



# River District

## Agenda

### River District Board of Management

January 14, 2026, 5:30 p.m.

City Hall - 808 2nd Avenue East - Council Chambers

The public can attend meetings in person. Meetings will be livestreamed on the City's Council and Committees webpage. If there are technical issues with the livestream that cannot be fixed within 15 minutes, the meeting will continue, and a recording will be available later on the webpage or by contacting the City Clerk. People who cannot attend the meeting in person for Public Forum should send their comments to the Recording Secretary one business day before the meeting. These comments will be shared with members and included in the updated agenda.

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## **9. MATTERS POSTPONED**

There are no matters postponed.

## **10. MOTIONS FOR WHICH NOTICE WAS PREVIOUSLY GIVEN**

There are no motions for which notice was previously given.

## **11. CORRESPONDENCE PROVIDED FOR INFORMATION**

11.a Final approvals issued for the following Business Licences:

- Owen Sound Taxi, a taxi business located at 945 3rd Avenue East, Unit 18A
- Horizon Therapy Centre, a registered massage therapist has relocated to 954 1st Avenue West, Unit 2

## **12. DISCUSSION OF ADDITIONAL BUSINESS**

## **13. NOTICES OF MOTION**

## **14. ADJOURNMENT**



## **Minutes**

### **River District Board of Management**

**November 26, 2025, 5:30 p.m.**

**City Hall - 808 2nd Avenue East - Council Chambers**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Chair Dave Parsons  
Vice Chair Richard Thomas  
Councillor Travis Dodd  
Member Tim Dwyer  
Member Kathy Hannen  
Member Olivia Legate  
Member Adrienne Robinson  
Member Jen Smith  
Member Winnifred Walcott (via video)

**STAFF PRESENT:** Tim Simmonds, City Manager  
Kate Allan, Director of Corporate Services  
Pam Coulter, Director of Community Services  
Sergeant Joshua Gurney, Owen Sound Police Service  
Viveca Gravel, River District Coordinator  
Staci Landry, Deputy Clerk

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#### **1. CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Parsons called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. All Board members and staff listed above were present except for Member Walcott and the Owen Sound Police Service Sergeant.

#### **2. CALL FOR ADDITIONAL BUSINESS**

2.a River District Coordinator Re: River District Membership Celebration and Neighbourhood Response Team

2.b Vice Chair Thomas Re: Artists' Alley Lighting Project

The Owen Sound Police Service Sergeant joined the meeting.

### 3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 3.a Vice Chair Thomas - Item 6.a - Deputation from Maryann Thomas Re: River District Concerns

Vice Chair Thomas declared a conflict of interest with Item 6.a due to his business relationship with the presenter.

### 4. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

- 4.a Minutes of the River District Board of Management meeting held on September 10, 2025

RD-251112-001

Moved by Member Hannen

**"THAT the minutes of the River District Board of Management meeting held on September 10, 2025 be approved as printed."**

Carried.

### 5. PUBLIC MEETINGS

- 5.a 2026 Budget

Chair Parsons declared the Public Meeting open at 5:32 p.m.

The Deputy Clerk explained that notice of the public meeting was circulated to all River District members, posted on the River District website, and posted on the City's website on November 10, 2025. No comments were received from the public and no individuals registered to attend the meeting electronically. The Deputy Clerk encouraged those present for the public meeting to sign the sign-in sheet located on the table outside of Council Chambers.

The Deputy Clerk advised that personal information is collected under the authority of the *Municipal Act, 2001*, and that the information collected will be used to complete the budget process. Questions about this collection should be addressed to the Deputy Clerk.

Member Walcott joined the meeting.

The Director of Corporate Services provided a presentation on the proposed 2026 River District budget. Ms. Allan noted that since the last Board meeting, the levy increase has decreased from 3.25% to 2.5% due to the removal of the \$2,000 donation to the Owen Sound Police Service Citizens on Patrol volunteer unit under the Security budget line, as this unit was retired on November 18, 2025. Ms. Allan advised that the final budget, subject to input, will reflect the 2.5% increase when it is brought forward to the Board for approval at its meeting on January 14, 2026.

Chair Parsons invited members of the public to ask questions or provide comments on the proposed 2026 River District budget. No members of the public came to the podium to speak in support of or in opposition to the proposed budget.

Chair Parsons noted that a staff report will be brought forward to the next Board meeting on January 14, 2026, seeking approval of the budget.

Chair Parsons declared the Public Meeting closed at 5:37 p.m.

Having declared a conflict of interest with Item 6.a, Vice Chair Thomas left the Council Chambers.

## **6. DEPUTATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS**

### **6.a Deputation from Maryann Thomas Re: River District Concerns**

Maryann Thomas brought forward two proposals for the Board's consideration:

1. Re-establish the River District Board of Management as the independent, self-funded organization it is mandated to be, with its own dedicated location, staffing, and a Board of Management composed of Directors who represent, and work on behalf of, its members.
2. Discontinue the existing agreement with the City under which the River District pays for complimentary parking within the River District and redirect the funds toward addressing more immediate challenges within the River District.

Ms. Thomas shared several concerns regarding the River District, including issues related to the River District Constitution, Board of Management composition, commercial vacancy rates, the outstanding replacement of the kiosk in the 800 block of 2nd Avenue East, seasonal banners along 2nd Avenue East, recycling collection for non-eligible sources, the availability of public washrooms, and overall cleanliness. Ms. Thomas noted that the challenges within the River District are both real and increasing and stressed the importance of members working together to realize the future to which they have devoted their time and money.

The River District Coordinator noted that the commercial vacancy rate should reflect all streets within the River District. Ms. Gravel added that staff continue to make every effort to bring new businesses into the River District.

The Director of Community Services advised that staff could provide a written response to Ms. Thomas respecting her concerns. Ms. Coulter noted that the River District Constitution was prepared in accordance with the *Municipal Act* and that Board membership is defined through legislative requirements. With respect to the kiosk, Ms. Coulter reported that various options have been presented and staff are working toward identifying the preferred option. Ms. Coulter indicated that the City funded new banners in 2025, which were consistent with those used

in previous years, and that the historic banners featuring local heroes and heritage buildings were also installed. Ms. Coulter added that some of these banners require replacement and that Ms. Gravel is working on the designs. With respect to recycling, Ms. Coulter noted that Council approved a three-month extension, allowing time for staff and the Board to review alternative options for the River District. Ms. Coulter advised that information on public washrooms within the River District is included in the City Manager's report attached to the agenda.

Vice Chair Thomas returned to his chair.

6.b Deputation from Robyn Strangway-Calder, Senior Manager of MNP Re: 2024 Year-End Audit

Robyn Strangway-Calder, Senior Manager of MNP provided an overview of the draft 2024 audited financial statements and audit letter, noting that the Owen Sound River District received a clean audit opinion with no noted concerns

In response to a question from the Board, Ms. Strangway-Calder noted that the Statement of Financial Position shows \$7,562 in gift certificates payable stemming from the legacy program. Ms. Strangway-Calder recommended that the Board adopt a policy allowing a portion of these funds to be recognized as income. Under this approach, any amount corresponding to certificates redeemed within the past five years would remain recorded as payable, in case future redemptions occur. If no certificates have been redeemed within the past five years, the Board and Treasurer could determine an appropriate amount to transfer into income while retaining a contingency amount to cover the unlikely event that any legacy gift certificates are later redeemed. Ms. Strangway-Calder explained that under public sector accounting standards (under which the Board's statements are audited), there is no barrier to closing the account and transferring the funds into income.

The Director of Corporate Services added that the gift certificates were originally issued as cheques drawn on the old bank account. Closing that account would ensure that no one could cash those certificates, as the cheques would no longer be able to be deposited, allowing the Board to address any issues if they arise. Ms. Allan noted that while revenue recognition is handled through the financial statements, there is also an operational consideration: the Board does not need to maintain the old bank account. There is no disadvantage to closing it and transferring the funds into the operating account. Ms. Allan advised that the policy she could bring forward would outline how revenue recognition related to these legacy gift certificates should be managed in the financial statements.

RD-251126-002

Moved by Member Hannen

**"THAT in consideration of the deputation from Robyn Strangway-Calder, Senior Manager of MNP provided on November 26, 2025, the River District Board of Management directs:**

- 1. The Board Treasurer to transfer the \$7,562 in the gift certificate account to the operating account;**
- 2. The Board Treasurer to close the gift certificate account; and**
- 3. Staff to bring forward a policy respecting revenue recognition to a future River District Board of Management meeting for the Board's consideration."**

Carried.

RD-251126-003

Moved by Vice Chair Thomas

**"THAT in consideration of the deputation from Robyn Strangway-Calder, Senior Manager of MNP provided on November 26, 2025, the River District Board of Management approves the 2024 financial statements as presented."**

Carried.

The Director of Corporate Services left the meeting.

## **7. PUBLIC FORUM**

### **7.a Leigh Greaves, Owen Sound resident**

Ms. Greaves provided comments respecting the draft 2026 budget and suggested that the Board consider increasing funding for security, street cleaning, and possibly a recycling program for members with the recent change in provincial legislation.

The Director of Community Services advised that staff presented a report to the Service Review Implementation Ad Hoc Committee in November 2025 respecting service levels in the River District and she will share this information with Ms. Greaves.

Councillor Dodd noted that Council approved a recommendation to send a letter to MPP Paul Vickers respecting recycling collection for non-profit organizations.

## **8. CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED FOR WHICH DIRECTION IS REQUIRED**

There were no correspondence items presented for consideration.

## 9. REPORTS OF CITY STAFF

### 9.a Verbal Report from the Owen Sound Police Service Re: Police Update

Sergeant Gurney reported that the Owen Sound Police Service (OSPS) foot patrol hours in the River District totaled 121 hours in September (including bike patrol and CORE member hours), and 87 hours in October. Sergeant Gurney explained that the October total was lower because members were attending mental health crisis response training on a two-week rotation.

Sergeant Gurney provided an update on the dissolution of the Citizens on Patrol volunteer unit. The new *Community Safety and Policing Act* introduced additional requirements, such as enhanced training standards, liability insurance, and WSIB coverage, that made it difficult for the OSPS to continue operating the program. Sergeant Gurney noted that the matter was brought to the Citizens on Patrol members for a vote, and they chose to formally retire the unit. Sergeant Gurney also reported that seven new auxiliary police constables have recently graduated from an eight-week training program and are now active in the community. This past weekend, they participated in a food drive at Metro, successfully raising several thousand dollars.

Sergeant Gurney advised that Community Oriented Response Unit (CORE) member, Constable Steve Beaney has recently been promoted to Detective. His CORE role is being assumed by Constable James Giles, who has been visiting local businesses to introduce himself. Constable Giles can be reached at extension 1185.

In response to a question from the Board, Sergeant Gurney explained that CORE is primarily based in the downtown core and often works alongside the Mobile Crisis Response Unit. Their focus is on engaging with individuals to ensure they are connected with appropriate supports, including housing, mental health services, and addictions services. CORE also maintains regular contact with business owners, listening to concerns and addressing issues as they arise.

RD-251112-004

Moved by Councillor Dodd

**"THAT in consideration of the Verbal Report provided November 26, 2025, from Sergeant Josh Gurney respecting a Police Update, the River District Board of Management receives the Verbal Report for information purposes."**

Carried.

### 9.b Report CS-25-095 from the Director of Community Services Re: Approach and Methodology to Update the River District Action Plan

The Director of Community Services provided an overview of the report.



RD-251126-005

Moved by Member Dwyer

**"THAT in consideration of Staff Report CS-25-095 respecting the Approach and Methodology to Update the River District Action Plan, the River District Board of Management supports moving forward with the approach and methodology as outlined in the report."**

Carried.

- 9.c Report CS-25-120 from the River District Coordinator Re: 2025 River District Block Captain Reorganization

The River District Coordinator provided an overview of the report and requested that members review the printed map and make any necessary changes.

Board members left their seats to review the map and discuss potential realignments of the Block Captain boundaries.

