



Committee of the Whole Report

Report Number:	ED2022-009
Meeting Date:	March 8, 2022
Title:	Downtown Revitalization Program 2017-2021
Description:	Summary of the Downtown Revitalization program for Coboconk-Norland, Fenelon Falls, Lindsay and Omemee
Author and Title:	Carlie Arbour, Economic Development Officer – Community

Recommendations:

That Report ED2022-009, Downtown Revitalization Program 2017-2021 be received;

That Staff bring updates and recommendations to Council by the end of Q3, 2022, regarding the three outstanding priorities of the Downtown Revitalization Committee of Council as outlined in Report ED2022-009 and Downtown Revitalization Action Plans being; (1) the reconstruction and beautification of Omemee and Coboconk; (2) public washrooms in downtowns; and (3) consistent signage in downtowns across the municipality that retains the individualized characteristic of each downtown;

That Council adopt the Downtown Revitalization Framework as attached in Appendix F;

That staff work with the Downtown Revitalization community stakeholders to formally thank the communities and volunteers for their contribution to the Downtown Revitalization program; and

That this recommendation be brought forward to Council for consideration at the next Regular Council Meeting.

Department Head: _____

Financial/Legal/HR/Other: _____

Chief Administrative Officer: _____

Background:

Downtown Revitalization is a program developed by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) to stimulate a community's economic, social and physical prosperity.

The Downtown Revitalization program follows a scripted process to conduct evidence based research that guides the development of Downtown strategic action plans that target both long and short term goals. The program follows a four stage process;

- Stage I: Organizing and Scoping
- Stage II: Collecting & Assessing
- Stage III: Action Planning and Prioritizing
- Stage IV: Implementation and Monitoring

Kawartha Lakes undertook four Downtown Revitalization projects simultaneously in Coboconk-Norland (as a joint project), Fenelon Falls, Lindsay and Omemee. Between 2014-2017, these communities worked through stages I to III of the program.

Stage I: Organizing and Scoping

Community organizations, business and building owners, and passionate residents made up local advisory committees. Economic Development and OMAFRA staff provided administrative support, subject matter experts, and community facilitation.

Stage II: Collecting & Assessing

Each community conducted evidence based research to formulate the final action plans. This included:

- 2044 Resident Surveys
- 158 Business Surveys
- 1802 Customer Origin Surveys & Market Area Data
- Business Mix Analysis
- Development of Streetscape and Façade Design Guidelines

Stage III: Action Planning and Prioritizing

Comprehensive action plans were developed utilizing OMAFRA's Downtown Revitalization Program four pillar approach and the collected evidence based research. The four pillars include:

- **Economic Development** objectives such as helping existing businesses target specific market segments in their trade area or identifying potential new businesses that complement the existing business mix.
- **Leadership and Management** activities that include various organizations to ensure the process continues and volunteers are celebrated and renewed.
- **Marketing and Promotions** to ensure that the identity and positive image of the downtown is communicated and that events and activities animate the area; and
- **Physical Improvements** such as restoring historic facades, streetscapes, parking and creating safe, walkable environments.

The plans and implementation structure were brought forward to Council for adoption, moving the program into Stage IV: Implementation and Monitoring. The action plans were organized to clearly detail the lead for each action being City Led, Collaborative (community and municipality), and Community Led.

At the Council meeting of March 7, 2017, Council approved the action plans with the following resolution:

ED2017-005

CR2017-194

Resolved That Report ED2017-005, **Downtown Revitalization Update and Action Plans**, be received;

That the Downtown Revitalization Action Plans for Coboconk-Norland, Fenelon Falls, Lindsay and Omemee, as outlined in Appendices A to D respectively to Report ED2017-005, be approved;

That financial considerations for projects beyond those already identified in existing budgets and work plans be incorporated in future budgets for consideration;

That a Downtown Revitalization Committee of Council be established with representation including each community that has a completed Downtown Revitalization Plan; and

That staff develop the Terms of Reference for the Downtown Revitalization Committee and forward to Council for approval.

Carried

Since the plans were adopted, the City, communities and many partner organizations have worked to implement the actions identified. The plans were designed with a five-year implementation timeline; we are at the end of the five years. This report provides a summary of the actions that were undertaken and provides recommendations of a framework for an ongoing Downtown Revitalization program.

Rationale:

The implementation of the Downtown Revitalization Action Plans was a collaborative effort between the municipality and communities. Some of the actions were the responsibility for the City to implement, some were for the community and many were done in partnership.

1. Committee of Council

The Downtown Revitalization Advisory Committee (DRAC) was established by Council in 2017. Representatives from each community were appointed to DRAC. The purpose of the Committee was to provide advice and assistance to Council and staff, provide opportunities for communities to collaborate, and support the implementation of all Downtown Revitalization Action Plans. DRAC members acted as conduits for information between the municipality and communities and were the local leaders of the action plans. The committee members reviewed and updated their action plans annually, and in 2021 conducted an inventory of all actions completed over the course of the program.

