

An aerial photograph of a suburban town, likely Dundalk, showing a mix of residential houses, commercial buildings, and parking lots. The town is surrounded by open fields and some wooded areas. The image is used as a background for the title section of the report.

Dundalk Downtown Revitalization

STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

2025 – 2027

Township of Southgate

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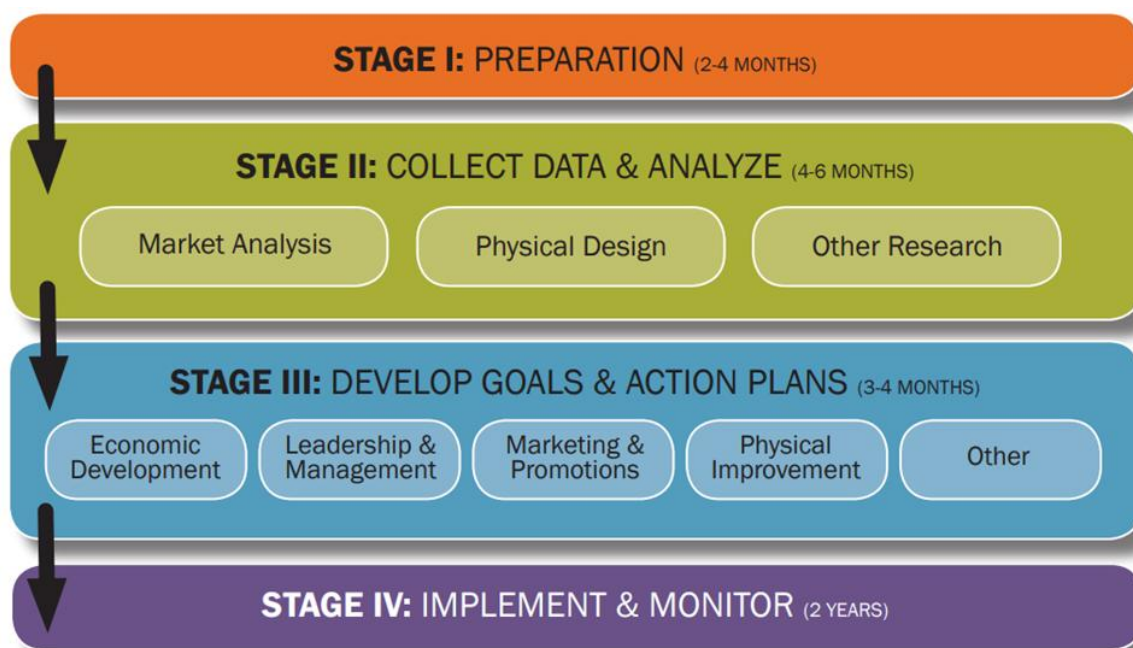
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Summary

In January 2025, the Township launched the Downtown Revitalization project for downtown Dundalk – which follows Ontario Ministry of Rural Affairs (MRA) guidelines – to develop “a vision for downtown beautification in consultation with the community.”¹ This project was initiated in keeping with the Township of Southgate’s 2023-2027 Community Strategic Plan Goal 4 to “revitalize Downtown Dundalk to enhance its beauty and restore pride-of-place in the downtown.” In keeping with the MRA Four-Stage Revitalization Process, the Township established the Downtown Revitalization Taskforce – made up of dedicated community members – to provide the project with feedback and direction. The Dundalk Downtown Revitalization Project was coordinated by the Township’s Economic Development Officer with the assistance of numerous departments within the municipality. This project was supported by various policies related to section 5.2.2 Downtown Commercial Designation of the Southgate Official Plan.²

Time Frame for the Four-Stage Revitalization Process³



During Stage I of the project, the Taskforce participated in preliminary analysis of downtown Dundalk’s opportunities and challenges. The Taskforce developed the vision statement below to guide the project as it entered the data gathering stage.