The Owen Sound Police Service Sergeant left the meeting.

RD-251126-006

Moved by Vice Chair Thomas

**"THAT in consideration of Staff Report CS-25-120 respecting 2025 River District Block Captain Reorganization, the River District Board of Management directs staff to:**

- 1. Update the River District Block Captain map as discussed in the meeting; and**
- 2. Post the updated River District Block Captain map on the River District website."**

Carried.

- 9.d Verbal Report from the Board Treasurer Re: Board Finances

The Board Treasurer advised that the total balance of all accounts is \$171,016.01 and that \$750 in interest has been earned in the past three months. There is \$8,500 in the operating account and \$155,500 in the trust savings account.

RD-251112-007

Moved by Member Hannen

**"THAT in consideration of the Verbal Report provided November 26, 2025, from the Board Treasurer respecting Board Finances, the River District Board of Management receives the Verbal Report for information purposes."**

Carried.

**10. MATTERS POSTPONED**

There were no matters postponed.

**11. MOTIONS FOR WHICH NOTICE WAS PREVIOUSLY GIVEN**

There were no motions for which notice was previously given.

**12. CORRESPONDENCE PROVIDED FOR INFORMATION**

- 12.a Report CM-25-032 from the City Manager Re: Fostering a Vibrant River District - Report II

The City Manager provided an overview of the report and noted that the City will fund the additional cost of the River District Coordinator's wage from the general tax levy to support her role as the dedicated River District Project Lead. Mr. Simmonds added that this project-lead responsibility will not impact any of Ms. Gravel's day-to-day work performed for the Board.

- 12.b Report CM-25-033 from the City Manager Re: River District Public Washroom Infrastructure and Operational Assessment

The City Manager provided an overview of the report.

RD-251126-008

Moved by Member Hannen

**"THAT in consideration of correspondence provided for information purposes listed on the November 26, 2025 River District Board of Management (RDBM) agenda, the RDBM receives items 12.a and 12.b for information purposes."**

Carried.

- 12.c Correspondence from Lynda Belanger, Poppy Chair 2025, Royal Canadian Legion Branch 6 Owen Sound Re: Poppy Fund

RD-251126-009

Moved by Member Hannen

**"THAT in consideration of correspondence provided for information purposes listed on the November 26, 2025 River District Board of Management (RDBM) agenda, the RDBM directs staff to issue a \$60 donation to the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 6 Owen Sound Poppy Fund."**

Carried.

12.d Final approvals issued for the following Business Licences:

- Lachile Liquidation and Afro Caribbean Groceries, a retail liquidation and Afro Caribbean grocery store located at 1006 2nd Avenue East
- Precision Tailoring & Alterations, a tailoring and alterations business located at 1071 2nd Avenue East
- River Tech Source, a cell phone and computer accessories and repair shop located at 149 8th Street East
- Crowns and Fades by Jamie Wilder, a hair salon has relocated to 1045 2nd Avenue East

RD-251112-010

Moved by Councillor Dodd

**"THAT in consideration of correspondence provided for information purposes listed on the November 26, 2025 River District Board of Management (RDBM) agenda, the RDBM receives item 12.d for information purposes."**

Carried.

**13. DISCUSSION OF ADDITIONAL BUSINESS**

13.a River District Membership Celebration and Neighbourhood Response Team

The River District Coordinator advised that staff and Block Captains have delivered invitations to businesses for the Membership Celebration on Tuesday, December 2 at the Owen Sound Farmers' Market and members are requested to RSVP for this event.

Ms. Gravel reported that staff have delivered a Neighbourhood Response Team rack card to businesses throughout the River District. Businesses are encouraged to contact the team for non-emergent issues requiring support. Ms. Gravel noted that the team documents every incident and City staff can use this information to guide their response. Ms. Gravel added that feedback from businesses has been positive so far.

13.b Artists' Alley Lighting Project

Vice Chair Thomas thanked the River District Coordinator for completing the lighting project in Artists' Alley, noting that the new lights look excellent and have made the area much brighter and more pleasant to walk through after dark. Member Smith added that she has also received several positive comments about the improved lighting.

**14. NOTICES OF MOTION**

There were no notices of motion.

**15. ADJOURNMENT**

The business contained on the agenda having been completed, Chair Parsons adjourned the meeting at 7:00 p.m.



## Staff Report

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**Report To:** River District Board of Management  
**Report From:** Kate Allan, Director of Corporate Services  
**Meeting Date:** January 14, 2026  
**Report Code:** CR-26-003  
**Subject:** 2026 River District Budget - Approval

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### Recommendations:

THAT in consideration of Staff Report CR-26-003 respecting the approval of the 2026 River District Budget, the River District Board of Management directs staff to send a memo to City Council requesting that the 2026 River District budget be approved with a 2.5% increase.

### Highlights:

- A public meeting was held at the River District Board of Management (RDBM) meeting on November 26, 2025 to receive input on the draft budget.
- The attached 2026 budget includes a 2.5% levy increase to members.
- The budget, as presented, continues to move forward with the implementation of the River District Action Plan, makes a contribution to the capital reserve, maintains complimentary business-sponsored parking, provides for a partnership with the City on beautification and maintenance, as well as promotion and experience development in the River District, and provides a sustainable long-term opportunity around the River District Coordinator role. The budget is sustainable and does not rely on the reserve for operating needs.

## **River District Plan Alignment:**

The 2026 budget supports the River District Action Plan in the areas of Branding, River District Management, River District Experience Development, as well as River District Promotion.

## **Previous Report/Authority:**

[Report CS-25-092 – Draft 2026 Budget for Board Review and Input](#)

[Draft Budget Presentation – November 26, 2025](#)

## **Background:**

Section 205 of the *Municipal Act, 2001* requires that a Business Improvement Area board of management prepare a proposed budget for each fiscal year and hold one or more meetings of the members of the improvement area for discussion of the proposed budget. The board of management shall submit the budget to Council for approval and Council may approve it in whole or in part but may not add expenditures to the budget.

On September 10, 2025, the draft budget was presented to the River District Board of Management (RDBM) for discussion. The RDBM directed staff to provide notice of a public meeting in November 2025 and include \$10,000 in the draft budget for special initiatives.

A public meeting was held on November 26, 2025.

This report is being presented to the RDBM on January 14, 2026, and the budget will be presented to City Council for approval at its meeting on January 26, 2026.

The draft budget presented to the RDBM on September 10, 2025 estimated a 3.25% levy increase. The final budget presented today has reduced that increase to 2.5% with the removal of the \$2,000 donation to the Owen Sound Police Service Citizens on Patrol volunteer unit, as this unit was retired on November 18, 2025.

## Analysis and Options:

The 2026 River District budget is attached.

Key items in the budget include:

- A 2.5% increase in the levy amounting to \$271,907.
- A continuation of the reduced cost of business-sponsored parking.
- Status quo in terms of revenue expected from the sharing of parking pass revenue with the City.
- Funding the River District Coordinator position.
- An allocation to events and promotions of \$31,300. The detailed allocation of this to various events and promotions is based on the direction from the Board that will be part of the January 14, 2026 report; however, this funding envelope is allocated to this use.
- Contribution to flowers, sidewalk maintenance, and street washing is increased by \$2,500 to \$10,000 to reflect the increase in costs.
- Includes a \$10,000 contribution to reserves. This would be added to the Board's existing reserve for use in a future special capital project or initiative.
- Expenses relating to the Board celebration event, education, and networking remain.
- 2026 is an election year. If there is the need for an election, the costs of the election would be taken from the reserve.
- The budget anticipates drawing down the reserve by \$10,000 to fund special initiatives in 2026 to be determined as the year progresses.
- The budget anticipates drawing down the reserve by an estimated \$5,000 in the event that a Board election is required in the fall.

The budget as presented includes levy to the membership of \$271,907. Based on an estimated 253 properties in the area, the average levy increase is \$2.50.

During the RDBM meeting on November 26, 2025, River District member, Leigh Greaves suggested that the Board consider increased funding for security, street cleaning, and a potential recycling program for members with the recent change in provincial legislation. Staff presented [Report CS-25-116](#) to the City's Service Review Implementation Ad Hoc Committee meeting on November 12, 2025 respecting service levels in the River District, which included information on street sweeping. Additionally, the Board has set aside \$10,000 from the reserve funds in 2026 for initiatives relating to

homelessness or other issues. City Council also recently approved a recommendation to send a letter to MPP Paul Vickers respecting the continuation of recycling collection for non-profit organizations.

## **Resource Alignment:**

### **Financial Resources**

There are no additional financial resources required as a result of approving the budget.

### **Human Resources**

The budget is informed by the service levels and staffing requirements that are set by the Board in the period preceding the budget development.

### **Time and Scheduling**

The budget applies to the 2026 fiscal year.

### **Technology and Infrastructure**

No additional or new technology or infrastructure is required as a result of approving the budget as presented.

## **Climate and Environmental Impacts:**

There are no anticipated climate or environmental impacts.

## **Communication and Engagement:**

This report has been posted to the City's website with the agenda in advance of the meeting.

Should the RDBM receive the budget, City staff will prepare a memo for the City Council meeting on January 26, 2026 requesting approval of the 2026 River District budget.

Should Council approve the budget, a notice will be sent to any River District members who provided comments or attended the public meeting.

## **Report Developed in Consultation With:**

Pam Coulter, Director of Community Services

Staci Landry, Deputy Clerk



**Attachments:**

2026 River District Budget

**Reviewed by:**

Tim Simmonds, City Manager

**Submission approved by:**

Tim Simmonds, City Manager

For more information on this report, please contact Kate Allan, Director of Corporate Services at [kallan@owensound.ca](mailto:kallan@owensound.ca) or 519-376-4440 ext. 1238.

| Owen Sound River District Board of Management 2026 DRAFT Budget |                                                |                   |                   |                 |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
|                                                                 |                                                |                   |                   |                 |
|                                                                 |                                                | Budget<br>2026    | Budget<br>2025    | Variance        |
| <b>Revenues</b>                                                 |                                                |                   |                   |                 |
|                                                                 | <b>Levy</b>                                    |                   |                   |                 |
|                                                                 | Levy to Members                                | 271,907.21        | \$ 265,275        | \$ 6,632        |
|                                                                 | Levy Adjustments                               | - 2,750.00        | -\$ 2,000         | -\$ 750         |
|                                                                 |                                                |                   |                   |                 |
|                                                                 | <b>Total Revenues</b>                          | <b>\$ 269,157</b> | <b>\$ 263,275</b> | <b>\$ 5,882</b> |
|                                                                 |                                                |                   |                   |                 |
| <b>Expenses</b>                                                 |                                                |                   |                   |                 |
|                                                                 | <b>Community Development Coordinator</b>       |                   |                   | \$ -            |
|                                                                 | Wages                                          | 74,515            | 70,205            | \$ 4,310        |
|                                                                 | Payroll Benefits and Overhead                  | 23,845            | 23,870            | -\$ 25          |
|                                                                 | Phone Allowance                                | 360               |                   | \$ 360          |
|                                                                 |                                                |                   |                   |                 |
|                                                                 | <b>Total Marketing</b>                         | <b>\$ 98,720</b>  | <b>\$ 94,075</b>  | <b>\$ 4,645</b> |
|                                                                 |                                                |                   |                   |                 |
|                                                                 | <b>Events</b>                                  |                   |                   |                 |
|                                                                 | Hottest Street Sale (net)                      |                   | \$ 6,000          | -\$ 6,000       |
|                                                                 | Christmas Promotions                           |                   | \$ 8,000          | -\$ 8,000       |
|                                                                 | Events                                         | \$ 31,300         | \$ 17,300         | \$ 14,000       |
|                                                                 |                                                |                   |                   |                 |
|                                                                 | <b>Total Events</b>                            | <b>\$ 31,300</b>  | <b>\$ 31,300</b>  | <b>\$ -</b>     |
|                                                                 |                                                |                   |                   |                 |
|                                                                 | <b>Beautification &amp; Maintenance</b>        |                   |                   |                 |
|                                                                 | Flora                                          | \$ 10,000         | \$ 7,500          | \$ 2,500        |
|                                                                 | Sidewalk Cleaning & Maintenance                | \$ 5,000          | \$ 5,000          | \$ -            |
|                                                                 | Sidewalk Washing                               | \$ 3,000          | \$ 3,000          | \$ -            |
|                                                                 | Streetscape Improvement Design                 |                   |                   | \$ -            |
|                                                                 | <b>Contribution to Future Reserve</b>          | <b>\$ 10,000</b>  | <b>\$ 10,000</b>  | <b>\$ -</b>     |
|                                                                 |                                                |                   |                   |                 |
|                                                                 | <b>Total Beautificatioin &amp; Maintenance</b> | <b>\$ 28,000</b>  | <b>\$ 25,500</b>  | <b>\$ 2,500</b> |

