



The Corporation of the Township of Huron-Kinloss

Staff Report

Report Title: Downtown Ripley Revitalization

Date: Feb. 3, 2025

Report Number: BED-2025-02

Department: BED

File Number: C11 BED25

Prepared By: Amy Irwin

Attachments: Ripley Downtown Development Envisioning Final Draft

Recommendation:

THAT the Township of Huron-Kinloss Committee of the Whole hereby receives for information Report BED-2025-02, prepared by Amy Irwin, Economic Development Officer.

Background:

Downtown Ripley Revitalization was identified as a priority in 2024 by Economic Development staff. A community engagement session, with 26 attendees was hosted on March 26, 2024 to gather feedback and ideas of what was needed in downtown Ripley, and RED funding (see report BED-2024-08-14) was secured in July 2024.

Discussion/Analysis/Overview:

Several consistent key themes emerged from the community meeting in March 2024 and included: the need to address derelict buildings and empty lots downtown, downtown aesthetics (paint, shutters, etc.), downtown flowers and planters, address lack of parking or improve parking signage, make business attraction a priority, rehab the gazebo in the Lewis Park, build a dog park, increase health and day care services and have more activities/a hub for youth.

While staff waited for approval for the RED grant, which occurred in July, staff initiated projects that were within the current budget, within the scope of the Township's capabilities and addressed the community's feedback.

These included:

- Window clings on downtown buildings to enhance the esthetics and promote business attraction.
- Built and installed window boxes on all downtown businesses and filled them seasonally.
- Hosted and promoted the Back Forty Bazaar, a market in the park alternating weeks in the summer, bringing many people to our downtown core.

- Staff collaborated with the Ripley Business Community, who took the lead, securing grants on new mural facing the empty lot and new seasonal lighting.
- Community Services installed new steel posts and roof on gazebo in Lewis Park and have moved forward plans for a dog park this spring.
- Senior staff at many levels worked together to complete the Ripley Medical Clinic project, bringing full time hours by the Family Health team back to Ripley and increased the number of childcare spaces available at the Ripley YMCA through renovation.

The actions achieved in the summer and fall of 2024 addressed some of the feedback received in March about how to revitalize downtown Ripley, within a short timeframe, utilizing community partnerships, while keeping within our mandates.

After a successful RED application notification in July, funding was available to engage with Plu.ral to create a Downtown Ripley envisioning documents. A current state analysis was conducted, input was gathered and streetscape recommendations as well as envisioning renderings were created. The goals of the project were to: Fill up vacant, tenant-ready spaces downtown, envision the potential of derelict buildings, rethink the purpose of vacant lots and increase promotions and events downtown.

The report includes phasing and implementation recommendations with immediate actionable steps that the Township can achieve independently, to multi-year plans in coordination with private landowners. It also includes grander façade renderings to be used for development attraction purposes, to demonstrate Ripley's potential in conceptual form only. The façade renderings intent is to inspire, not be used as a guiding document. The renderings usage is limited to private ownership and development buy-in. It's anticipated that targeted business recruitment campaigns will be carried out, using some of the elements in the report to garner interest with developers in the potential downtown Ripley holds and create leads, but are not intended to be actionable by staff. The budget estimates are for information purposes only and are not a recommendation by staff.

The envisioning portion of the document is "Generally, it is a visual education – an education that may entice building owners, developers, and small businesses to invest in Downtown Ripley by incorporating the rendering into marketing materials such as brochures, websites, social media, and presentations, the Township can effectively communicate the vision and potential of Ripley, ultimately contributing to the successful promotion of the Downtown Development Envisioning." – page 25 of report.

The attached report, funded by the NWMO and RED funding, provides an overview of our current states, some actionable items that are achievable by the Township, implementation timelines and is, in part, an envisioning document rather than an action plan, for business recruitment/development purposes in partnership with interested developers and current landowners.

Staff will continue to work on business recruitment strategies and downtown revitalization efforts to work toward the desired outcomes of a vibrant and attractive downtown, where people want to live and do business.

Financial Impacts:

Funding was received through the NWMO and RED grant to cover the cost of plans as well as specific action items as outlined in the RED funding agreement. Any additional costs are included in the regular operational Economic Development budget.

Performance Measurement:

This project will be measured by increased investment in Downtown Ripley (new businesses, new developments, beautification efforts, events, partnerships and training opportunities for businesses, etc.).

Strategic Area:

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| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Embrace a thriving rural lifestyle | <input type="checkbox"/> Enhance Municipal Service Delivery |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Prepare for Inclusive Growth | <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure Financial Stability |

Strategic Goal: Encourage economic vitality

Respectfully Submitted By:

Amy Irwin, Economic Development Officer

Report Approved By:

Jodi MacArthur, Chief Administrative Officer