Vision Statement

Downtown Dundalk is a vibrant, multicultural hub that fosters new businesses, enriching experiences, and a high quality of life, all while honouring its rich history. It is

a cherished destination for accessible local shopping, celebrating diverse business owners and entrepreneurs, providing space for all-ages recreation, and ensuring local farm goods and products are readily available. The unique mix of traditional farming communities, and modern, innovative industries in the surrounding areas adds to the town's charm and dynamic character.

As part of Stage I: Preparation, the Township engaged two groups of planning students from the University of Waterloo to make recommendations based on Dundalk's current and future population needs for goods, services, and recreation within the community. The students reported on their (virtual and in-person) first impressions of the downtown, created inventories of buildings and businesses, evaluated the impacts of the Ministerial Zoning Orders (MZOs), and provided overall analysis.

In Stage II: Collect Data & Analyze, the Taskforce launched surveys of businesses, residents of Dundalk, and downtown customers. The customer origin survey data will be used to create the Trade Area Analysis and Market Threshold Analysis with the support of MRA. The results of the business and resident surveys were utilized to support an application to MRA for Rural Ontario Development (ROD) Program cost sharing to fund the "Participatory Community Design" process. In this community-led process, a design professional will be utilized to guide businesses and residents through creating a visual framework for physical improvements in response to downtown challenges and opportunities. This component of the Downtown Revitalization project could not be initiated factoring in that staff do not have the software and skillsets needed to produce professional renderings in-house. This activity of Stage II will be delayed until funding is secured, and a design professional can be enlisted.

To complete Stage III: Develop Goals & Action Plans, staff and Taskforce members utilized the results of the data and analysis to develop a strategy and action plan. The Dundalk Downtown Revitalization Strategy aims to resolve the two main problems identified through data gathered that – if resolved – would have the greatest impact on the commercial core. These issues are 1) the poor physical condition of downtown buildings, and 2) the need for new businesses offering residents more selection and affordable prices. The actions developed in response to this strategy will focus on enhancing the physical appeal of downtown Dundalk and attracting new businesses that meet the needs of the growing population.

¹ [Rooted in community, embracing our future: Township of Southgate Community Strategic Plan 2023-2027](#), (p. 18).

² Township of Southgate Official Plan: <https://www.southgate.ca/media/tkmb0krc/official-plan-may-4-2022-township-adopted-updated-with-county-amendments.pdf> (5.5.5 Downtown Commercial Designation).

³ (Downtown Revitalization Coordinator's Manual, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, 2.)

Once approved by Southgate Council, the strategy and action plan will be implemented and monitored from early 2026 to the end of 2027. Following this two-year period, the strategy and action plan will be re-examined and may be modified based on future context and need.

Background

The Township of Southgate provides a wealth of opportunity to its residents, businesses, and workforce. From rich agricultural lands to commercial and industrial outlets – such as the Eco Park just outside of Dundalk – all offer unique and appealing opportunities. As the southernmost municipality in Grey County, Southgate acts as a gateway to the region. Southgate's community is diverse, and it is home to the highest concentrations of Muslim and Caribbean residents in the County. The Township also have two traditional Mennonite communities that contribute significantly to the thriving agricultural and manufacturing sectors.

Southgate was formed on January 1, 2000, with the amalgamation of the Village of Dundalk, the Township of Proton, and the Township of Egremont. As Mayor Brian Milne reflects, “the history of the Township is very much rural and agriculturally based. We have a lot of very productive farmland here. On the eastern extreme end of the Township is our urban centre, the town of Dundalk, and interspersed amongst the Township are a number of small settlement areas.”

Dundalk – originally Dundalk Station – was once a bustling hub of the area with the CRP rail line running through its core from the 1870s. Its significance as an important rail station led to its growth and official incorporation as a village in 1887. Over the years, Dundalk became known as the busiest station on the line with regular shipments of livestock, grain, timber, and produce, as well as the later addition of passenger service. However, a shift towards transportation of goods by truck and passengers by car led to the eventual closure of the station in 1971. Since this time, downtown businesses have struggled to draw new customers into the downtown area and commercial vacancies have skyrocketed.