|                              |                                         |                   |                   |                 |  |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------|--|
| <b>Expenses Continued...</b> |                                         |                   |                   |                 |  |
|                              | <b>Administration</b>                   |                   |                   |                 |  |
|                              | Membership Fees                         | \$ 600            | \$ 600            | \$ -            |  |
|                              | Insurance                               | \$ 2,837          | \$ 2,100          | \$ 737          |  |
|                              | Audit                                   | \$ 4,000          | \$ 4,000          | \$ -            |  |
|                              | Election Contract                       | \$ -              |                   | \$ -            |  |
|                              |                                         |                   |                   |                 |  |
|                              | <b>Total Administration</b>             | <b>\$ 7,437</b>   | <b>\$ 6,700</b>   | <b>\$ 737</b>   |  |
|                              |                                         |                   |                   |                 |  |
|                              | <b>Complimentary Parking</b>            |                   |                   |                 |  |
|                              | Contribution to City                    | \$ 120,000        | \$ 120,000        | \$ -            |  |
|                              | DIA 50 % Share of Passes                | -\$ 24,000        | -\$ 24,000        | \$ -            |  |
|                              |                                         |                   |                   |                 |  |
|                              | <b>Total Complimentary Parking</b>      | <b>\$ 96,000</b>  | <b>\$ 96,000</b>  | <b>\$ -</b>     |  |
|                              |                                         |                   |                   |                 |  |
|                              | <b>Security</b>                         |                   |                   |                 |  |
|                              | Citizen on Patrol Donation              | -                 | \$ 2,000          | -\$ 2,000       |  |
|                              |                                         |                   |                   |                 |  |
|                              | <b>Board Expenses</b>                   |                   |                   |                 |  |
|                              | Celebration                             | \$ 5,000          | \$ 5,000          | \$ -            |  |
|                              | Service Recognition                     | \$ 200            | \$ 200            | \$ -            |  |
|                              | Education - Board                       | \$ 2,000          | \$ 2,000          | \$ -            |  |
|                              | Networking - Board                      | \$ 500            | \$ 500            | \$ -            |  |
|                              | Community Service Fund                  |                   |                   |                 |  |
|                              |                                         |                   |                   |                 |  |
|                              | <b>Total Board Expenses</b>             | <b>\$ 7,700</b>   | <b>\$ 7,700</b>   | <b>\$ -</b>     |  |
|                              |                                         |                   |                   |                 |  |
|                              | <b>Total Expenses</b>                   | <b>\$ 269,157</b> | <b>\$ 263,275</b> | <b>\$ 5,882</b> |  |
|                              |                                         |                   |                   |                 |  |
|                              |                                         |                   |                   |                 |  |
|                              | <b>To Reserves (Draw from Reserves)</b> | <b>-\$ 0</b>      | <b>-\$ 0</b>      | <b>-\$ 0</b>    |  |
|                              |                                         |                   |                   |                 |  |
|                              | <b>Estimated Opening Reserves</b>       | <b>\$ 153,079</b> | <b>\$ 168,079</b> |                 |  |
|                              | <b>River District Action Plan</b>       |                   | -\$ 10,000        |                 |  |
|                              | <b>River District Lighting</b>          |                   | -\$ 15,000        |                 |  |
|                              | <b>Less Election</b>                    | - 5,000           |                   |                 |  |
|                              | <b>Less Downtown Initiatives</b>        | - 10,000          |                   |                 |  |
|                              | <b>plus contribution for future</b>     | \$ 10,000         | \$ 10,000         |                 |  |
|                              | <b>Estimated Closing Reserves</b>       | <b>\$ 148,079</b> | <b>\$ 153,079</b> |                 |  |
|                              |                                         |                   |                   |                 |  |



## Staff Report

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**Report To:** River District Board of Management  
**Report From:** Viveca Gravel, River District Coordinator  
**Meeting Date:** January 14, 2026  
**Report Code:** CS-26-001  
**Subject:** 2025 Year End Events, Activations & Promotions Wrap Up

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### Recommendations:

THAT in consideration of Staff Report CS-26-001 respecting the 2025 Year End Events, Activations & Promotions Wrap Up, the River District Board of Management receives the report for information purposes.

### Highlights:

- 2025 Events and Activations leveraged strong partnerships with community groups, sponsors, and businesses to expand programming reach, generate significant social and digital engagement, and reduce direct River District costs.
- Total cost savings for 2025 are \$2,626.89.
- Staff executed a strategic, multi-layered promotions approach based on the River District Action Plan that generated strong digital performance, including high social reach and website click-throughs that directed users to River District businesses and events.
- Strengthened the River District Experience through a mix of signature events, grassroots activations, and business-led initiatives that encouraged repeat visitation and longer stays.

### River District Plan Alignment:

#### River District Experience Development

Strategic Objective: Create an engaging space.

Recommendation: Continue to invest in the animation and activation of the River District.

Tactic:

- a. Encourage animation of the River District;
- b. Encourage new and continued programming; and
- c. Encourage new activities and attractions to engage visitors and locals.

### **River District Promotion**

Strategic Objective: Attract people to the River District.

Recommendation: Follow a strategic, multi-layered, collaborative, and bold promotions plan for the River District.

Tactic:

- a. Encourage animation of the River District;
- b. Brand RDBM Social Media accounts for alignment with the River District look and feel;
- c. Regularly schedule social media posts;
- d. Digital advertising. Deliver digital ad campaign to local and nearby residents in the target market
- e. Leverage local social media influencers; and
- f. Claim the River District Google business and Trip Advisor page.

### **Previous Report/Authority:**

[CS-25-003](#) – 2025 Events, Activations and Promotions Plan

[River District Action Plan](#)

### **Background:**

In addition to the direction and action provided by the River District Action Plan, the joint operating agreement between the City and the River District Board of Management (RDBM) provides direction with respect to:

- Events & Activation
- Marketing & Promotion

Two of the four pillars in the River District Action Plan are River District Experience Development and River District Promotion.

Report CS-25-003 presented the plan for events and promotions in 2025. The report focused on providing new and innovative events and activations and continuing to provide successful events as outlined in the River District Action Plan. Staff have worked closely with community groups and stakeholders to strengthen relationships and create opportunities for collaboration, leveraging these partnerships to benefit the River District wherever possible.

The purpose of this report is to provide a wrap-up report, including financial performance, regarding River District Events, Activations and Promotions to the end of 2025.

## **Analysis and Options:**

### **Just Say Yes**

Date: Friday, February 14, 2025

Location: Owen Sound City Hall

This collaborative Valentine's Day wedding event between the City of Owen Sound and the River District continues to gain positive and widespread attention. Shannon Deckers, Re/Max Grey Bruce Realty, returned as title sponsor, allowing for additional funds for promotion and the purchase of event décor.

#### **Event Metrics:**

- Participating Couples – 12
- Social Reach – 40,895
- Clicks to website – 1,169

#### **Promotional Approach:**

- Social media
- Radio mentions and interviews
- Media Release

Impact: Just Say Yes is a fun, lighthearted event that promotes the River District as a destination to get married. Couples were treated to gifts by local businesses and offered discounted night stays at local hotels.

Budget: \$500.00

Sponsorship: \$500.00

Total Budget: \$1,000.00

River District Cost: \$462.31

Recommendation: The RDBM has pre-approved a \$500.00 budget for 2026 in advance. Bookings are now open for the 2026 event.

## **Best Pizza of the River District**

Date: March 2025

In 2025, the RDBM supported the plan to change Scones of the River District to River District's Best Pizza. This change allowed the excitement of the contest to keep momentum. Participating businesses submit their best slice or pie for review and then patrons are asked to try for themselves and vote for their favourite.

Event Metrics:

- Participating businesses – 7
- Social Reach – 10,968
- Link Clicks to Website – 829
- Votes – 579

Promotional Approach:

- Social media

Impact: This contest continues to be popular. It's been used as a great way to promote certain restaurants instead of merchandise-based shops.

Budget: \$500.00

River District Cost: \$491.09

Recommendation: Staff recommend that this be modified to be a more inclusive event celebrating food in the River District for 2026.

## **Wheel & Ride Safety Festival**

Date: Saturday, May 3, 2025

Location: 8th Street East, between 2nd and 3rd Avenues East

The established relationships with the Kiwanis Club of Owen Sound, the Optimist Club of Sydenham and District, Owen Sound and District Junior Optimists, Scenic Cycle, and Owen Sound Police Service have continued to facilitate a well-received, important event that provides refurbished bicycles to those in need, including helmets. This year, the Attack Mascot Cubby was on site and proved to be a huge success.

The Junior Optimists were awarded a Community Foundation Grant to purchase signage that will serve the community for years to come.

Event Metrics:

- Attendees – approximately 100
- Social Event Reach – 13,610
- Event Responses – 197
- Bikes given away – 55

Promotional Approach:

- Social media
- Radio mentions and interviews
- Hand delivery of invitations to targeted community groups
- Posters throughout the city and at schools and churches

Impact: This event continues to be a positive, inclusive philanthropic event that positions the River District as a family-friendly, safe environment. These bikes enable families to navigate the city more easily, creating opportunities for our community to work, shop, and explore.

River District Budget: \$400.00

Community Foundations Grant by Junior Optimists: \$700.00

Total Budget: \$1,100.00

River District Cost: \$398.33

Recommendation: Staff recommend that this event continue in 2026.

## **Pride Event**

Date: Saturday, June 21, 2025

Location: Entire River District Area

The Pride Event is organized by volunteers in the River District. Businesses were encouraged to put tables or activations along the sidewalk while 2nd Avenue East was closed for the Pride Parade, leveraging the closure to engage with the community.

Event Metrics:

- Attendance (approx. only) – 500 to 1,000
- Social Reach – 12,284
- Link clicks to River District Business Directory – 369



## Promotional Approach:

- Social media

Impact: The Pride Parade remains an important event. Click-throughs to the business directory were high, which is positive, and it presented the River District as a safe and inclusive space for everyone in the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. This year, a group including River District businesses came forward to host a block party following the parade. While the weather was very intense and kept some people away, it was a fun and inclusive event for individuals and families. Heartwood and the Rumpus Room, two River District businesses, acted as architects for the new event and did an exceptional job of putting it together. Staff served as the point person within City Hall to help navigate approvals for this first year event and ensure compliance with all regulations.

Because this day coincided with the Art Walk and Doors Open, the River District was packed throughout the day, despite the inclement weather.

Budget: \$200.00

River District Cost: \$191.83

Recommendation: Staff recommend that the RDBM continue to support this initiative and encourage other businesses to come forward to run more of these events.

## **Hottest Street Sale**

Date: July 12, 2025

Location: 2nd Avenue East, between 7th Street and 11th Street

The 2025 Hottest Street Sale was a successful event regardless of the extreme heat, although the heat and wind in the late afternoon did pose issues and this caused a decline in traffic about an hour earlier than in the past.

This event included 164 vendors. There was a stage situated at the 9th Street and 2nd Avenue East intersection hosted by Summerfolk and sponsored by Mix 106.5. The Community Stage run by the Owen Sound and District Chamber of Commerce was located on the front steps of City Hall, bringing families and onlookers great entertainment and drawing crowds. Once again, the 700 and 1000 block were activated to increase traffic to those blocks.

