



The TOWNSHIP of
NORTH DUMFRIES

Downtown Ayr: Strategic Action Plan for Revitalization

DRAFT #4
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Prepared By: North Dumfries Economic Development Advisory Committee
Economic Development Division, Office of the Chief Administrative Officer

Why does Downtown Ayr need a strategic plan?

The village of Ayr offers a unique and desirable option for individuals and families looking for rural character and a natural setting within the fabric of Waterloo Region’s urban settlements.

Downtown Ayr - considered the heart and historic hub of the Community - is in need of a pragmatic, strategy driven framework that guides community-based revitalization efforts. This framework or strategic plan harnesses the social, economic, natural and cultural assets that sets the village of Ayr apart and ultimately leads to tangible outcomes that benefit the entire community.

This strategic plan (Plan) represents a co-ordinated approach using both long-term and short-term activities that attract people and businesses to the commercial core and creates a sense of enthusiasm and momentum about the community. The Plan will guide the actions of all associated stakeholders, including the community-at-large, Downtown landowners and business community, Township Council and staff and the Economic Development and Heritage Advisory Committees.

The Plan will act as both a co-ordination tool and measuring stick for success by demonstrating the wise use of resources, prioritized goals and – when necessary – further action or revised strategy. The Plan will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure real change and visible results for Downtown Ayr.

Vision Statement:

The Downtown is a community destination for retail, commerce and entertainment that embraces our rural traditions and small town charm.

Mission Statement:

Downtown Ayr is considered a village centre steeped in tradition and history, with buildings, streets and streetscapes and access to a Canadian Heritage River that reflect its unique past and its role as a village meeting and gathering place.

The scale of development promotes and reinforces a pedestrian oriented focus with strong linkages through trail systems to the adjacent residential neighbourhoods situated to the north and south, east and west of the Northumberland Street, Swan Street and Stanley Street axis.

The ease of vehicular access into the Core Area and the provision of parking are effectively promoted to enhance the visit to area businesses and cultural / entertainment venues.

Centennial Park, Watson Pond, the urban plaza at the Cenotaph, “Ice House Park” with Nith River access, all with its community and themed events, and, cultural and leisure pursuits and their interconnected walkway network, reinforces the role of the Core Area as a meeting place and focal Township destination.

The Downtown’s first priority is to serve its community with retail stores, businesses, recreation and entertainment opportunities that support, and are supported by, the residents of the village of Ayr and North Dumfries. These activities will be combined with quaint and attractive stores, cafes, cultural and entertainment amenities that draw visitors from across Waterloo and southwestern Ontario to enjoy what we have here in North Dumfries.

The revitalization of Downtown Ayr will be achieved through a consistent and long-term organizational structure that ensures effective action, monitoring and open dialogue. Support for the Plan must come from a committed Township Council and staff, merchants and business owners, property owners and the community-at-large.

A. Establishing a Strong Foundation

To establish a strong foundation, Downtown Ayr needs to take stock of what currently exists. This inventory can include but is not limited to on and off-street parking, vacant retail space, vacant land, existing signage, landscapes and streetscapes.

Objective A1

Undertake an inventory of existing on and off-street parking capacity, utilization rates and assess the potential to increase parking opportunities.

Lead:	Planning Division
Partners:	Downtown Landowners, Public Works Division
Timing:	2018
Approval:	None
Funding:	Not Required

Goal: Identify where necessary and appropriate improvements required to facilitate additional parking, including 24-hour access, disabled and delivery / courier parking opportunities.

Objective A2

Assemble baseline information to establish square footage of leasable space in buildings; vacant property index; property assessment records; residential units and unit mix, traffic and pedestrian counts, etc.

Lead: Planning Division
Partners: Realty Firms, Downtown Landowners
Timing: 2018 and on-going
Approval: None
Funding: Not Required

Goal: Data generated would assist in attracting investment / re-investment. Quarterly trends monitored and used for marketing purposes and any future planning initiatives.

Objective A3

Review existing wayfinding signage and destination signage in the Downtown and on approach routes into the Downtown.

Lead: Public Works
Partners: Merchants and business owners, EDAC, Heritage and Trails Committee
Timing: 2019
Approval: 2019 Budget – Council
Funding: To Be Determined

Goal: Identify opportunities to improve wayfinding signage and destination signage in the Downtown and on the approach routes into the Downtown.

Objective A4

Conduct periodic customer surveys to determine customer profiles to assist with establishing new markets and identifying areas for improvement.

Lead: Planning Division
Partners: EDAC, Merchants & Business Owners
Timing: 2018 and on-going
Approval: None
Funding: Not Required

Goal: To develop proactive marketing opportunities and identify / confirm gaps in the range of services or products available in the Downtown.

