Funding Structure and Financial Risk

Several Council members sought clarification regarding:

- The distinction between grants and loans
- Whether fee waivers would shift costs to taxpayers
- When municipal fees would be collected if an applicant did not complete a project
- Whether the CIP would require immediate funding allocation

The project team clarified that:

- The proposed structure includes grant-based incentives rather than loans.
- Municipal fee grants would be structured so that fees are paid upfront and reimbursed upon project completion.

- The Township retains discretion to determine when fees are collected (e.g., building permit stage or occupancy).
- Adoption of the CIP does not obligate Council to fund all programs immediately; programs may be funded annually through the budget process, and Council may choose which programs to activate in a given year.

It was noted that the CIP framework may be adopted independently of funding allocations, allowing flexibility over time.

Coordination with Other Levels of Government

Council also discussed:

- Whether financial contributions from the Township are required to secure provincial or federal funding
- Whether letters of support alone are sufficient
- The extent to which higher levels of government require municipal participation

The project team advised that:

- Requirements vary by program
- Historically, demonstrated municipal financial participation can strengthen funding applications
- The CIP can position the Township to participate in multi-level funding programs

It was also confirmed that CIP incentives would be in addition to any provincially mandated development charge exemptions.

Public Delegations

Two representatives from the community spoke in support of the CIP.

Delegates emphasized:

- Increasing demand for affordable housing across the Region
- Growth in housing waitlists and worsening housing conditions
- The importance of municipal participation to strengthen federal funding applications

- The need for support from all levels of government to advance large-scale affordable housing projects

Delegates encouraged Council to consider the CIP as a meaningful tool to address identified housing needs within West Lincoln. Feedback received at the Statutory Public Meeting was generally consistent with themes identified through earlier engagement activities.

6. Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing Review

The Township provided the draft Affordable Housing Community Improvement Plan to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) for review and comment. The Ministry reviewed the draft with respect to the legislative requirements of the *Planning Act, R.S.O. 1990*, and *Municipal Act, 2001*, as well as consistency with the Provincial Planning Statement, 2024. The Ministry acknowledged the Township's intent to establish a Community Improvement Project Area (CIPA) for the Smithville Urban Area and introduce financial and non-financial incentive programs to support the development of affordable housing and a broader range of housing options. Comments provided by MMAH focused on strengthening the clarity, administration, and accountability within the CIP. Key suggestions included:

- Improving map clarity for the CIPA
- Ensuring consistent terminology throughout the document
- Clarifying administrative details
- Clarifying when amendments to the CIP would be required versus when administrative changes could occur
- Suggesting potential compliance mechanisms
- Expanding the definitions section

The Ministry's feedback was reviewed and, where necessary, changes were implemented to the Affordable Housing CIP.

7. Conclusion

Across all engagement activities hosted to inform the development of the Township of West Lincoln's Affordable Housing CIP, several consistent themes emerged.

Recognition of Housing Affordability Challenges

Participants across all engagement formats acknowledged that housing affordability is an increasing concern in West Lincoln. Survey respondents and public delegations emphasized the need to expand the supply of both affordable rental units and attainable homeownership opportunities. There was broad recognition that current market conditions are creating barriers for families, seniors, and young adults seeking to remain in the community.

Support for Increasing Housing Supply, Including Targeted Unit Types

Feedback consistently highlighted the importance of:

- Family-sized units
- Senior-friendly and accessible housing
- Smaller homes and gentle density forms
- Additional residential units (ARUs/ADUs)
- Multi-generational housing opportunities

Generally, participants indicated that incentives addressing specific housing needs may improve program effectiveness.

Interest in Financial Incentives That Improve Project Feasibility

Survey respondents and Council discussion demonstrated interest in financial tools that reduce development barriers, including:

- Municipal fee grants
- Development charge reductions
- Capital grants
- Targeted financial top-ups

Council discussion focused on ensuring that financial incentives are structured responsibly, with clarity regarding reimbursement timing, eligibility requirements, and municipal budget implications.

Importance of Administrative Clarity and Fiscal Responsibility

Council members emphasized the need for:

- Clear eligibility criteria
- Defined affordability requirements
- Appropriate timing for fee collection
- Flexibility in annual funding allocations

Discussion reflected a desire to ensure that adoption of the CIP does not automatically obligate full funding of all programs, and that Council retains discretion through the annual budget process.

Leveraging Senior Government Funding and Partnerships

Public delegations and survey respondents highlighted the importance of coordination with other levels of government. Delegates noted that demonstrated municipal participation can strengthen funding applications and improve access to provincial and federal programs. There was recognition that addressing affordable housing effectively requires collaboration across municipal, regional, provincial, and federal partners.

General Support for Moving Forward with a CIP Framework

Across all engagement activities, there was support for the Township pursuing an Affordable Housing Community Improvement Plan as a structured tool to address the community's housing needs. While questions were raised regarding funding and implementation, feedback overall indicated that participants see value in establishing a formal framework to guide municipal action.

The feedback gathered through surveys, the Public Open House, the Statutory Public Meeting, and consultation with the Ministry has helped inform the final structure of the Affordable Housing Community Improvement Plan and will support the Township in implementing programs that respond to community needs.