By leveraging community relationships, the River District was supported not only monetarily but with effort and commitment by groups to make the event a success.

Event Metrics:

- Attendance (approximate) – 4,000
- Participating Vendors – 164
- Vendor Spaces Used – 185
- Social Reach – 28,187
- Event Page Responses – 838

Promotional Approach:

- Social media
- Radio advertising mentions and interviews
- Poster distribution
- Active engagement with community groups

Impact: 2025 saw another great turnout of shoppers and vendors for this event regardless of extreme weather. This event continues to create a lot of buzz for the River District and is a long running signature event. Both the 700 and 1000 blocks continue to see positive growth in event visitors.

River District Budget: \$8,500.00

Vendor Fees: \$2,700.00

Subtotal Revenue/Budget: \$11,200.00

River District Cost: \$11,241.91

Recommendation: Staff recommend that the RDBM budget and plan for this event in 2026. Staff will continue to look for cost-saving options and make adaptations as necessary as costs rise.

## **Cars & Coffee & Concours d’Lemons**

Date: Saturday, September 13, 2025

Location: 2nd Avenue East between 7th and 10th Streets & 1st Avenue West between 8th and 9 Streets

Staff worked alongside the Cobble Beach Concours d’Elegance team to present the annual Cars & Coffee and Concours d’Lemons car shows in the River District along 2nd Avenue East and 1st Avenue West. The River District was a car lover's dream with cars and seminars throughout the day.

## Event Metrics:

- Attendance (approximate) – over 5,000
- Social Reach – 119,386
- Clicks – 3,024
- 175 Classic Cars + 60 Lemons

## Promotional Approach in partnership with the Cobble Beach Concours d'Elegance:

- Social media
- Radio advertisement mentions and interviews
- Direct contact with car clubs
- Hand distribution of registration cards to the community
- Print promotion

Impact: The events in partnership with Cobble Beach Concours d'Elegance continue to be a very impressive showcase of classic and wacky cars, drawing large numbers of people to the River District. Cobble Beach Concours d'Elegance remains a great partner and supporter of the River District. The entire Concours d'Elegance weekend has proven to be a strong economic and tourism driver and has exposed the shops and businesses in the River District to a new and expanded demographic. Anecdotally, a River District café was so excited and positive about the turnout and foot traffic to their business during the event.

Budget: \$1,500.00

River District Cost: \$1,496.18

Recommendation: Staff recommends the RDBM to continue to build the relationship with the Concours d'Elegance and plan for another Cars & Coffee and Concours d'Lemons event in 2026.

## **Trick-or-Treat Trail**

Date: Saturday, October 25, 2025

Location: Entire River District Area

Hosted during the day on the Saturday leading up to Halloween, the Trick-or-Treat Trail event gives families an opportunity to Trick-or-Treat during the daylight hours. This event encourages families to spend time in the River District and introduces them to stores they may not be familiar with. Given the exceptional attendance at the 2023 and 2024 events, 2025 was modified to run for 3 hours to make the event easier for business owners and provide

ample time for families to make the rounds. A partnership with The Rumpus Room, a club in the River District, allowed families to work off the sugar at a child-focused dance party. This party was a huge success, leaving the door open for future partnerships.

Event Metrics:

- Attendance (approximate) – 600+ trick-or-treaters
- Social Reach – 16,373
- Clicks – 252

Promotional Approach:

- Social media
- Radio advertisement mentions and interviews
- Hand delivery of invitations to targeted community groups and schools

Impact: Once again, this event saw hundreds of people take to the streets of the River District to enjoy time together and familiarize themselves with the businesses.

Budget: \$400.00

River District Cost: \$400.00

Recommendation: Staff recommends that the Trick-or-Treat Trail event take place again in 2026. Staff will continue to try and find cost saving measures for the participating businesses.

## **Holiday Magic**

Date: Saturday, November 15, 2025

Location: Entire River District Area

River District businesses were asked to sign up early in the holiday season and to stay open late with the option to add an offer and/or activation. Holiday Magic leverages and encapsulates the Kiwanis Santa Claus Parade and Festival of Northern Lights Opening Ceremony to encourage visitors to spend more time in the River District. For the third year, the City hosted Hockey Fest as part of the holiday festivities and street hockey, which has become the new home of the "SICK SHOT" Organized Ball Hockey Games in memory of Josh Olynyk. In 2025, street hockey was held in three designated zones on the 800 block of 2nd Avenue East after the parade, further activating the space and encouraging people to stay in the area, explore, and wander into stores to shop. Due to the extreme weather, there was a

decrease in attendance for the parade and the Festival of Northern Lights Opening Ceremony. Most of the teams registered for street hockey played through the weather.

#### Event Metrics:

- Approximate attendance for parade – 8,000 +
- Participating businesses – 20
- Social Impressions – 115,800
- Event responses – 844
- Registered hockey players – 92 (23 teams – up from 42 registered players in 2024)

#### Promotional Approach:

- Social media
- Radio advertisement mentions and interviews
- Additional promotion through partners

Impact: Once again, the River District was flooded with families taking part in the collaborative event, regardless of the weather. Feedback continues to be positive, and the relationship remains strong with the Festival of Northern Lights and the Kiwanis Santa Claus Parade. These events have become a tradition for families and a way to spend an entire evening in the River District.

Budget: \$3,600.00

River District Cost: \$3,635.00

Recommendation: Staff recommends that the RDBM move forward with the Holiday Magic event in 2026. A strengthened partnership with the Festival of Northern Lights will be encouraged to leverage this event and expand the reach, encouraging people to stay or come back again to the area to visit the lights and shop.

### **Warmest Seat on the Street Contest**

Date: Monday, November 3, 2025 to Thursday, November 13, 2025

The Warmest Seat on the Street Contest through the radio is used to help promote the Holiday Magic event. Prize winners receive a VIP Santa Claus Parade experience, which includes an unobstructed and covered seating area to watch the parade, a parking space nearby, and prizes from sponsoring businesses.

#### Event Metrics:

Contest entries – 752

Impact: This fun contest is a great way to engage with radio listeners and promote the upcoming events. It has run for 4 years, and the number of entries continues to grow.

Budget Funded under Holiday Magic.

Recommendation: Staff recommends that the Warmest Seat on the Street contest continue in 2026.

### **Holiday Window Decorating Contest**

Date: Saturday, November 15, 2025, to Sunday, December 14, 2025

This contest encourages all businesses to participate and beautify the River District by decorating their windows for their chance to win a \$500 Cobble Beach Gift Card. Businesses are asked to sign up for this initiative at the start of the holiday season to be added to the participating list, however businesses can be added after the sign up if they notify staff due to the simplicity of including them in the contest. Voters can select their favourite window for their chance to win \$100 in River District Gift Certificates.

#### Event Metrics:

- Participating businesses – 17
- Votes – 122

#### Promotional Approach:

- Social media
- Posters in business windows

Impact: The Window Decorating Contest makes a huge impact on the holiday beautification of the River District. It creates a cohesive feeling of celebration and helps to light the dark streets in the evening.

Budget: \$800.00

River District Cost: \$800.00

### **Holiday Shopping Passport**

Date: Saturday, November 15, 2025, to Sunday, December 14, 2025

A holiday and local shopping favourite, River District businesses are asked to sign up for this initiative at the start of the holiday season. This is a first

come, first served opportunity because of the limited space on the card. This contest encourages the public to shop and explore the River District for their chance to win a massive prize package worth over \$1,400.

Participants must collect five (5) stickers from different participating businesses and enter their passports at City Hall.

#### Event Metrics:

- Participating businesses – 24
- Entries – 98

#### Promotional Approach:

- Social media
- Passports available at each participating business

Impact: The Holiday Shopping Passport is a great way to encourage people to shop locally during the holidays and continues to generate a lot of attention for the River District. Participating businesses receive extra focus during the holiday with individual mentions on both the radio and on social media.

Budget: \$800.00

River District Cost: \$876.13

Recommendation: Staff recommends that the RDBM move forward with the Holiday Shopping Passport in 2026.

### **Moonlight Madness**

Date: Friday, December 5, 2025

Location: Entire River District Area

Moonlight Madness is a shopping focused event at prime holiday shopping season. River District businesses are asked to sign up at the start of the holiday season and provide hours and offers at that time. Participating stores stay open until 9 p.m. and offer sales and/or activations within their shop. This event overlaps with the passport and window contests and is a great opportunity for late-evening shopping.

Again, this year, weather played a huge factor in attendance and activation. In addition, the Owen Sound Attack had a Friday night game, and another large market was taking place in the City. However, given all the circumstances, it was still a good turn out.

#### Event Metrics:

- Participating businesses – 23
- Social Impressions – 23,026
- Event responses – 325

#### Promotional Approach:

- Social media
- Radio advertisement mentions and interviews
- Spotify promotion

Impact: Moonlight Madness was a success, given the circumstances. Many restaurants were booked with reservations.

Budget: \$4,400.00

River District Cost: \$4,400.00

Recommendation: Based on feedback, it would appear there is interest in additional shopping nights. Staff will bring forward a modified plan for review for 2026.

### **Locals Love It Here**

Locals Love It Here is an umbrella campaign focused on attracting locals back to the River District and ensuring they experience a clean and safe environment upon arrival. Staff continue to leverage these funds to create small, impactful initiatives and were able to participate in a national Shop Local campaign, offering winners \$10,000 in prize money and prize money to participating businesses.

#### Event Metrics:

We do not yet have metrics from the organizing group as this initiative ran until mid-December.

Budget: \$2,000.00

River District Cost: \$1,992.27

Recommendation: Staff recommends funds continue to be included in the Locals Love It Here program and are allocated as outlined in the 2026 plan.

### **River District Blooms**

In 2025, the River District Blooms budget was held with the intention to add to beautification efforts. Observations outlined a clear need for more cigarette butt containers in an effort to keep the butts off the sidewalk and



street. These containers have been affixed to City infrastructure since fall 2025. Additionally, dog waste bag dispensers have been purchased and will be placed on each block of 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue East in an effort to decrease the amount of waste in the flower beds and on sidewalks. These dispensers will be installed soon. Once these fixtures have all been put into place, there is an intention to run a campaign around the visibility of these fixtures. By leveraging resources through the City's Communications Department, all artwork and messaging will be done in house and will make for future cost savings.

Impact: With more convenient tools to ensure waste is disposed of correctly, the potential impact is a cleaner River District.

Budget: \$1,000.00

River District Cost: \$983.10

Recommendation: Staff recommend that the initiative around River District Blooms continues to be flexible for 2026, allocating funds toward small beautification efforts with possible big impact.

### **New Business Welcome Initiative**

In 2025, the RDBM approved a budget to allocate funds to small welcome campaigns for new businesses on social media. These campaigns include photos and contact details, usually linking to the new business website or social media channels.

Number of campaigns run – 5

Impact: Feedback has been very positive for these campaigns. By leveraging the River District social audience, new businesses get a jump start on gaining followers and business attention. The remaining budget was put toward a large-scale national campaign.

Budget: \$600.00

River District Cost: \$583.66

Recommendation: Staff recommend this initiative continue into 2026.

### **Business Led Initiatives**

In 2025, a budget was allocated to businesses that wanted to run their own event or initiative with a minimum of five participating River District businesses. These events could be anything from sales to contests. Businesses running the event could access a maximum of \$200.00 per

initiative on a first come, first served basis. This also included minor support from staff.

#### Initiatives led – 3

- Art Walk
- Summer Sundays
- Longest Day of Play

Impact: The business-led initiatives have been well-received in their first year. This helps to support business owners in business-led initiatives.

Budget: \$1,000.00

River District Cost: \$993.02

Recommendation: Staff recommends this initiative continue in 2026.

### **General Promotion**

2025 was the first year a budget allocation was made for general promotions. Historically, annual promotions had been absorbed through event budget lines. Staff were pleased with this approach, allowing for broader planning opportunities.