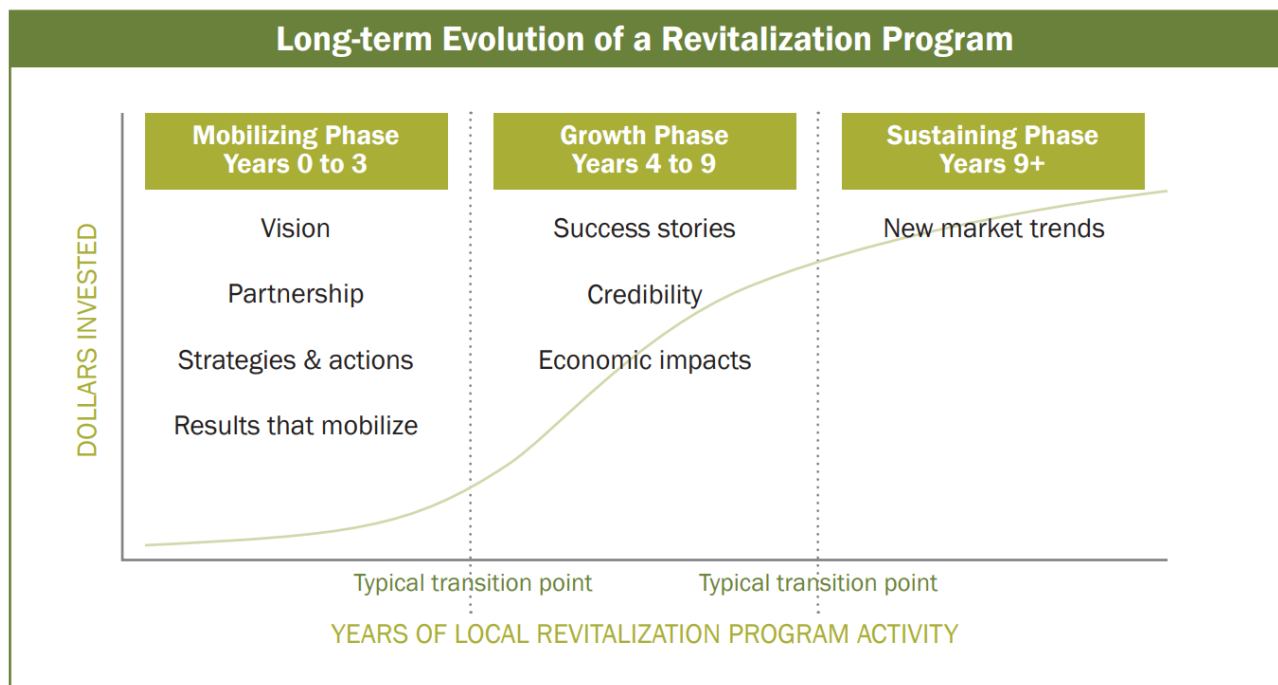
Currently, Dundalk is under three Ministerial Zoning Orders (MZOs) and is experiencing unprecedented residential growth. As of the 2021 census, the population of Dundalk was 2,803, though this number continues to grow exponentially with the addition of three large subdivisions. However, downtown Dundalk lacks the underlying core businesses suited to adequately serve the growing population, which significantly impacts community cohesion and the integration of new housing around it, affecting livability and economic growth. While existing downtown businesses struggle to attract new customers and many commercial spaces remain vacant, there is an opportunity to revitalize the downtown and draw new residents to local businesses.