2. Downtown Revitalization Action Plans

The activities identified in the action plans were based around the four-pillar approach to stimulate their local economies: (1) Economic Development (2) Leadership and Management (3) Marketing and Promotion and (4) Physical Improvements.

Many of the actions listed in the plans were completed, some are ongoing activities that will continue, and a number are larger, long term projects yet to be completed.

Each action plan, and details of the work completed throughout the implementation of the program are presented as Appendices A-D, as well as a summary document as Appendix E.

3. Downtown Revitalization Successes and Completed Actions

The following summary provides a highlight of initiatives completed over the course of the program that supported the broader downtown communities, broken into the four pillars:

Pillar: Economic Development

- Business Count Program: launched in 2021 to gather business and employment property information
- Digital Main Street: Service Squad program offered locally to help businesses increase their online presence
 - 47 grants of \$2,500 approved for businesses
 - 74 businesses supported with launching ecommerce sites
 - Over 200 businesses served by Digital Service Squad
- Local Intel: launched online as a digital toolkit to support businesses attraction and expansion located on Economic Development pages at www.kawarthalakes.ca
- Workforce attraction marketing piece: developed for employers to use to promote the community as part of their workforce attraction efforts
- Training: Ongoing, regular education and training offered for businesses in partnership with the Kawartha Lakes Small Business Entrepreneurship Centre (KLSBEC)
- Retail Refresh: a three part in depth training program for retailers to increase sales revenue
- Downtown Dreams: a business and growth program supporting four businesses to open

Pillar: Leadership

- Downtown Revitalization Advisory Committee of Council and Community Working Groups: leading the implementation of the action plans
- Chambers + BIA Roundtable: bi-weekly collaborative meetings leading to increase in collaborative projects and partnerships between organizations
- Kawartha Lakes Ecosystem Network (KLEN): Over 16 business support organizations sharing resources, building collaborative projects and strengthening relationships

Pillar: Marketing

- New City and Tourism websites that offer community and tourism event calendars as well as a tourism business directory
- Professionally branded marketing campaigns developed that enhance programming offered to and for businesses, including:
 - Shop Local Campaign: launched in 2020 in response to COVID-19
 - Diggin' Downtown: a marketing campaign to support businesses throughout downtown reconstruction projects
 - Lovin' It Local: shop local marketing campaign developed by regional Chambers of Commerce

Pillar: Physical Improvements

- Downtown Reconstructions: enhancing the functionality and streetscape of the main streets in (1) Lindsay (2) Fenelon Falls (3) Omemee (in development) and the wharf in Coboconk-Norland (in development)
- Private Property improvements made possible through the:
 - Kawartha Lakes Strategic Community Improvement Plan policy developed, and;
 - The launch of the Million Dollar Makeover program: 54 property improvement projects approved throughout the City
- Parking Study completed to develop solutions to optimize parking in the downtowns of Lindsay, Fenelon Falls and Bobcaygeon.

Localized activities within each community were undertaken. The Downtown Revitalization Advisory Committee members identified the following actions within the plans that had the greatest impacts to their community:

Coboconk-Norland

- The Wellness Centre development
- The establishment of the Norland Management Committee
- Management of Lions Park in Coboconk
- Increase use of local parks
- Increase in visitors to area
- Great local facilities
- Increase in beautification efforts

Fenelon Falls

- Increase in community leadership and capacity
- Reconstruction of Colborne Street
- Rock wayfinding signage project
- Downtown walking tour
- The Grove Theater development and launch
- Outdoor art sculpture project
- Beautification (flowers)
- Business retention during COVID-19
- Business innovation during COVID-19
- New condo developments (in development)
- Relationship with High School Co-op Program

Lindsay

- Downtown Reconstruction
- Enhanced snow removal in BIA district
- Heritage Conservation District creation
- Building and Landlord Inventory
- Streamlined parking enforcement
- Lindsay designated as a **Trail Town**
- Parking Study completed
- Downtown Walking Tour developed
- Information Kiosk (in development)
- BIA Event playbook for downtown events (in development)

Omemee

- Guitar wayfinding signage installed
- Million Dollar Makeover projects completed in town
- Library and Mikeals collaboration
- Two public art murals installed
- Music Series at Coronation Hall
- Neil Young Concert
- Omemee Units committee developed and increase in community events

The overarching impacts within each of these communities is significant, and the Downtown main streets are stronger in all aspects that a Downtown Revitalization program is designed to support.

4. Next Steps for Downtown Revitalization

The five-year implementation of the program has come to an end. While many activities were accomplished with great success, there are a number of projects that are important to the communities yet to be completed. These include:

- Celebrate the success of the Downtown Revitalization project in a report card (to be completed in 2022)
- Business investment attraction to fill vacancies (to be incorporated in the Welcome Home business and workforce attraction campaign in 2022)
- Signage – highway, wayfinding, business direction signs, parking, public infrastructure, key community assets
- Public washrooms in downtown
- Place-making initiatives (including gathering spaces, public art, etc.)