General promotional examples included:

- Award submissions
- Hawkers & Peddlers License
- Magazine ads
- Brochures
- Rack cards
- Sponsorships

Budget: \$4,000.00

River District Cost: \$4,047.46

Recommendation: Staff recommends that a continued budget allocation be made toward general promotion in 2026.

### **Website Support**

In the third year of owensoundriverdistrict.ca, a few items required maintenance. As outlined in the original website agreement, tools that were proprietary to VS Group would be updated and fixed as required. Any changes to the site and hosting would be an additional cost.

## Website Support Items in 2024:

- SSL Certificate renewal and install
- 2024 Hosting
- Non-proprietary software updates
- Navigation update
- Vanity URL creation for Events, News, Business Directory, and Parking

Budget: \$1,300.00

River District Cost: \$1,290.86

## **River District Membership Event**

Date: Tuesday, December 2, 2025

The RDBM hosts an annual membership event for networking and celebration. In January 2023, the RDBM urged staff to take the budget into consideration for this event and work as frugally as possible; this was considered in 2025 as well. A marginal cost for a ticket continues to prove that it aids in RSVP commitment. Invitations were sent in the River District Review newsletter as well as hand delivered by event working group members.

### Event Metrics:

- Participating businesses – 26
- RSVPs – 49
- Total attendance – 45

Impact: 2025 was another wonderful event, however, smaller than the last few years. It was the decision of the working group to try and use more spaces within the River District. There are two key requirements for a location: accessible and a fire code that allows for over 100 people. Those who attended were very pleased with the atmosphere and the food; however, the space was much colder than anticipated. Feedback has been generally positive, and the Owen Sound Farmers' Market was beautiful, however, not a space to be used for long events in winter.

Budget: \$5,000.00

Ticket Sales: \$165.62

River District Cost: \$2,289.96

Recommendation: Staff recommends that the RDBM continue to budget \$5,000.00 for a membership event to ensure members continue to engage

and network with one another. The working group for 2026 will consider an earlier date.

## Resource Alignment:

### Financial Resources

This table represents only River District costs, excluding partnerships and sponsorships. Full analysis can be found in the report.

| <b>Initiative</b>                      | <b>Budget</b> | <b>Expenses</b> | <b>Difference</b>                            |
|----------------------------------------|---------------|-----------------|----------------------------------------------|
| Just Say Yes                           | \$500.00      | \$462.31        | - \$37.69                                    |
| Best Pizza                             | \$500.00      | \$491.09        | - \$8.91                                     |
| Wheel & Ride                           | \$400.00      | \$398.33        | - \$1.67                                     |
| Pride Event                            | \$200.00      | \$191.83        | - \$8.17                                     |
| Hottest Street Sale                    | \$8,500.00    | \$8,541.91      | \$41.91                                      |
| Cars & Coffee and<br>Concours d'Lemons | \$1,500.00    | \$1,496.18      | - \$3.82                                     |
| Trick-or-Treat Trail                   | \$400.00      | \$400.00        | \$0.00                                       |
| Holiday Magic                          | \$3,600.00    | \$3,635.00      | \$35.00                                      |
| Warmest Seat on the<br>Street Contest  |               |                 | Budget allocated<br>through Holiday<br>Magic |
| Holiday Window<br>Decorating Contest   | \$800.00      | \$800.00        | \$0.00                                       |
| Holiday Shopping<br>Passport           | \$800.00      | \$876.13        | \$76.13                                      |
| Moonlight Madness                      | \$4,400.00    | \$4,400.00      | \$0.00                                       |
| Locals Love It Here                    | \$2,000.00    | \$1,992.27      | - \$7.73                                     |
| River District Blooms                  | \$1,000.00    | \$983.10        | - \$16.90                                    |
| New Business<br>Welcome Initiative     | \$600.00      | \$583.66        | - \$16.34                                    |

| <b>Initiative</b>        | <b>Budget</b> | <b>Expenses</b> | <b>Difference</b> |
|--------------------------|---------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| Business Led Initiatives | \$1,000.00    | \$993.02        | - \$6.98          |
| General Promotion        | \$4,000.00    | \$4,047.46      | \$47.46           |
| Website Support          | \$1,300.00    | \$1,290.86      | - \$9.14          |
| Membership Event         | \$5,000.00    | \$2,289.96      | - \$2,710.04      |

### **Totals:**

|                                                         |             |
|---------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| River District Events, Activations & Promotions Budget: | \$31,500.00 |
| Total Spend:                                            | \$31,583.15 |
| Membership Celebration Budget:                          | \$5,000.00  |
| Total Spend:                                            | \$2,289.96  |
| Total Consolidated Budget:                              | \$36,500.00 |
| 2025 Year-End:                                          | \$33,873.11 |

### **Human Resources**

The River District Coordinator completed the 2025 Events and Promotions. As noted, partnerships are leveraged to bring events and activities to the River District as well as third-party events.

### **Time and Scheduling**

All initiatives fall within the annual work plan.

### **Technology and Infrastructure**

All current software will be utilized.

### **Climate and Environmental Impacts:**

There are no anticipated climate or environmental impacts.

### **Communication and Engagement:**

This report is available on the City's website through the RDBM meeting agenda. Each event, promotion, and activation has a communication strategy, including a listing of events in all River District newsletters.

**Report Developed in Consultation With:**

Pamela Coulter, Director Community Services

**Attachments:**

None.

**Reviewed by:**

Pamela Coulter, Director of Community Services

**Submission approved by:**

Tim Simmonds, City Manager

For more information on this report, please contact Viveca Gravel, River District Coordinator at [vgravel@owensound.ca](mailto:vgravel@owensound.ca) or 519-376-4440 ext. 1209.



## Staff Report

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**Report To:** River District Board of Management  
**Report From:** Viveca Gravel, River District Coordinator  
**Meeting Date:** January 14, 2026  
**Report Code:** CS-26-002  
**Subject:** 2026 Events, Activations and Promotions Plan

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### Recommendations:

THAT in consideration of Staff Report CS-26-002 respecting the 2026 Events, Activations and Promotions Plan, the River District Board of Management:

1. Approves the 2026 Events, Activations and Promotions as outlined in the report;
2. Selects the date of the Trick-or-Treat Trail;
3. Directs staff to use the agreed upon time for the Festive Fridays events; and
4. Appoints River District Board Members to the Membership Event working group for 2026.

### Highlights:

- The River District Action Plan establishes a plan for Branding, Management, Experience Development, and Promotion in the River District as part of creating an engaging space and bringing more people to the River District.
- This report presents the draft outline of events and animations proposed for the 2026 year.
- This report takes 2025 feedback into consideration in its execution.

## **River District Plan Alignment:**

### **River District Experience Development**

- Strategic Objective: Create an engaging space.
- Recommendation: Continue to invest in the animation and activation of the River District.
- Tactic:
  - a. Encourage animation of the River District;
  - b. Encourage new and continued programming; and
  - c. Encourage new activities and attractions to engage visitors and locals.

### **River District Promotion**

- Strategic Objective: Attract people to the River District.
- Recommendation: Follow a strategic, multi-layered, collaborative, and bold promotions plan for the River District.
- Tactic:
  - a. Encourage animation of the River District;
  - b. Brand RDBM Social Media accounts for alignment with the River District look and feel;
  - c. Regularly schedule social media posts;
  - d. Digital advertising. Deliver digital ad campaign to local and nearby residents in the target market;
  - e. Leverage local social media influencers; and
  - f. Claim the River District Google business and Trip Advisor page.

## **Previous Report/Authority:**

[CS-25-003](#) – 2025 Events, Activations & Promotions Plan

[CS-25-092](#) – River District Board of Management Draft 2026 Budget

[River District Action Plan](#)

## **Background:**

In addition to the direction and action provided by the River District Action Plan, the joint operating agreement between the City and the River District Board of Management (RDBM) provides direction with respect to:

- Events & Activations
- Marketing & Promotions



## **8.0 EVENTS AND ACTIVATION**

8.1 City staff will work with the River District Board of Management to establish, based on the RDBM budget, a program of annual RDBM events/attractions. This event planning will be completed by the end of January each year.

8.2 City staff will work to plan, market, promote and deliver each event in accordance with the plan set and approved by the River District Board of Management.

8.3 City staff will report on the progress and do a wrap-up of each event, including financial performance, to the River District Board of Management.

## **9.0 MARKETING AND PROMOTION**

9.1 City staff will work with the River District Board of Management to establish, based on the RDBM budget, an annual plan for marketing and promotion reflecting the goals and objectives identified in the River District Action Plan.

9.2 City staff will work to implement the plan and report to the RDBM twice annually on the progress.

9.3 City staff will work with the RDBM collaboratively to implement the recommendations of the River District Action Plan subject to budget approval each year, including a Wayfinding Signage Strategy.

Two of the four pillars in the River District Action Plan are River District Experience Development and River District Promotion.

The purpose of this report is to provide recommendations regarding River District Events, Activations, and Promotions for 2026 as contemplated by the operating agreement.

### **Analysis and Options:**

Staff have planned the River District events, activations, and promotions based on successes, feedback and lessons learned in 2025 and with the River District Action Plan in mind. The events as presented are also in line with the draft 2026 budget.

## **Just Say Yes**

Date: February 14, 2025

Time: 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Location: City Hall

A collaborative event between the City of Owen Sound and the River District where a wedding event at City Hall takes place on Valentine's Day as a kind of in-and-out wedding pop-up.

This event has had an extensive positive reach since 2023. The benefit to the River District is that it gets promoted as a wedding destination. This benefits businesses that could be involved in weddings, such as salons, spas, and restaurants. 2026 brings a special opportunity because the event runs on a Saturday, making the possibility for receptions at local businesses higher. Businesses will continue to be encouraged to get involved in some capacity.

Proposed Budget: \$500.00 (pre-approved in 2025)

Breakdown of Expenses:

- Advertising – \$350.00
- Miscellaneous – \$150.00

Staff also recommend that this event be pre-approved at the same budget for 2027 so that planning can take place starting in late 2026.

## **River District Best Pizza or Scone becomes River District Eats**

Dates: March 3 to March 31, 2026

Over the last few years, staff have run contests for the best River District scone and the best River District pizza. These promotions have been well received with some great content around the participating businesses.

In an effort to be more inclusive of all the incredible eateries and to promote the River District as a culinary superpower, staff propose the event becomes "River District Eats". This leverages the slang term for "Eats" as well as the more obvious reference to food.

In slang, "ate" or "eats" means someone did something exceptionally well, succeeded, or looked amazing, similar to "slay" or "killed it," often meaning they "ate and left no crumbs". So, if someone says, "You ate that!" or "She's eating," they're praising a fantastic performance.

This content-based promotion will set the River District apart and make it a location visitors and locals will want to experience.

Proposed Budget: \$500.00

Breakdown of Expenses:

- Advertising – \$500.00

## **Wheel & Ride Safety Festival**

With the success and partnerships established in 2023 and the success of the Wheel & Ride bike program in 2025, staff are proposing a similar event in 2026.

Date: May TBD, 2026, a half-day event

Location: 8th Street East between 2nd Avenue and 3rd Avenue.

This event will be run in partnership with Owen Sound Police Service, Kiwanis Club of Owen Sound, Optimist Club of Sydenham and District, Owen Sound and District Junior Optimists, and Scenic Cycle. Like last year, Owen Sound Fire & Emergency Services and Grey County EMS will be invited to participate.

Proposed Budget: \$400

Breakdown of Expenses

- Advertising – \$300.00
- Miscellaneous – \$100.00

## **Pride Event**

The Pride Parade is run by Grey Bruce Pride and runs in June every year along 2nd Avenue East. Last year, a group came forward to create a street party in conjunction with the parade. While the road is closed, staff recommend the businesses take advantage of the crowds by putting out tables along the sidewalk and offering sales or specials should they choose.

Staff will work with the organizers to optimize the benefit of the event in the River District.