Dundalk Downtown Revitalization Project

Project Summary

In 2023, the Township developed the 2023-2027 Community Strategic Plan – through resident and business consultation – to serve as a roadmap for rapid development and growth in Southgate. This plan identified developing “a thriving economy” as the first of its three priorities. Within these priorities, the revitalization of downtown Dundalk was a central goal, with participation in MRA’s Downtown Revitalization program as a key action to fulfill it. The Township recognizes that – as the commercial core of Southgate – attracting and retaining businesses to downtown Dundalk is essential for providing necessary products and services to the growing population. While downtown revitalization has been a goal of the Township for quite some time, the revitalization process needs to be recognized as an on-going task that is pursued in collaboration with the community.

Long-term Evolution of a Revitalization Program⁴



In the past five years, the Township has completed the following activities which will support the on-going revitalization of downtown Dundalk:

- Established a Community Improvement Plan (CIP) to provide business and property owners with financial support to rehabilitate downtown buildings.
- Development of the Historic Southgate program, with banners and signs installed in Dundalk, connecting residents to the history of the area.
- Installation of benches and planters downtown to support streetscape beautification.

-
- Painting of 11 new murals downtown, reflecting cultural and environmental heritage.

The purpose of this project was to ensure that a fulsome vision was developed to tie previous projects together, creating further momentum towards revitalization. The community is ripe for growth in this area as residents, businesses, and property owners are more aware of downtown initiatives and how they can get involved to revive Dundalk's commercial core.

Stage I: Preparation

The first stage of the project focused on establishing the Downtown Revitalization Taskforce and training the volunteer members on their advisory role. Following which, the Taskforce conducted preliminary assessments, reviewed background documents, and created a workplan.

Downtown Revitalization Taskforce

This project was strengthened by the guidance and feedback of community members. In January 2025, the Township put out a call for volunteers to participate in the Downtown Revitalization Taskforce. This group met monthly to direct the steps of the program. The Taskforce was comprised of local business owners, property owners, residents, and members of local service groups. Members of the Township's planning, building, and public works departments also attended meetings as non-voting members to respond to questions directed towards their specific departments. The Taskforce began with an introductory meeting in February 2025 and final official meeting in December 2025.

Taskforce Members:

- Samantha Parent (Chair)
- Stacy Sherson (Vice-Chair)
- Govind Singh
- Erin Goodyear
- Talha Wasti

First Impressions Community Exchange

A First Impressions Community Exchange (FICE) – as outlined by MRA – helps a community gain insight on the challenges and opportunities of a downtown through the perspective of visitors. While a typical FICE program facilitates the exchange between two communities, the Township requested that the University of Waterloo planning students conduct modified FICE

⁴ (Downtown Revitalization Coordinator's Manual, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, x)

activities.⁵ The students organized walk-about of the downtown both in-person and virtually in February of 2025, then compiled reports accompanied by thorough mapping, review of existing conditions, and MZO impact analysis in April 2025.⁶ The EDO presented the student reports to the Taskforce and then to Council for consideration.

Ideas drawn from the analysis that staff believed to be feasible include:

- Improving existing and adding street furniture (benches, planters, bike racks, banners, etc.).
- Motivating more business and building owners to utilize the façade and signage grants offered through the Southgate Community Improvement Plan (CIP).
- Updating the Zoning By-law and Official Plan for the context of residential growth surrounding Dundalk's downtown core. Possible updates could:
 - Encourage mixed-uses and higher densities in and around downtown.
 - Allow special downtown core zoning that would enhance permitted uses of downtown buildings regardless of parking.
- Adding wayfinding signage that directs residents and visitors to the downtown core, to notify them about shopping destinations and alternative parking locations.
- Developing more Township-maintained parking spaces within the downtown core.
- Creating design standards for buildings that promote a uniform look and feel while increasing curb appeal of the downtown streetscape.
- Offering increased entertainment options for residents in the downtown core by attracting new businesses and activating public spaces for events.