B. Promotion and Marketing of Downtown Ayr

A key deliverable to revitalize the Downtown is to encourage people to visit, shop and dine on a frequent basis.

The objective should be to increase the patronage of the area and extend the time spent in the Downtown. A robust coordinated promotion and marketing for the Downtown will be a key component to the success of attracting visitors to the Downtown district.

Objective B1

Develop a dedicated page on the Township’s Website that identifies, markets and promotes Downtown Ayr as a destination.

Lead: Corporate Services
Partners: EDAC, merchants and business owners, Heritage
Timing: 2018 and on-going
Approval: None
Funding: Already Funded

Goal: By creating a dedicate page, Downtown Ayr will create an online presence for potential visitors and businesses and highlight features of the area.

Objective B2

Develop a social media presence that highlights activities and events occurring in the Downtown for programs or services affiliated with the Municipality.

Lead: Recreation Division
Partners: EDAC, Heritage, Trails, Community Groups, business owners and merchants
Timing: 2018 and on-going
Approval: None
Funding: None

Goal: Social media presence will give Downtown Ayr an online voice to promote activities and encourage patrons, visitors and the community-at-large to come Downtown.

Objective B3

Develop a social media presence through Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc that is a designated feed on activities, sales, business happenings, etc occurring in the Downtown to advise patrons and visitors of what the businesses are doing or hosting.

Lead: Merchants and Business Owners
Partners: EDAC
Timing: 2018 and on-going
Approval: None
Funding: None

Goal: Social media presence will give Downtown Ayr an online voice to promote activities and encourage patrons, visitors and the community-at-large to come Downtown

Objective B4

Investigate opportunities for additional promotion through downtown newsletters, QR Codes, Apps, promotional subscriptions or inserts into brochures issued by local homebuilders, realtors, welcome wagon, etc.

Lead: Merchants and Business Owners
Partners: Local Media Outlets, Realtors, Homebuilders and similar ventures
Timing: 2019 and on-going
Approval: None
Funding: To be Determined

Goal: A broad spectrum of mediums to advertise and promote the Downtown as a destination will ensure that the patrons and visitors will be made aware of the on-goings of Downtown Ayr.

Objective B5

Explore the feasibility of cross-marketing the Downtown and its various retail stores, professional services, restaurants, etc through a pooled promotion and advertising campaign.

Lead: Merchants and Business Owners
Partners: Local Media Outlets
Timing: 2019 and on-going
Approval: None
Funding: To be Determined

Goal: By getting business owners and merchants to talk to each other, a business association can be established, cross-selling opportunities can be created that encourages visitors to spend more time Downtown.

Objective B6

Explore partnership opportunities with the eco-tourism and agri-business sectors to cross-market and link Downtown Ayr to these other business ventures.

Lead: Merchants and Business Owners
Partners: Local Media Outlets, Waterloo Region Tourism & Marketing Corp.,
Heritage, Trails
Timing: 2019 and on-going
Approval: None
Funding: To be Determined

Goal: Partnering with events across the Township, the Downtown has an opportunity to leverage exposure and add capacity to these day trip activities.

Objective B7

In partnership with the North Dumfries Heritage Advisory Committee, establish a historic walking tour(s) for properties and buildings in and around the Downtown. The tour(s) could be in the form of a guided tour (such as Jane’s Walk, Culture Days, etc) or self-guided tours with brochures or downloaded apps.

Lead: North Dumfries Heritage Advisory Committee
Partners: EDAC, Local Media Outlets, Waterloo Region Tourism & Marketing Corp.
Timing: 2019 and on-going
Approval: None
Funding: To be Determined

Goal: Establishing heritage and cultural events and activities will create awareness about Ayr’s historical features and encourage visitors and the community to reconnect with the past.

Objective B8

Explore the feasibility of establishing a local shopping loyalty campaign.

Lead:	Merchants and Business Owners
Partners:	To be Determined
Timing:	2020 and on-going
Approval:	None
Funding:	To be Determined

Goal: To develop and foster repeat customers to local businesses.

Objective B9

Develop and establish distinctive promotional signage on the approaches to Ayr and within the Downtown which reinforces a consistent theme and provides wayfinding / messaging opportunities.

Lead:	EDAC
Partners:	Merchants and Business Owners, Council, Heritage, Trails, Community Organizations
Timing:	2019 and on-going
Approval:	Council
Funding:	To be Determined

Goal: Establishment of distinctive signage that will unify the branding of Ayr.

