



Report to Council

To: Mayor and Council Members
From: Edward Hilton, Economic Development Officer
Date: March 13, 2026
Subject: RED Program Update from EDO March 2026

Recommendation:

That Council:

Authorize staff to discontinue the Downtown Revitalization process funded through the former Rural Economic Development (RED) Grant administered by the Ministry of Rural Affairs.

Background:

The Township was successful in securing funding through the former Rural Economic Development (RED) Grant program. The original grant application and approval included key activities such as:

- Community consultations
- Development of a Downtown Master Plan
- Marketing activities

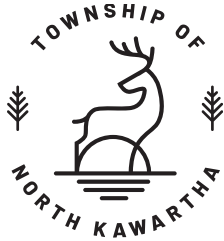
Since the original grant submission and approval, several developments have influenced the scope and timing of a Downtown Revitalization project:

1. Creation of a Planning Department

A new Planning Department was established, including the hiring of a Junior Planner and a Manager of Planning. Both positions are now vacant, and the Township is relying on Planning Consultants for continuity.

2. Comprehensive Zoning By-law Review

A review of the Township's Comprehensive Zoning By-law was initiated by Committee in 2024 and later placed on hold in 2025. A joint RFP with neighbouring municipalities for a coordinated zoning update is planned for 2026. The Comprehensive Zoning By-



Township of North Kawartha

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law Review process will impact land use and development opportunities in Downtown Apsley.

3. Delays in County Planning

Approval of the Peterborough County Official Plan has been delayed, which could influence land use and transportation corridors within a proposed Downtown Apsley Master Plan.

Other Relevant Activities and Initiatives

Community Improvement Plan (CIP)

The CIP Committee has resumed meetings after a four-year hiatus and is actively reviewing the Plan. Draft proposed changes to the CIP will be presented for public consultation in April using the Engage platform, with feedback to be reviewed by the Committee. This work complements a Downtown Master Plan by encouraging property improvement and revitalization initiatives.

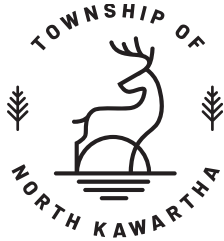
Parks & Open Space Strategy

As per the strategic plan, staff are completing a Parks and Open Space Strategy for the Township which includes enhanced green spaces and connectivity within and around Downtown Apsley. The strategy aligns with a potential Downtown Master Plan by improving public spaces and supporting multi-use trails or pathways.

Staff note that the intent of the RED-funded Downtown Revitalization project was to support long-term planning and investment in Downtown Apsley. However, given the number of broader planning initiatives currently underway or anticipated, including the Peterborough County Official Plan update, the Township's Comprehensive Zoning By-law review, and updates to the Community Improvement Plan, staff believe that pausing the project at this time will allow the Township to undertake a more coordinated and effective downtown planning process in the future. Aligning these initiatives will help ensure that future planning efforts are supported by the appropriate policy framework and provide clearer direction for residents, businesses, and potential investors.

In the interim, staff will continue to advance smaller-scale economic development and placemaking initiatives that support Downtown Apsley while positioning the Township for a more comprehensive planning process at a later date.

Analysis:



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While the formal Downtown Revitalization process under the RED grant is proposed to be discontinued, staff will continue to advance targeted initiatives that support the functionality, economic activity, and vibrancy of Downtown Apsley.

Additionally, several projects are currently planned or underway that support Downtown Apsley and involve Township staff resources:

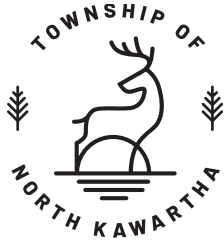
- Improvements to the vacant lot at 143 Burleigh Street to create a much-needed parking lot, including paving, curbs, lighting, and rough-in for EV chargers.
- Renovation of the underutilized municipal space at 135 Burleigh Street, with construction to be completed in Q2 2026.
- A development application for 80 Burleigh Street, for a daycare is currently under review through the municipal planning process. Township staff and the Municipality's planning consultant are working with the applicant as part of the review. Staff believe the proposed use has the potential to be a positive addition to Downtown Apsley; however, it may also warrant further consideration of transportation and mobility connections within the community.
- Exploration of traffic calming measures and posted limits in Apsley, with the Township preparing an updated traffic warrant request to the County of Peterborough.
- The first pedestrian wayfinding signage to guide visitors and encourage downtown exploration, installed in 2025.

Given the timing of the Peterborough County Official Plan update and the Township's planned Comprehensive Zoning By-law review, staff recommend discontinuing the Downtown Revitalization process under the RED grant at this time and revisiting a more comprehensive planning approach in the future.

Staff also plan to bring forward further recommendations in 2026 that may inform the Township's future Comprehensive Zoning By-law review and could also be incorporated into the next Strategic Plan(s), including the Economic Development Strategy and/or the broader Township Strategic Plan for 2027–2030.

Financial Implications:

The municipal contribution previously allocated to support the Rural Economic Development (RED) Grant Downtown Revitalization project will no longer be required for the originally proposed activities.



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At this time, no funding contributions have been received from the province, and no funds are required to be transferred back to the province.

Staff would ensure that any remaining administrative requirements associated with the grant are appropriately addressed.

Should additional economic development opportunities arise in 2026 that align with Council priorities for Downtown Apsley or broader community promotion, staff may bring forward separate financial requests for Council consideration through future reports or the 2027 budget process.

Strategic and/or Other Plans:

- 2026 Budget
- Township of North Kawartha 2023-2026 Strategic Plan
Infrastructure - 4. Explore complete communities
- Township of North Kawartha 2023–2026 Strategic Economic Development Plan
5.0 – Master Plan

In Consultation With:

Connie Parent, Clerk

Judy Everett, Treasurer

Alana Solman, CAO

Attachment:

None