Proposed Budget: \$200.00 for advertising

## Hottest Street Sale

Date: July 11, 2026

Time: 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Location: 2nd Avenue East, 7th to 11th Streets East, 9th Street East

With the ongoing success of the Hottest Street Sale in 2025, it is recommended that this event return in much the same format as last year.

Similar to last year, merchants will be located on 2nd Avenue East between 7th Street and 11th Street as well as 9th Street. Like last year, there will be something for everyone, with a variety of different food and drink vendors and great deals from River District businesses and more.

The RDBM will host the Summerfolk Stage in partnership with the Georgian Bay Folk Society, where there will be musical performances starting at 9:00 a.m. and running the duration of the event. The River District will partner with the Owen Sound & District Chamber of Commerce to facilitate the popular community stage located at City Hall and in other ways as possible.

The Hottest Street Sale will require the closure of 2nd Avenue East from 7th Street East to 11th Street East, starting at 5:00 a.m. Saturday morning. 9th Street East would also be closed from 1st Avenue East to 3rd Avenue East.

Staff continue to engage with community groups in efforts to make the event sustainable and as engaging as possible.

As in years past, there will be an open invitation for vendors/artisans to participate. The revenue from registrations will be used to increase advertising efforts.

| <b>Business Type</b>   | <b>Description</b>                                                                                                                                             | <b>Fee per Space</b> |
|------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|
| River District Members | Businesses not located in the closed-off area will be assigned a spot as close as possible to their business location.                                         | No charge            |
| Artist/Artisans        | Artists and artisans are welcome to exhibit in the Hottest Street Sale. However, all participants must be approved and assigned space by River District staff. | \$15.00              |

| <b>Business Type</b>                           | <b>Description</b>                                                                                                   | <b>Fee per Space</b> |
|------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Non-Profit (NFP)<br>Community<br>Group/Charity | All NFP Groups and Charities participating in the event must be approved and assigned space by River District staff. | \$25.00              |
| Non-River District<br>Member Commercial        | All non-members participating in the event must be approved and assigned space by River District staff.              | \$125.00             |
| Small home-based<br>businesses                 | All participants must be approved and assigned space by River District staff.                                        | \$75.00              |

Staff recommend no changes to fees in 2026.

Proposed River District Budget: \$8,500.00

Approximate Vendor Fees: \$2,000.00

Total Estimated Budget: \$10,500.00

Breakdown of Expenses:

- Advertising – \$3,500.00
- Entertainment – \$3,000.00
- Miscellaneous – \$1,000.00
- Rental Fees & Charges – \$2,500.00
- Insurance – \$500.00

Vendor fees have been estimated at \$2,000.00. Should the fees collected be less than budgeted, the event expenses will be reduced accordingly to stay within budget.

### **Cars & Coffee & Concours d’Lemons**

Date: Saturday, September 19, 2026

Time: 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Location: 2nd Avenue East, 7th to 11th Streets East and 1st Avenue West  
8th Street to 9th Street

In partnership with the Cobble Beach Concours d’Elegance, staff recommend hosting the Cars & Coffee car show event along 2nd Avenue East. Based on

the Cobble Beach schedule, the event will take place on Saturday, September 19, during the Concours d'Elegance weekend in 2026.

This event would mirror the 2025 event, with 2nd Avenue East closed from 7th to 11th Streets with all intersections remaining open for the duration. Concours d'Lemons will continue to use the space along 1st Avenue West and run similarly to 2025. Staff will work closely with Hagerty on the execution of that portion of the event. Cobble Beach has already indicated that they would like to move forward with this event in 2026.

Proposed Budget: \$1,500.00

Breakdown of Expenses:

- Advertising – \$900.00
- Entertainment – \$400.00
- Prizing – \$200.00

### **Trick-or-Treat Trail**

Date: Saturday, **October 24**, or Saturday, **October 31**, 2026

Location: Entire River District Area

Staff recommends hosting the event again, where each business is encouraged to offer trick-or-treating on Saturday, October 24 or 31, 2026, during regular business hours. Staff will collect the list of participating businesses, create a trick-or-treating map, and promote the event over social media, encouraging parents to bring their children to the River District on that day. Each business would be responsible for its treats and any décor associated with its business. No street closure is required as this would be during daylight hours, and parents are encouraged to be with children using signalized intersections and pedestrian crossings only.

Staff is requesting direction on which day the event should take place, either October 24 or 31.

Proposed Budget: \$400.00

Breakdown of Expenses:

- Advertising – \$300.00
- Prizing – \$100.00

## **Holiday Magic**

Date: Saturday, November 21, 2026

Event starts at 4:00 p.m.

Parade starts at 5:00 p.m.

Lighting at 7:00 p.m. – after the parade

Location: Entire River District Area

Holiday Magic is again proposed in conjunction with the annual Kiwanis Santa Claus Parade and lighting of the Festival of Northern Lights.

The Kiwanis Santa Clause Parade is planned for Saturday, November 21, 2026, at 5:00 p.m. (the Kiwanis Club plans for the parade the third weekend in November, every year). The annual Festival of Northern Lights Opening Ceremonies will also happen on November 21, later in the evening.

Staff recommend that the successful River District Holiday Magic event be repeated in 2026. The event is proposed to begin November 21 at 4:00 p.m. with the traditional road closures of 2nd Avenue East from 8th to 18th Streets East and 3rd Avenue East from 8th to 11th Streets East.

The following would be duplicated from the 2025 event:

- Decorated windows (see Holiday Window Painting/Decorating);
- Entertainers/Buskers;
- Warming stations;
- Photo Booth;
- Select food vendors selling food varieties not currently available in the River District, such as cotton candy, roasted chestnuts, popcorn, and grab-and-go items; and
- River District businesses would be encouraged to decorate their stores and offer sale items for holiday shopping and stay open into the evening for shoppers after the parade and lights.

Traditionally, this event has marked the start of the holiday contests but because of its late date this year, staff recommend those portions of this event start the week prior. This budget would continue to fund those initiatives where outlined.

It is proposed that street hockey also be included as part of Holiday Magic in the River District in cooperation with the City's HockeyFest 2026 Event. The timing and location of the road hockey may occur earlier in the day.

Staff recommends supporting and partnering with the City in this initiative.

Proposed Budget: \$3,000.00

Breakdown of Expenses:

- Advertising – \$1,650.00
- Entertainment – \$300.00
- Branded Instant Photo Booth – \$1,000.00
- Miscellaneous – \$50.00

### **Warmest Seats on the Street Contest**

Date: November 2 to 19, 2026

Starting November 2, 2026, a radio contest to win the “Warmest Seats on the Street” would begin. The winners of this radio contest will win premium seats for the Santa Claus Parade on November 21. These comfortable seats would be covered by a tent with an unobstructed view of the parade. In addition to their “Warmest Seats,” the family would also receive a prize pack consisting of a River District gift certificate and possible River District business merchandise. The “Warmest Seat” contest would be sponsored by one or several businesses to circumvent costs associated with the contest.

The contest would close on November 18, with the announcement on November 19.

Proposed Budget: All financial implications for this contest will be attributed to the Holiday Magic event.

### **Holiday Window Painting/Decorating**

Date: November 16 to December 14, 2026

Starting on November 16, 2026, River District businesses will be encouraged to participate in a holiday window painting/decorating contest. Each participating business will be provided with a QR code to post in the window, which will link to a voting platform. Guests to the River District will be invited to vote (by following the QR code or going online) until midnight December 13 for their favourite window display. The business owner with the most votes will win a \$500 Cobble Beach Gift Card. One entrant will be randomly selected from the voters and announced on December 14; this winner will win a River District gift certificate for \$100.



This animation initiative will help to beautify the River District for the holiday season. In addition, it will create a sense of community for businesses and guests alike and involve guests in the River District holiday spirit.

Proposed Budget: \$800.00

Breakdown of Expenses:

- Advertising – \$150.00
- Materials – \$50.00
- Prizing – \$600.00

### **Holiday Shopping Passport**

Date: November 16 to December 14, 2026

In 2025, a holiday shopping passport was used to encourage patrons to shop at more than one store in the River District during the holiday season, as well as promote holiday shopping. For 2026, it is recommended that this initiative be repeated. Interested businesses would provide a small item at a minimum of \$25.00 value and a gift certificate for \$25.00 to include in a gift basket, and their name would be included on a passport.

Guests to the River District would collect a minimum of six stickers (stickers provided to participating businesses to be placed on the passport when a guest makes a purchase). Once a minimum of six stickers are collected, guests to the River District could then submit their passports to City Hall or any participating location.

It is proposed that this initiative start the week before the parade in 2026 due to the parade happening later in November. This initiative would end on December 14 with a draw for the winner on December 15 from the submitted passports. The winner would then take home the gift basket and \$700.00 in gift certificates.

Proposed Budget: \$1,000.00

Breakdown of Expenses:

- Materials – \$700.00
- Prizing – \$100.00
- Advertising – \$150.00
- Miscellaneous – \$50.00

## **Moonlight Madness becomes four “Festive Fridays”**

Dates Proposed: Friday, November 27, Friday, December 4, Friday December 11, and Friday, December 18

Time: 4:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

To keep the holiday momentum in the River District, it’s proposed that the traditional Moonlight Madness become Festive Fridays.

On Fridays beginning the Friday following Holiday Magic on November 27 and ending December 18, the River District would be activated with heaters and fire tables and would engage musicians appropriate for the holiday season. Staff will also investigate having wagon rides during the event time to tour the River District. Staff propose to run the event beginning at 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. each Friday but seek direction by the RDBM on the event start and end time if different from what is listed in this report. The goal would be to create a festive atmosphere throughout the holiday shopping season with consistent hours among businesses.

As in years past, businesses will be encouraged to offer specials and promotions in-store and activate their stores in some way to entice shoppers to spend the evening in the River District. All participating businesses will be included in the event's marketing and promotion efforts.

Staff will also explore the activation of empty store fronts as part of the holiday shopping experience and will begin that investigation.

Proposed Budget: \$5,600.00

Breakdown of Expenses:

- Advertising – \$3,000.00
- Entertainment – \$2,000.00
- Miscellaneous – \$600.00

## **River District Blooms**

In 2025, River District Blooms was leveraged to add cigarette butt containers and dog waste bag dispensers (install coming soon) along 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue East to help in beautification. This year, staff recommend allocation of these funds to similar initiatives to help support as needed beautification efforts.

Proposed Budget: \$1,000.00

## **New Business Welcome Initiative**

Staff continue to see positive feedback for this initiative. Staff recommend allocating a portion of the River District promotional budget to new businesses. In addition to a welcome post on social media and mention in the monthly newsletter, staff would run a short promotion for each new business on social media that would include photos, location, hours of operation, and contact details.

Each new business welcome promotion would be budgeted at \$50.00. Staff recommends the RDBM approve staff to reallocate additional budget from other Events and Activations should the need arise to promote more businesses than is budgeted, if budget is available.

Proposed Budget: \$600.00

## **Business Led Initiatives**

The budget allocated to business led initiatives in 2025 was a great value to both staff and businesses. Businesses often approach staff about possible promotions for various events. This initiative would allow for the allocation of budget to business-led events/initiatives/activations first come, first served, and to a maximum of \$200.00 each.

Each initiative will have to include a minimum of four (4) participating businesses. All funds will be managed through staff. The expectation would be that the businesses take on responsibility for organizing and executing the events with support from staff in terms of promotion and ensuring the River District brand standards are being adhered to.

Proposed Budget: \$1,000.00

A report is coming forward at the January 14, 2026 RDBM meeting regarding an additional opportunity to support the River District in the development of new events and activations with a budget of \$10,000.00 from the reserve funds.

## **Annual Promotional Materials and General Advertising**

Last year, an annual promotional budget was added to the plan to allow for general promotional materials such as brochures, rack cards, etc. These funds were allocated out of the overall budget based on background financial. This budget would also absorb any funding for the Locals Love It Here Ambassador Program and promotion during months with lower activity such as January, February, April, August, and October.

Proposed Budget: \$5,000.00

### **Website Support**

As part of the ongoing hosting and maintenance of owensoundriverdistrict.ca, staff suggests allocating a budget to the annual plan.