C. New Investment & Catalyst for Renewal

The Downtown should have the primary focus of serving the day-to-day retail and professional service needs of the community, while simultaneously broadening the opportunities of providing complementary services and facilities that attract visitors to the Downtown

Residential development, in the form of intensification projects in the Downtown and sited in strategic locations at the edge of the Downtown should be promoted so as to establish this district as part of a larger neighbourhood.

Objective C1

In consultation with the Grand River Conservation Authority (GRCA), the Township should determine development and redevelopment standards as it relates to

renovations, additions and new construction applicable to the flood fringe areas of the Nith River.

Lead: Planning Division
Partners: Property Owners, EDAC, Council, GRCA
Timing: 2018 / 2019
Approval: Council
Funding: To be Determined

Goal: To develop, where possible, relaxed zone standards and regulations within the flood fringe areas through a two zone context, and, to clarify and confirm regulations governing existing buildings within the flood zone.

Objective C2

The Township should update the Zone classifications and standards to regulate land use activity and the massing of buildings within the Downtown. Specific consideration should be given to parking standards, promoting mixed use buildings, identifying single purpose buildings, and, the establishment of professional services on the ground floor along Stanley Street and portions of Northumberland Street.

Lead: Planning Division
Partners: Merchants and Business Owners, EDAC, Council, Community-at-large
Timing: 2018 / 2019
Approval: Council
Funding: To be Determined

Goal: To modernize the Zone provisions in the Downtown so that they are not a barrier to development, and, to introduce a hierarchy of zone classifications that respond to strategic properties within the Downtown.

Objective C3

The Township should assess land use activities at the edges and approach to the Downtown. Specific consideration should be given to medium density residential, mixed use, and, "boutique" office type activities that complement the planned function of the Downtown.

Lead: Planning Division
Partners: Heritage Advisory Committee, EDAC, Council, Community-at-large
Timing: 2019
Approval: Council
Funding: None

Goal: To modernize the Township’s Zoning By-law and to reinforce uses that will support and complement the Downtown. Provide for a transition between the Downtown and the long established / stable residential neighbourhoods.

Objective C4

The Township should provide “concierge services” to assist building owners when undertaking renovations in the older building stock of the Downtown

Lead: Building Division
Partners: Grand River Accessibility Advisory Cmttee, Fire Dept., Building Owners, EDAC
Timing: 2018
Approval: None
Funding: None

Goal: This service will assist new business owners and merchants in understanding the transitional requirements of the *Ontario Building Code*. By assisting existing and potential businesses, it will demystify the approvals process and create more opportunities to revitalize the area.

Objective C5

The Township should provide education and outreach to building owners, merchants and business owners to identify their obligations under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* and to advise of grant opportunities, etc designed to establish barrier free accessible options for existing buildings.

Lead: Clerks Division
Partners: Grand River Accessibility Advisory Cmttee, Merchants, Business Owners, Building Owners, EDAC
Timing: 2018
Approval: None
Funding: None

Goal: By reaching out to building owners, Downtown becomes more accessible to more visitors.

Objective C6

The Township should explore the feasibility of establishing a Community Improvement Plan for the Downtown Core Area to establish a Grant program or other financial incentives for building, signage or façade rehabilitation.

Lead: Planning Division
Partners: EDAC, Council, public-at-large, North Dumfries Heritage Advisory Cmtte
Timing: 2020
Approval: Council
Funding: To be Determined

Goal: This plan will help offset the costs or provide Grants for building owners to make improvements. This assistance will help with the establishment of an overall uniform streetscape in the Downtown

Objective C7

The Township should prepare urban design guidelines to assist in establishing parameters and objectives in support of building façade projects and/or new development and intensification projects.

Lead: Planning Division
Partners: EDAC, Council, North Dumfries Heritage Advisory Committee, Community-at-Large, Property Owners
Timing: 2020
Approval: Council
Funding: To be Determined

Goal: This plan will provide guidance and assist owners and investors in making improvements or advancing redevelopment proposals. The intent is to assist in developing an overall uniform streetscape in the Downtown

D. Improving the Downtown Physical Environment – Pedestrian First Scale of Development

The built environment, in terms of height, massing, ‘public spaces’ and orientation to the Street, all assist in promoting a pedestrian friendly scale of development

Objective D1

Centennial Park and its immediate environs represent a focal public space in the Downtown both as a view corridor and as a meeting place. The Township should provide the appropriate pedestrian scale lighting and four seasons maintenance along the walkway network north of Watson Pond, linking Northumberland Street to the Gibson Street Municipal Parking Lot, and, across the pedestrian bridge through to Stanley Street. Additional electrical outlets to support lit displays and activities should be incorporated into the light standards.