Many of these capital projects have budget implications for the City. Economic Development will work with all City Departments to develop a costing and implementation plan for Council's consideration in Q3.

At the November 18, 2021 DRAC meeting, the Committee made the following motions relating to these projects:

DRAC2021-021

Moved By A. Radey

Seconded By S. Podolsky

That Council consider a comprehensive review of signage in the Downtowns with the intent to develop consistent signage throughout the municipality, while also representing the individualized characteristics of each Downtown.

Carried

DRAC2021-022

Moved By D. Wilson

Seconded By M. Hutchison

That Council address key outstanding actions from the Downtown Revitalization Action Plans as identified in the Action Plans Summary, with two high priority items being (1) reconstruction and beautification of Omemee and Coboconk and (2) provide public washrooms in the Downtowns.

Carried

While important to celebrate the progress made, we need to continue to support Downtowns to ensure they remain strong economic cores of the communities. This will be done through an ongoing downtown program.

The DRAC established a framework to guide downtown programming in Kawartha Lakes (attached as Appendix F). This framework was designed based on the successful OMAFRA program, and the localized knowledge gained over the past five years. The framework defines what Downtown Revitalization means to Kawartha Lakes, the community and how the four-pillar approach will inform ongoing support and programming.

In 2022, Economic Development will establish the foundations of this program to ensure ongoing supports for the Downtown.

On November 18, 2021, The DRAC held its final meeting and made the following recommendations to Council to wrap up the 2017-2022 Downtown Revitalization program.

DRAC2021-020

Moved By S. Podolsky

Seconded By A. Radey

That the Downtown Revitalization Advisory Committee recommend that Council adopt the Downtown Revitalization Framework.

Carried

***DRAC2021-023**

Moved By M. Hutchison

Seconded By A. Radey

That the Committee request that Council dissolve the Downtown Revitalization Advisory Committee; and

That Members of the Committee be thanked for their contribution; and

That Economic Development work with Downtown stakeholders to establish a Downtown Community of Practice.

Carried

*These recommendations have been brought forward to Council in report ED2022-013 Downtown Revitalization Advisory Committee 2021 Annual Report and Future Recommendations.

DRAC2021-024

Moved By A. Radey

Seconded By M. Hutchison

That the Downtown Revitalization Advisory Committee thank Council for their commitment to the Committee and Downtown's; and

That the Committee recommend to Council that staff work with the Downtown Revitalization community stakeholders to formally thank the communities and volunteers for their contribution to the Downtown Revitalization program.

Carried

These recommendations put Kawartha Lakes on a clear path to close out the current Downtown Revitalization program. They ensure important initiatives do not get lost that have yet to be completed and guide the transition to a new Downtown Revitalization program.

Other Alternatives Considered:

No other alternatives have been considered.

Alignment to Strategic Priorities

The recommendations within this report directly align with all Strategic Priorities, with a primary focus on supporting A Vibrant and Growing Economy.

Specifically, this report supports the activities that **Support downtown revitalization to ensure our communities have a strong core.**

The Economic Development Strategic Plan provides direction to (1) Implement the Downtown Revitalization Action Plans in Coboconk-Norland, Omemee, Lindsay and Fenelon Falls, and (2) Develop a Kawartha Lakes Downtown Revitalization program based on the Ontario Downtown Revitalization Program. This report addresses this direction.

Financial/Operation Impacts:

While there are no financial considerations related to this program summary report, the recommendations from the committee to implement remaining priority items are likely to have financial implications in the future budgets and that they will be dealt with separately at that time.

Consultations:

Downtown Revitalization Committee of Council
Manager, Economic Development
Manager, Municipal Law Enforcement
Manager, Communications, Advertising and Marketing
Director, Development Services
Director, Public Works
Director, Community Services
Director, Engineering and Assets

Attachments:

Appendix A – Coboconk-Norland 2022 Downtown Revitalization Status Update



Appendix A
Coboconk-Norland 2022

Appendix B – Fenelon Falls 2022 Downtown Revitalization Status Update



Appendix B Fenelon
Falls 2022 Downtown

Appendix C – Lindsay 2022 Downtown Revitalization Status Update



Appendix C Lindsay
2022 Downtown Revit

Appendix D – Omemee 2022 Downtown Revitalization Status Update



Appendix D Omemee
2022 Downtown Revit

Appendix E – Downtown Action Plans Highlight Summary



Appendix E Kawartha
Lakes Downtown Revi

Appendix F – Draft Kawartha Lakes Downtown Program Framework



Appendix F Draft
Kawartha Lakes Down

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Department Head: Richard Holy, Director of Development Services