Proposed Budget: \$1,300.00

### **City of Owen Sound Events & Activations**

In addition to the events noted above, staff will work with the City of Owen Sound on the promotion and support of:

- Savour Owen Sound
- Mid Week Music
- Salmon Run
- Movie nights
- Other events and activations within the River District to ensure additional promotion where available.

### **River District Membership Event**

The membership event is an annual tradition that celebrates the membership as a community and allows them to celebrate each other and network. Staff recommends continuing this celebration in 2026 while maintaining the budget line as it has been in the past. Efforts will be made to find cost savings where possible.

Staff requests that a small working group (3) of board members be assembled as in previous years and ask that the directors volunteer at the RDBM meeting held on January 14, 2026. The working group and block captains would be tasked with the physical distribution of invitations.

Proposed Budget: \$5,000.00

## **Resource Alignment:**

### **Financial Resources**

The proposed River District Marketing and Events budget is \$31,300.00. The table below shows the proposed events, activations, and promotions as outlined in this report. The River District Membership Celebration is its own budgetary item of \$5,000.00 and is not reflected in the \$31,300.00.

| <b>2026 Events &amp; Promotions</b>                  | <b>Proposed Budget</b>              |
|------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Just Say Yes                                         | \$500.00 – Approved in 2025         |
| River District Eats                                  | \$500.00                            |
| Wheel & Ride Safety Festival                         | \$400.00                            |
| Pride Event                                          | \$200.00                            |
| Hottest Street Sale                                  | \$8,500.00                          |
| Cars & Coffee and Concours d’Lemons                  | \$1,500.00                          |
| Trick-or-Treat Trail                                 | \$400.00                            |
| Holiday Magic                                        | \$3,000.00                          |
| Warmest Seats on the Street Contest                  | Absorbed under Holiday Magic budget |
| Holiday Window Decorating Contest                    | \$800.00                            |
| Holiday Shopping Passport                            | \$1,000.00                          |
| 4 Festive Fridays                                    | \$5,600.00                          |
| River District Blooms                                | \$1,000.00                          |
| New Business Welcome Initiative                      | \$600.00                            |
| Business Led Initiatives                             | \$1,000.00                          |
| Annual Promotional Materials and General Advertising | \$5,000.00                          |
| Website Support                                      | \$1,300.00                          |
| River District Membership Event                      | \$5,000.00                          |

|                                                                |             |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| Total River District Events, Activations and Promotions Budget | \$31,300.00 |
| Total Allocated Budget Proposed                                | \$31,300.00 |
| Membership Event Proposed Budget                               | \$5,000.00  |

Staff continue to recommend that unused budget be allocated where required for event infrastructure and additional promotional opportunities.

## **Human Resources**

N/A.

## **Time and Scheduling**

N/A.

## **Technology and Infrastructure**

N/A.

## **Climate and Environmental Impacts:**

There are no anticipated climate or environmental impacts.

## **Communication and Engagement:**

All events, activations, and promotions will be shared through the River District Review Newsletter, which is distributed monthly. In addition, Media Advisories will be circulated if they are appropriate to the event or activation. Specific businesses will be contacted directly for events concerning them. All information regarding events, activations, and promotions will be shared on social media either directly or first through [owensoundriverdistrict.ca](http://owensoundriverdistrict.ca).

## **Report Developed in Consultation With:**

Pamela Coulter, Director of Community Services  
Tim Simmonds, City Manager  
Based on feedback from 2025

## **Attachments:**

Events, Activations and Promotions Calendar

## **Reviewed by:**

Viveca Gravel, River District Coordinator  
Pamela Coulter, Director Community Services

## **Submission approved by:**

Tim Simmonds, City Manager

For more information on this report, please contact Viveca Gravel, River District Coordinator, at [vgravel@owensound.ca](mailto:vgravel@owensound.ca) or 519-376-4440 ext. 1209.

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JANUARY  
2026

| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY       | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|--------|--------|---------|-----------|----------------|--------|----------|
|        |        |         |           | 1<br>NEW YEARS | 2      | 3        |
| 4      | 5      | 6       | 7         | 8              | 9      | 10       |
| 11     | 12     | 13      | 14        | 15             | 16     | 17       |
| 18     | 19     | 20      | 21        | 22             | 23     | 24       |
| 25     | 26     | 27      | 28        | 29             | 30     | 31       |

NOTES

☐ CONTENT - COZY SPACES & FRIENDLY FACES

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| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY           |
|--------|--------|---------|-----------|----------|--------|--------------------|
| 1      | 2      | 3       | 4         | 5        | 6      | 7                  |
| 8      | 9      | 10      | 11        | 12       | 13     | 14<br>JUST SAY YES |
| 15     | 16     | 17      | 18        | 19       | 20     | 21                 |
| 22     | 23     | 24      | 25        | 26       | 27     | 28                 |
|        |        |         |           |          |        |                    |

NOTES

☐ CONTENT - VALENTINES DAY GIFT GUIDE

☐ CONTENT - JUST SAY YES

☐ CONTENT - FAMILY DAY

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| SUNDAY | MONDAY                   | TUESDAY    | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|--------|--------------------------|------------|-----------|----------|--------|----------|
| 1      | 2<br>RIVER DISTRICT EATS | 3          | 4         | 5        | 6      | 7        |
|        | SAVOUR OWEN SOUND        | owen sound |           |          |        |          |
| 8      | 9                        | 10         | 11        | 12       | 13     | 14       |
| 15     | 16                       | 17         | 18        | 19       | 20     | 21       |
| 22     | 23                       | 24         | 25        | 26       | 27     | 28       |
| 29     | 30                       | 31         |           |          |        |          |

NOTES

- ☐ CONTENT - MARCH BREAK
- ☐ CONTENT - INT WOMEN'S DAY
- ☐ CONTENT - ST. PATRICK'S DAY - RESTAURANTS
- ☐
- ☐
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| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|--------|--------|---------|-----------|----------|--------|----------|
|        |        |         | 1         | 2        | 3      | 4        |
| 5      | 8      | 7       | 8         | 9        | 10     | 11       |
| 12     | 13     | 14      | 15        | 16       | 17     | 18       |
| 19     | 20     | 21      | 22        | 23       | 24     | 25       |
| 26     | 27     | 28      | 28        | 30       |        |          |

☐ CONTENT - SPRING IS IN THE AIR -

☐ CONTENT - EARTH DAY - SUSTAINABLE SHOPPING

☐ CONTENT - WORLD HEALTH DAY

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05

MAY  
2026

| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY                       |
|--------|--------|---------|-----------|----------|--------|--------------------------------|
|        |        |         |           |          | 1      | 2                              |
| 3      | 4      | 5       | 6         | 7        | 8      | 9                              |
| 10     | 11     | 12      | 13        | 14       | 15     | 16                             |
| 17     | 18     | 19      | 20        | 21       | 22     | 23                             |
| 24     | 25     | 26      | 27        | 28       | 29     | 30<br>WHEEL & RIDE<br>DATE TBD |

NOTES

☐ CONTENT - MOTHERS DAY

☐ CONTENT - LONG WEEKEND

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JUNE  
2026

| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|--------|--------|---------|-----------|----------|--------|----------|
| 31     | 1      | 2       | 3         | 4        | 5      | 6        |
| 7      | 8      | 9       | 10        | 11       | 12     | 13       |
| 14     | 15     | 16      | 17        | 18       | 19     | 20       |
| 21     | 22     | 23      | 24        | 25       | 26     | 27       |
| 28     | 29     | 30      |           |          |        |          |

MID WEEK MUSIC  
owen  
sound  
TBD

NOTES

- ☐ CONTENT - FATHERS DAY
- ☐ CONTENT - PRIDE
- ☐ CONTENT - PREP FOR SUMMER IN THE CITY
- ☐ CONTENT NATIONAL INDIGENOUS PEOPLES DAY
- ☐
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| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY                              | THURSDAY                                              | FRIDAY | SATURDAY               |
|--------|--------|---------|----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|--------|------------------------|
|        |        |         | 1                                      | 2                                                     | 3      | 4                      |
| 5      | 8      | 7       | 8                                      | 9                                                     | 10     | 11                     |
|        |        |         | MID WEEK MUSIC<br>owen<br>sound<br>TBD |                                                       |        | HOTTEST<br>STREET SALE |
| 12     | 13     | 14      | 15                                     | 16                                                    | 17     | 18                     |
| 19     | 20     | 21      | 22                                     | 23                                                    | 24     | 25                     |
|        |        |         |                                        | OUTDOOR FAMILY<br>MOVIE NIGHT<br>owen<br>sound<br>TBD |        |                        |
| 26     | 27     | 28      | 28                                     | 30                                                    | 31     |                        |

NOTES

☐ CONTENT - PATIOS AND OUTDOOR SPACES

☐ CONTENT - SUMMER EVENTS

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08

AUGUST  
2026

| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY                                                   | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY                                                                 | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|--------|--------|-----------------------------------------------------------|-----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|----------|
|        |        |                                                           |           |                                                                          |        | 1        |
| 2      | 3      | 4                                                         | 5         | 6                                                                        | 7      | 8        |
|        |        | MID WEEK MUSIC<br>owen sound<br>where you want to be. TBD |           |                                                                          |        |          |
| 9      | 10     | 11                                                        | 12        | 13                                                                       | 14     | 15       |
| 16     | 17     | 18                                                        | 19        | 20                                                                       | 21     | 22       |
|        |        |                                                           |           | OUTDOOR FAMILY<br>MOVIE NIGHT<br>owen sound<br>where you want to be. TBD |        |          |
| 23     | 24     | 25                                                        | 26        | 27                                                                       | 28     | 29       |

NOTES

☐ CONTENT - BACK TO SCHOOL

☐ CONTENT - LAST SUMMER LONG WEEKEND

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| SUNDAY | MONDAY                      | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY                              | THURSDAY | FRIDAY               | SATURDAY                                     |
|--------|-----------------------------|---------|----------------------------------------|----------|----------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| 30     | 31                          | 1       | 2                                      | 3        | 4                    | 5                                            |
| 6      | 7                           | 8       | 9                                      | 10       | 11                   | 12                                           |
|        |                             |         | MID WEEK MUSIC<br>owen<br>solid<br>TBD |          |                      |                                              |
| 13     | 14                          | 15      | 16                                     | 17       | 18                   | 19                                           |
|        | SALMON RUN<br>owen<br>solid |         |                                        |          | PARTICIPANTS<br>TOUR | CARS & COFFEE<br>AND<br>CONCOURS<br>D'LEMONS |
| 20     | 21                          | 22      | 23                                     | 24       | 25                   | 26                                           |
| 27     | 28                          | 29      | 30                                     |          |                      |                                              |

NOTES

- ☐ CONTENT - BACK TO SCHOOL CONTINUED
- ☐ CONTENT - FALL IN LOVE WITH LOCAL
- ☐ CONTENT - NATIONAL DAY FOR TRUTH  
AND RECONCILIATION
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10

OCTOBER  
2026

| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY             |
|--------|--------|---------|-----------|----------|--------|----------------------|
|        |        |         |           | 1        | 2      | 3                    |
|        |        |         |           |          |        |                      |
| 4      | 5      | 6       | 7         | 8        | 9      | 10                   |
|        |        |         |           |          |        |                      |
| 11     | 12     | 13      | 14        | 15       | 16     | 17                   |
|        |        |         |           |          |        |                      |
| 18     | 19     | 20      | 21        | 22       | 23     | 24                   |
|        |        |         |           |          |        | TRICK OR TREAT TRAIL |
| 25     | 26     | 27      | 28        | 29       | 30     | 31                   |
|        |        |         |           |          |        |                      |