Lead: Recreation Division
Partners: Council
Timing: 2018
Approval: 2018 Budget - Council
Funding: \$71,745

Goal: By improving the park, the Downtown will benefit from it's proximity and opportunity for visitors to the park, spending more time Downtown.

Objective D2

Explore the potential of establishing a Heritage Conservation District for the Downtown Core under the authority of the *Ontario Heritage Act*.

Lead: North Dumfries Heritage Advisory Committee
Partners: Downtown Landowners, Planning Division, Public, EDAC, Council
Timing: Underway
Approval: 2017 / 18 Budget – Council [Initial Phase]
Funding: \$30,000

Goal: By creating a heritage district, awareness of Downtown Ayr and its historical significance is heightened and can be showcased as a reason for visitors to come to Ayr. The Heritage District designation will help to preserve the restored buildings already in the downtown and it may also assist with access to funding for building owners wishing to restore the heritage features of their properties.

Objective D3

Restore the exterior of the Ice House, which is a significant heritage asset designated under Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act*. Explore adaptive re-use of the building's interior such as a small heritage museum and / or eco-tourism display.

Lead: North Dumfries Heritage Advisory Committee,
Partners: Public, GRCA, Building Division, Council, Friends of the Ice House
Timing: 2019 and Beyond
Approval: 2019 Budget - Council
Funding: \$15,000 [Engineering Assessment]

Goal: Restoring the Ice House will enhance the ambiance of the downtown area. The Ice House can become Ayr's signature heritage piece. By setting an example, the Township will encourage other downtown property owners to restore their buildings.

Objective D4

In partnership with the Region of Waterloo, advance the design and construction of an urban plaza at the intersection of Stanley and Northumberland Streets. This proposed plaza should be respectful of and celebrate the adjacent Cenotaph.

Lead: Planning Division
Partners: Region of Waterloo, Community-at-Large, Council, EDAC, Merchants & business owners, property owners, Heritage Advisory Committee
Timing: 2017 Design
2018/19 Construction
Approval: Council and Regional Council
Funding: 2017 Budget Design \$ 24,000
Construction \$185,000

Goal: An urban plaza will create open space in the Downtown and reinforce the pedestrian scale of activity.

Objective D5

In partnership with the Ayr Garden Club, develop and implement a program to provide four seasons landscaping, baskets, banners, displays, etc along the Stanley Street, Northumberland Street, Gibson Street and Swan Street corridors in the Downtown Area.

Lead: Recreation Division
Partners: Ayr Garden Club, Region of Waterloo, Community-at-Large, Council,
Timing: 2018 / 19
Approval: Council
Funding: To be Determined

Goal: Year round landscaping will help to beautify the Downtown and encourage visitors. The program will reinforce the pedestrian scale of activity.

Objective D6

The Township should assess the redevelopment opportunities for 24 / 26 Northumberland Street, including the potential of a piered structure boardwalk.

Lead: Recreation Division
Partners: Grand River Conservation Authority, Community-at-Large, Council, EDAC, Heritage and Trails Advisory Committees
Timing: 2018 / 19
Approval: Council and Grand River Conservation Authority
Funding: To be Determined

Goal: Accessibility to different areas of the Downtown are important and walking paths provide visitors with easy access to unique features. Reinforces the pedestrian scale of scale of activity.

Objective D7

Advance the construction of integrated trail network in and around the Downtown which links the residential neighbourhoods to the East, West, South and North. This network would include both on and off road linear systems.

Lead: Recreation Division
Partners: Grand River Conservation Authority, Community-at-Large, Council, Region of Waterloo, Public Works, Trails & Cycling Committee
Timing: 2018 to 2021
Approval: Council
Funding: To be Determined

Goal: The network will provide accessibility to different users and visitors to Downtown. Different forms of access allow for a greater variety of visitors.

Objective D8

The Township should assess the opportunities to redevelop Tannery Street and the Lawn Bowling Club into a new public green space in a manner and fashion to complement the potential of the Ayr Ice House.

Lead: Planning Division
Partners: Grand River Conservation Authority, Community-at-Large, Council, Heritage, Trails, Friends of the Ice House
Timing: 2020 / 21
Approval: Council and Grand River Conservation Authority
Funding: To be Determined

Goal: This precinct should be redeveloped as a focal community destination in the Downtown, adjacent the Nith River. This new development would link Jedburgh Pond, “Ice House Park, Centennial Park, Watson's Pond and the Nith River into one continuous public space enhancing Ayr's small town charm and offering river access to the Core Area. Opportunities exist to partner with the GRCA in rehabilitating the river bank to restore its natural beauty and demonstrate the Township's commitment to responsible river stewardship and clean water.