



Report Presented To:	Township of Southgate Council Meeting
Meeting Date:	2024-12-18
Report Number	EDO2024-014
Title:	Downtown Revitalization Program
Open/Closed Session:	Open Session
Prepared By:	Brenna Carroll, Economic Development Officer
Approved By:	Kenneth Melanson, RPP, MCIP, Senior Manager, Development & Community Services

Executive Summary:

Coordinating a Downtown Revitalization (DR) program is slated as an action item 4.C of the 2023-2027 Community Strategic Plan to support Goal 4: Revitalization Downtown Dundalk and enhance its beauty and restore pride-of-place in the downtown. This report recommends that a DR program be initiated by staff in January 2025.

Recommendation:

Be it resolved that Staff Report EDO2024-014 be received for information; and **That** Council approve the commencement of the Downtown Revitalization Program for the town of Dundalk.

Background:

A [Downtown Revitalization \(DR\) program](#) is a project guided by OMAFA principles to facilitate the improvement of rural downtown cores across Ontario through community consultation and evaluation. A DR program was identified as an action item of the Township’s 2023-2027 Community Strategic Plan to support the revitalization of Downtown Dundalk by restoring its pride-of-place. An OMAFA prerequisite for this program is completing a Business Retention and Expansion (BR+E) program to gather a base of data from local businesses.

The Southgate BR+E surveys were compiled and analyzed in 2024, and Township staff are currently implementing the actions items developed in response to the survey analysis. The DR project will expand on the BR+E by examining Dundalk’s downtown business mix, location, customer-base, trade-area, etc. Staff working on the DR project will gather data and community feedback to develop a vision for downtown beautification so that plans for the commercial core can be focused on boosting the overall economic well-being of the Township in accordance with local context and needs.

Analysis

The EDO recommends moving forward with the DR program in January of 2025. The goal of this project would be to develop a vision and action plan for the revitalization of downtown Dundalk that can be implemented and monitored over a 2 to 4-year period. The project would be organized in-house with the EDO acting as the project coordinator.

The DR program as outlined by OMAFA is divided into four stages: I) Preparation, II) Collect Data & Analyze, III) Develop Goals & Action Plans, IV) Implement and Monitor. Township staff suggest that Stages I-II can be completed in 2025, with Stage IV being implemented starting in 2026. The Southgate DR program will be launched in the New Year by notifying residents and business owners. Following which, the EDO will release a call for members of a "Downtown Revitalization Taskforce": a temporary working group that will manage and support the various components of the project. The remaining activities of the program will be carried out as described below and in collaboration with the Downtown Revitalization Taskforce (DRT).

Stage I: Preparation (January – March 2025)

- Establish a DRT of 5-8 community members and set-up regular meetings.
- Conduct various downtown self-assessments with the DRT.
- Create a preliminary vision and objectives for the DR project.
- Develop a DR work plan for Stage II.

Stage II: Collect Data & Analyze (April – September 2025)

- Complete a building and business inventory of the downtown.
- Organize a business mix and location analysis.
- Conduct a survey of downtown business owners.
- Conduct a customer origin analysis by engaging with downtown shoppers.
- Conduct a survey of residents about downtown visits and shopping habits.
- Facilitate participatory community design sessions.
- Analyze and synthesize data.

Stage III: Develop Goals & Action Plans (October – December 2025)

- Prepare results for the Downtown Revitalization Taskforce (DRT).
- Share results with the DRT.
- Establish a market position and set-up goals.
- Develop a DR strategic plan with the DRT.
- Share the results and strategic plan with the public and business community.

Stage IV: Implement and Monitor (Starting January 2026)

- Implement the work plan and monitoring process that is determined in Stage III.

Internal Policy and Legislated Requirements:

Staff will ensure that this project is carried out in accordance with all internal policy and legislated requirements.

Financial and Resource Implications:

The EDO recommends that the DR program be delivered in-house so that expenses associated with the project coordinator (in this case the EDO), office space, and data entry be covered "in-kind." This is a cost-effective approach, while also enabling the EDO to connect directly with businesses to maintain clear communication between the Township and the business community.

Additional costs associated with the DR program would be considered during the 2025 budget discussions and covered under the Economic Development budget. These costs will be related to

office supplies, software tools, promotion, community facilitation, training, mileage, and implementation of quick wins.

Where needed, the EDO will utilize the resources and expertise of other Township departments as well as local partners, institutions, and service providers.

Strategic Priorities:

Priority: A Thriving Economy

Goal: Goal 4: Revitalize Downtown Dundalk to Enhance its Beauty and Restore Pride-in-Place in the Downtown

Action Item: 4 c). Participate in the Downtown Revitalization Program that Includes Developing a Vision for Downtown Beautification in Consultation with the Community

Attachments:

None.