



## Staff Report

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**Report To:** River District Board of Management  
**Report From:** Viveca Gravel, River District Coordinator  
**Meeting Date:** September 9, 2026  
**Report Code:** CS-26-089  
**Subject:** River District Action Plan and Revitalization Project Updates

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### Recommendations:

THAT in consideration of Staff Report CS-26-089 respecting updates on the River District Action Plan and Revitalization Project, the River District Board of Management receives the report for information purposes.

### Highlights:

- The River District Action Plan update is progressing, with engagement completed with the Board of Management and River District business and building owners. Further engagement with service providers and the broader community is planned for September.
- Approximately 57 business and building owners participated in the August 5 engagement session, providing input on existing Action Plan priorities and identifying areas for continued focus.
- O2 Design has commenced work on the River District Revitalization Project, including an on-site assessment of existing infrastructure and deficiencies.
- O2 Design is consolidating information from its site assessment with City GIS and other available data to establish existing conditions and inform the development of a long-term revitalization vision and priorities.

## **River District Plan Alignment:**

The River District Action Plan was approved in 2021. This Plan was designed as a three-year strategy. The timing is appropriate to undertake an update to the Plan.

The River District Revitalization Project aligns with the City of Owen Sound's Strategic Plan.

Priority: City Building

Definition: Enhancing urban development, planning and place-making processes to create places and spaces that contribute to complete communities for existing residents, future residents, and tourists.

By 2050, Owen Sound will be a city whose infrastructure, community amenities and housing stock are well maintained, accessible and responsive to the evolving requirements of community stakeholders and visitors.

## **Previous Report/Authority:**

[River District Action Plan](#)

[CS-25-095](#) - Approach and Methodology to Update the River District Action Plan

[CS-26-061](#) - River District Action Plan Update – Board Update and Input

[CM-25-027](#) - Update Following the July 28 Community Stakeholder Discussion to Foster a Vibrant River District

[CM-25-032](#) - Fostering a Vibrant River District – Report II

[CM-25-033](#) – River District Public Washroom Infrastructure and Operational Assessment

[CM-26-021](#) – Fostering a Vibrant River District - Report III

## **Background:**

### **River District Action Plan**

In 2020, the City of Owen Sound and the River District shared the cost of developing the River District Action Plan, the plan intended to guide the River District over a three-year period.

The Board of Management has approved a methodology for undertaking the Plan update.

This report provides an interim update on the progress to date.

## **River District Revitalization Project**

In October 2025, Council approved funding toward a River District revitalization project, which also received grant funding through the Government of Ontario. The project is intended to assess the aging infrastructure within the River District and establish a comprehensive, long-term approach to infrastructure, revitalization, and placemaking.

Following a competitive procurement process, the City of Owen Sound awarded the consulting contract to O2 Design.

## **Analysis and Options:**

### **River District Action Plan**

As part of the Board of Management meeting on July 8, 2026, the River District Board participated in an exercise to review and provide feedback on the existing actions and identify new actions within the four key pillars of the Plan.

On August 5, 2026, River District business and building owners were invited to participate in the same exercise. Approximately 57 participants attended and provided feedback on the existing action items and future priorities for the River District.

A service provider engagement session is scheduled for September 25, 2026, where participants will complete the same exercise. A public survey will also launch on the same date to provide an additional opportunity for community input.

Once all the feedback is received, staff will consolidate the feedback and bring back a report to the Board for review and input. An updated Plan will follow.

## **River District Revitalization Project**

A project kick-off meeting was held on July 22, 2026, between O2 Design, City staff, and the River District Coordinator. The meeting provided an overview of the project requirements, expectations, schedule, and immediate next steps.

Staff shared background including; River District Action Plan, City of Owen Sound Official Plan, Urban Design & Façade Guidelines, Harbour Downtown Urban Design Master Plan, Community Improvement Plan guidelines, detailed mapping of streets, street furniture and infrastructure, Patio Guidelines, as well as other planning and land use documents. In addition to this documentation, O2 has been provided with access to several GIS (Geographic Information System) layers with deficiencies, historic plaque placement, parking, vacancy, and more. As the project continues, staff will ensure that they receive further documentation as needed.

On August 20, 2026, a member of the O2 Design team was in Owen Sound to conduct an on-site review of River District infrastructure, assess deficiencies, and develop a more comprehensive understanding of the area.

O2 Design is currently consolidating information gathered during the site visit with available City data, including GIS information. This work will help establish a clear understanding of existing conditions and inform future planning and revitalization priorities.

The consultant is also preparing an initial communication for Council and the River District Board of Management outlining preliminary findings, vision, and direction for the project.

As part of this project, O2 Design will be hosting feedback sessions with stakeholders as well as launching a survey to the public to ensure these pieces of information are included in their overall plan.

## **Resource Alignment:**

### **Financial Resources**

#### **River District Action Plan**

The River District Board has established a \$10,000 budget to support this update. A portion of these funds was used to support costs relating to a meeting with building and business owners and service providers.

#### **River District Revitalization Project**

This project is funded through an allocation from Council and a grant from the Government of Ontario.

## **Human Resources**

These actions are being completed with staff resources from both the City and River District.

## **Time and Scheduling**

### **River District Action Plan**

Public engagement, including a meeting with service providers and a live survey, is scheduled to be completed by mid-October 2026.

### **River District Revitalization Project**

The project is scheduled to be completed by April 2027.

## **Technology and Infrastructure**

N/A.

## **Climate and Environmental Impacts:**

The recommendation supports both the City's Corporate Climate Change Adaptation Plan and the City's Climate Mitigation Plan.

## **Communication and Engagement:**

### **River District Action Plan**

Staff have sent direct emails to social agencies and community partners for the upcoming session.

Staff will use the City's project page on the OurCity framework as a key part of communication for the project. The project will be branded to identify the initiative as being led by the River District.

A public survey will be conducted through OurCity launching September 25, 2026.

Following public engagement, a report will be prepared for the Board summarizing the input and identifying any issues that require additional professional expertise. Following this, the Plan will be updated, and this updated River District Action Plan will be presented to the Board for review and feedback.

## **River District Revitalization Project**

As the project progresses, memos and presentations will be made to Council and the River District Board of Management.

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

Pamela Coulter, Director of 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.