



## Council Report

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<b>Report Number:</b>	<b>ED2025-018</b>
<b>Meeting Date:</b>	July 22, 2025
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Discover Downtown Fenelon Falls Action Plan</b>
<b>Description:</b>	Community initiated 5-year downtown action plan
<b>Author and Title:</b>	Carlie Arbour, Economic Development Officer - Community

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### Recommendations:

**That** Report ED2025-018, **Discover Downtown Fenelon Falls Action Plan**, be received;

**That** members of the Discover Downtown Fenelon Falls Committee, a sub-committee of Fenelon Forward, be recognized for the exemplary community engagement in developing this action plan; and

**That** staff report back to Council by end of Q3 2025 with a summary and analysis of projects that fall within Municipal responsibility and their associated proposed timelines.

**Department Head:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Financial/Legal/HR/Other:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Chief Administrative Officer:** \_\_\_\_\_

## **Background:**

At the Council Meeting of July 23, 2024 Council adopted the following resolution:

### **CR2024-395**

**That** Report ED2024-034, **Rural Economic Development Fund Agreement**, be received; and

**That** the Mayor and Clerk, following a review of agreements to the satisfaction of the City Solicitor, be authorized to execute agreement(s) with the Province of Ontario for the Fenelon Falls Downtown Revitalization 2.0 project.

**Carried**

With funding support from the Rural Economic Development (RED) program, the Economic Development Division, in partnership with the Fenelon Falls and District Chamber of Commerce, supported the Fenelon Falls community in the development of a new Downtown Fenelon Falls Action Plan.

Downtown Revitalization is a program developed by the Ontario Ministry of Rural Affairs to stimulate economic, social, and physical prosperity in rural communities. The program follows a structured, evidence-based approach to develop a strategic downtown action plan that addresses both short- and long-term community goals.

The Downtown Revitalization program is organized into four key stages:

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

The Fenelon Falls community has successfully completed Stages I through III and is now preparing to transition into Stage IV: Implementation and Monitoring.

This report is intended to present the Discover Downtown Fenelon Falls Action Plan to Council and outline the community's goals for the next five years of implementation.

## **Rationale:**

### **Downtown Revitalization in Fenelon Falls**

Through the Corporate Strategic Plan, Council has demonstrated a strong commitment to supporting downtowns through revitalization, intensification, and beautification. In 2017, the City led a Downtown Revitalization project in partnership with the Fenelon Falls community through the Provincial Downtown Revitalization Program. The implementation period for the initial plan took place from 2017 to 2021. The community recognized the value of an evidence-based action plan and attributes many local successes to the program, including:

- 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 and innovation during COVID-19
- New condo developments
- Relationship with High School Co-op Program

During this process, and in the years that followed, the Fenelon Falls community has demonstrated a sustained high level of engagement and capacity for implementing local projects. The community has continued to meet regularly and to identify and advance initiatives of local significance.

Building on the success of the 2017 downtown action plan, and in response to ongoing community interest, the Municipality was approached in 2023 to participate once again in the Ontario Downtown Revitalization Program. Led by Fenelon Forward, the Discover Downtown Fenelon Falls Committee was established October 2024. With support from the Chamber of Commerce, the Economic Development Division, and the Ministry of Rural Affairs, the committee undertook the process of hiring a Coordinator, collecting data, engaging the community, and developing this five-year action plan (see Appendix A).

The data collected included:

- 526 Customer Origin Surveys
- 356 Resident Surveys
- 55 Downtown Business Surveys
- 75 Event Participant Surveys
- 30 Attendees at a Discover Downtown Public Meeting

Municipal departments were invited to participate throughout the process, including representatives from Economic Development, Community Services, as well as Federal and Provincial partners such as Parks Canada and the Ministry of Rural Affairs.

### **Fenelon Falls Downtown Action Plan Goals**

The community has identified four primary goals to focus on over the next five years, which include:

1. **Enable Growth Through Infrastructure:** Lay the foundation for economic and population growth in downtown Fenelon Falls through thoughtful infrastructure investment.
2. **Expand/Build Business Diversity:** Support the growth of a vibrant and varied business community in downtown Fenelon Falls.
3. **Improve Pride of Place:** Foster a strong sense of pride among residents, businesses, and visitors by celebrating the character and identity of downtown Fenelon Falls.
4. **Placemaking:** Create engaging public spaces and initiatives in downtown Fenelon Falls that strengthen the connection between people and their environment.

### **Implementation of the Action Plan**

While the Downtown Fenelon Falls 2.0 Action Plan will be community-led, its successful implementation will require continued collaboration between local organizations, business leaders, engaged residents, and the Municipality.

Some action items identified in the community-led plan may result in future municipal budget requests. Implementation of these items may require collaboration across multiple departments to ensure alignment with existing or planned City initiatives. These items will be brought forward individually for consideration—either as standalone projects or as enhancements to projects already scheduled.

Economic Development will act as the municipal staff liaison for this initiative, supporting coordination across departments as needed and maintaining communication with the community-led committee.

Community members have demonstrated a strong interest in contributing to municipal processes, particularly by sharing local knowledge and identifying community priorities throughout the planning process.

The successful implementation of this plan reflects a shared commitment to investing in, enhancing, and growing our downtowns into vibrant, animated, and safe commercial and community spaces.

### **Other Alternatives Considered:**

No alternatives considered.

### **Alignment to Strategic Priorities**

The four strategic priorities within the 2024-2027 Kawartha Lakes Strategic Plan are:

1. A Healthy Environment
2. An Exceptional Quality of Life
3. A Vibrant and Growing Economy
4. Good Government

Downtown Revitalization aligns with the three following Strategic Priorities:

Exceptional Quality of Life – “Maintain community hubs such as parks, buildings and active spaces for social, healthy interactions.” This plan identifies a need for developing community gathering spaces in downtown Fenelon Falls.

Vibrant and Growing Economy – The Strategic Plan identifies the importance of “support[ing] downtown revitalization, intensification and beautification.” This project will touch on all four pillars of downtown revitalization through planning and plan implementation.

Good Government – “Secure and advocate for provincial and federal funding for municipal infrastructure and service delivery needs, and critical community infrastructure and project investments”. This project received provincial funding to engage in evidence-based community action planning initiatives.

Alignment with the Economic Development Strategy includes:

Invest in Places of Economic and Cultural Activity: Engage communities in Kawartha Lakes in the Provincial Downtown Revitalization programming.

### **Financial/Operation Impacts:**

The development of the Action Plan was supported by 50% matching funds from the Ontario Ministry of Rural Affairs through the Rural Economic Development (RED) program. The Municipality's contribution was provided through the Downtown Revitalization Special Project budget. The Fenelon Falls Chamber of Commerce, as a co-applicant, contributed both financially and through in-kind support.

The long-term success of the project will rely on continued support from Council over the five-year implementation period, including the consideration of Downtown Revitalization priorities in future budgets and departmental work plans. Several actions identified in the plan can be integrated into existing budgets or already align with current initiatives, while some activities may be brought forward as new funding requests for Council's consideration and approval.

### **Consultations:**

Ontario Ministry of Rural Affairs  
Fenelon Falls and Area Chamber of Commerce  
Fenelon Forward, Discover Downtown Fenelon Falls Committee  
Manager, Economic Development

### **Attachments:**

Appendix A: Discover Downtown Fenelon Falls Action Plan



Appendix A

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**Department Head:** Leah Barrie, Director Development Services