NOTES

☐ CONTENT - THANKSGIVING - HOSTING

☐ CONTENT - SMALL BUSINESS WEEK

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11

NOVEMBER  
2026

| SUNDAY | MONDAY                                                  | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY         | SATURDAY                    |
|--------|---------------------------------------------------------|---------|-----------|----------|----------------|-----------------------------|
| 1      | 2                                                       | 3       | 4         | 5        | 6              | 7                           |
|        | WARMEST SEAT                                            |         |           |          |                |                             |
| 8      | 9                                                       | 10      | 11        | 12       | 13             | 14                          |
|        |                                                         |         |           |          |                |                             |
| 15     | 16                                                      | 17      | 18        | 19       | 20             | 21                          |
|        | HOLIDAY DECORATING CONTEST & HOLIDAY SHOPPING PASSPORTS |         |           |          |                | HOLIDAY MAGIC               |
|        |                                                         |         |           |          |                | HOCKEYFEST<br>owen<br>sound |
| 22     | 23                                                      | 24      | 25        | 26       | 27             | 28                          |
|        |                                                         |         |           |          | FESTIVE FRIDAY |                             |
| 29     | 30                                                      |         |           |          |                |                             |

NOTES

☐ CONTENT -GIFT CERTIFICATES

☐ CONTENT -SHOP LOCAL FOR THE HOLIDAYS

☐ CONTENT - REMEMBRANCE DAY

☐ CONTENT - BLACK FRIDAY

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12

DECEMBER  
2026

| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY      | THURSDAY | FRIDAY         | SATURDAY   |
|--------|--------|---------|----------------|----------|----------------|------------|
|        |        | 1       | 2              | 3        | 4              | 5          |
|        |        |         |                |          | FESTIVE FRIDAY |            |
| 6      | 7      | 8       | 9              | 10       | 11             | 12         |
|        |        |         |                |          | FESTIVE FRIDAY |            |
| 13     | 14     | 15      | 16             | 17       | 18             | 19         |
|        |        |         |                |          | FESTIVE FRIDAY |            |
| 20     | 21     | 22      | 23             | 24       | 25             | 26         |
|        |        |         | HAPPY HOLIDAYS |          |                | BOXING DAY |
| 27     | 28     | 29      | 30             | 31       |                |            |
|        |        |         | HAPPY NEW YEAR |          |                |            |

NOTES

- ☐ CONTENT -GIFT CERTIFICATES
- ☐ CONTENT -SHOP LOCAL FOR THE HOLIDAYS
- ☐ CONTENT - NEW YEARS & HOLIDAY EVENTS
- ☐ CONTENT - FESTIVAL OF NORTHERN LIGHTS
- ☐ CONTENT - CYBER MONDAY
- ☐ CONTENT - SMALL BUSINESS SATURDAY
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## Staff Report

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**Report To:** River District Board of Management  
**Report From:** Viveca Gravel, River District Coordinator  
**Meeting Date:** January 14, 2026  
**Report Code:** CS-26-004  
**Subject:** One Year Events and Activations Team

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### Recommendations:

THAT in consideration of Staff Report CS-26-004 respecting a one-year pilot for an Events and Activations Team, the River District Board of Management approves the:

1. Creation of the Events and Activations Team as outlined in the report;
2. Allocation of up to \$10,000 from the reserve budget to this initiative; and
3. Terms of Reference as attached to the report.

### Highlights:

- A proposed one-time allocation of up to \$10,000 from reserve funds will allow new events and activations to be tested without impacting the delivery of the approved annual events program.
- The creation of a one-year Events and Activations Team will support the development of new and engaging pilot initiatives within the River District.
- The Team will provide flexibility to pursue time-sensitive opportunities that fall outside the annual events planning cycle while remaining transparent and accountable to the board.
- Successful pilot events may be recommended in the 2027 Events and Activations Plan.

## **River District Plan Alignment:**

### **River District Experience Development**

- Strategic Objective: Create an engaging space.
- Recommendation: Continue to invest in the animation and activation of the River District.
- Tactic:
  - a. Encourage animation of the River District;
  - b. Encourage new and continued programming; and
  - c. Encourage new activities and attractions to engage visitors and locals.

### **River District Promotion**

- Strategic Objective: Attract people to the River District.
- Recommendation: Follow a strategic, multi-layered, collaborative, and bold promotions plan for the River District.
- Tactic:
  - a. Encourage animation of the River District;
  - b. Brand RDBM Social Media accounts for alignment with the River District look and feel;
  - c. Regularly schedule social media posts;
  - d. Digital advertising. Deliver digital ad campaign to local and nearby residents in the target market;
  - e. Leverage local social media influencers; and
  - f. Claim the River District Google business and Trip Advisor page.

## **Previous Report/Authority:**

### [River District Action Plan](#)

CS-26-002 – Presented at the River District Board of Management meeting on January 14, 2026

## **Background:**

On July 28, 2025, the City of Owen Sound hosted a facilitated discussion for River District stakeholders. During this meeting, it was raised that businesses wanted more events and activations within the River District. Staff deliver a full roster of events and promotions throughout the year and do not have capacity to run more events. This conversation continued with members of

the River District Board of Management (RDBM) who raised interest in taking on planning and executing events and activations.

The purpose of this report is to provide recommendations regarding the creation of a one-year pilot Events and Activation Team who will work with staff in the development of new events and activations outside of the proposed annual plan presented to the RDBM on January 14, 2026, with budget allocated from reserve funds.

## **Analysis and Options:**

### **Proposed Events and Activations Team**

Staff are recommending the creation of a dedicated Events and Activations Team for a one-year term, with the sole purpose of developing and delivering new events and activations within the River District.

The Team would include two (2) members of the RDBM and three (3) public members.

If the RDBM approves this Team, staff would include a call to public members through the monthly newsletter, a media advisory, and social media. Public members will be selected by the River District Coordinator.

The intent of the Team is to provide greater flexibility and responsiveness in pursuing new, and at times time-sensitive, opportunities that may arise outside of the annual planning cycle. This approach allows the River District to test and pilot new ideas without impacting the delivery of the full slate of events already approved through the annual work plan.

To ensure the existing annual events program remains fully funded and delivered as planned, staff recommend allocating up to \$10,000 from the River District reserve funds or another amount as directed by the RDBM, to support the work of the Team. This one-time allocation allows for experimentation and innovation while maintaining certainty around the execution of core, pre-approved events and activations.

Team members would serve as the primary drivers of event development and execution, leveraging the skills, experience, and capacity of board members and the public.

Staff would provide support where required, including coordination related to permits, insurance, communications, marketing and promotion, and acting as the primary point of contact for all financial transactions and withdrawals

from the allocated budget. The chair of the Team will report back to the RDBM at each Board meeting throughout the pilot to ensure transparency.

Initiatives developed through this Team would be considered pilot or trial initiatives. Any initiatives demonstrating strong community engagement, operational success, and alignment with River District objectives may be recommended in the 2027 Events and Activations Plan.

A draft Terms of Reference is attached to this report for review and provides additional detail regarding the structure, roles and responsibilities, expectations, and reporting requirements of the proposed Team.

The first task the Team will undertake is creating criteria and a process around the approval of pilot events to ensure the budget is well managed.

## **Resource Alignment**

### **Financial Resources**

Staff recommend the allocation of up to \$10,000 from the River District reserve funds for this one year initiative or provide direction on an amount allocated from the reserve funds.

### **Human Resources**

The River District Coordinator will support this pilot. The anticipated staff resources are within the capacity of the position. The planning and delivery of the additional new events will be the responsibility of the Team.

### **Time and Scheduling**

Time and scheduling cannot be calculated due to the Team being a pilot.

### **Technology and Infrastructure**

N/A.

## **Climate and Environmental Impacts:**

There are no anticipated climate or environmental impacts.

## **Communication and Engagement:**

This report is available on the City's website through the RDBM meeting agenda. Following approval, staff will include this information in

communications to the membership through the monthly River District newsletter.

A call for public team members will be through social media, the monthly newsletter, and a media advisory.

The members appointed to the Team will act as additional liaisons with businesses to encourage ideas to come forward.

The events and activations approved through the Team would be reported to the RDBM through its agenda.

### **Report Developed in Consultation With:**

Briana Bloomfield, City Clerk  
Pamela Coulter, Director of Community Services  
Staci Landry, Deputy Clerk

### **Attachments:**

Terms of Reference – RDBM One Year Events and Activations Team

### **Reviewed by:**

Pamela Coulter, Director of Community Services

### **Submission approved by:**

Tim Simmonds, City Manager

For more information on this report, please contact Viveca Gravel, River District Coordinator at [vgravel@owensound.ca](mailto:vgravel@owensound.ca) or 519-376-4440 ext. 1209.

## Background

### Role of the River District Coordinator

1. With respect to events and activations, the role of the River District Coordinator is to;
  - a. coordinate any permits, licensing, insurance, and street closures through the City of Owen Sound;
  - b. ensure the Events and Activations Team budget is tracked;
  - c. manage all expenses;
  - d. ensure River District brand standards are met; and
  - e. support in marketing and promotion of events including maintaining sole administrative access to digital software accounts.

### Role of the River District Board of Management (RDBM)

2. With respect to events and activations, the role of the RDBM is to;
  - a. approve the annual River District Events and Activations Plan;
  - b. allocate budget resources to events and activations; and
  - c. provide oversight and strategic guidance for events and activations within the River District.

### Role of the Events and Activations Team

3. The Events and Activations Team (the “Team”) is a working group under the River District Board of Management that explores new pilot events and activations that fall outside the approved annual events plan.

## Team

### Duties

4. Duties of the Events and Activation Team include:
  - a. acting as the primary driver to develop, plan and execute pilot events and activations by leveraging expertise, community connection and experience;



- b. providing recommendations, updates, and lessons learned to the RDBM regarding pilot initiatives that show potential for future inclusion in the annual plan;
- c. collaborating with staff on operational requirements such as permits, insurance, communications, and marketing;
- d. providing feedback on the successes, challenges, and opportunities associated with pilot initiatives; and
- e. recommending pilot initiatives that may be incorporated into future River District annual plans.

### Chair

- 5. The chair of the Events and Activations Team will be elected by the members of the Team using the Clerk's Election of Chair Procedure in effect at the time. The chair must be a member of the RDBM.
- 6. The role of the chair is to;
  - a. provide leadership, coordination, and accountability to ensure the Team fulfills its mandate;
  - b. facilitate discussion, keep meetings focused, and ensure all members have an opportunity to contribute;
  - c. act as the liaison between the Team, staff, and the RDBM, reporting progress, recommendations, and issues as required; and
  - d. encourage respectful dialogue, manage differing viewpoints, and work toward consensus or clear recommendations.

### Membership

- 7. The Events and Activation Team will be comprised of:
  - a. two (2) members of the RDBM selected using the Clerk's Nomination Procedure in effect at the time; and
  - b. three (3) public members selected by the River District Coordinator based on expertise in events and activations, community connections and experience.

### Term

- 8. The term for Team members will be one (1) year.

## Administrative Support

9. River District staff will provide administrative support to the Team, including coordination of meetings, operational guidance, financial management of the allocated budget, and reporting.

## Meetings

10. The Team will meet monthly, or at the call of the chair, at a location determined by the chair.
11. A quorum of members is not required for a meeting to take place.
12. All decisions to approve new events and allocate funds require a minimum of three (3) Team members.
13. Any Team member with a conflict of interest associated with a matter or matters being considered by the Team must identify the conflict to the team and remove themselves for the portion of the meeting associated with the conflict.

## Reporting

14. At each meeting of the RDBM, the chair of the Events and Activation Team will provide an update on the activities of the Team.
15. Should an event or activation be created and implemented between RDBM meetings, the Chair will notify the RDBM via email for information purposes.
16. In the absence of the chair of the Events and Activation Team at a RDBM meeting, River District staff will provide the update.
17. Updates may be provided verbally or in writing.

## Budget

18. The RDBM may allocate funds to support the Team's work on an annual basis.
19. All expenditures must be coordinated through staff, who will act as the primary point of contact for financial withdrawals and reporting.

## Code of Conduct

20. All Team members will adhere to the City of Owen Sound's [Code of Conduct](#) as outlined in the [River District Constitution](#).