Stage II: Collect Data & Analyze

The second stage of the project focused on gathering current data to create an evidence-based foundation for the strategy and action plan. The information collection components utilized written surveys, existing databases, downtown walks, and street interviews for the below-listed activities:

⁵ First Impressions Community Exchange Report – Group 1: <https://pub-southgate.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=29867>

First Impressions Community Exchange Report – Group 2: <https://pub-southgate.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=29868>

⁶ EDO2025-007 – Waterloo Student Reports: <https://pub-southgate.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=31281>

EDO2025-007-Downtown Revitalization Final Report – Group 1: <https://pub-southgate.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=31282>

EDO2025-007-Downtown Revitalization MZO Analysis – Group 1: <https://pub-southgate.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=31283>

EDO2025-007-Downtown Revitalization Final Report – Group 2: <https://pub-southgate.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=31284>

- Business & Building Inventory
- Business Mix Analysis
- Business Owner Survey
- Resident Survey
- Customer Origin Survey

The following summaries demonstrate the data gathered in every component of Stage II. Please contact the Township of Southgate for full reports and documents.

Business & Building Inventory

The Business & Building Inventory was compiled by University of Waterloo planning students. At the time of writing (April 2025), they identified 49 buildings downtown, 41 of which were occupied and 8 of which were vacant. The students compiled maps that analyzed the area by downtown boundaries, land use designation, commercial categories, zoning, and parking spaces. Significantly, the findings demonstrated that –

although not every business has on-site or street parking – all were within a five-minute walk (or 400 meters) of appropriate parking.⁷ In addition to mapping, the students compiled the information in a datasheet the act as a working inventory of businesses and buildings. This datasheet will be utilized by Township staff.



Business Mix Analysis

The Business Mix Analysis was developed by Waterloo planning students alongside the Business & Building inventory with detailed mapping. The information showcased the

⁷ EDO2025-007-Downtown Revitalization Final Report – Group 2: <https://pub-southgate.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=31284> (p. 84).

commercial category and classification of the downtown businesses to demonstrate how Dundalk's downtown functions. Examining the various business types downtown helped to identify gaps in the current business mix. The 41 occupied spaces had the following classification.⁸

| | |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Retail Trade: 8 | Wholesale Trade: 2 |
| Personal Services: 6 | Municipal Administration: 2 |
| Professional & Banking Services: 6 | Manufacturing: 2 |
| Food Services: 5 | Health Care Services: 2 |
| Religious Organizations: 3 | Other: 5 |

Business Owner Survey

The Business Owner survey was completed by 20 downtown business owners who shared their feedback on operating businesses in the commercial core.⁹ Of the respondents, 40%

Question 15: Is your business experiencing any of these issues?



said that their top issues with running a business downtown were 1) number of parking spaces, 2) availability of parking spaces, and 3) storefront appearance/signage. It should be noted that both planning students and residents felt that there was sufficient parking downtown. It is possible that there is a perception issue related to parking availability

⁸ EDO2025-007-Downtown Revitalization Final Report – Group 2: <https://pub-southgate.escrimemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=31284> (p. 81).

⁹ EDO2025-009-Downtown Dundalk Business Owner Survey Results: <https://pub-southgate.escrimemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=32019>

EDO2025-009-Attachment 1 - Downtown Dundalk Business Owner Survey: <https://pub-southgate.escrimemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=32020>

EDO2025-009-Attachment 2 - Downtown Dundalk Business Owner Survey Results: [EDO2025-009 Attachment 2 - Downtown Dundalk Business Owner Survey Results.pptx](#)

downtown and that providing information to businesses and customers about alternative parking locations might be an appropriate solution.

Survey results demonstrate that most downtown customers are residents of Dundalk and the surrounding area. Most new customers come from referral or foot traffic, emphasizing the importance of attracting new residents to shop locally. Respondents largely disagreed that the look and feel of the downtown helped their business (65%). The two main problems identified that – if resolved – would have the greatest impact on business were 1) physical appearance of the downtown (buildings, streetscapes, parking, and signage), and 2) the need for new businesses to draw more customers to the core. These two issues were also identified in resident surveys.

Resident Survey

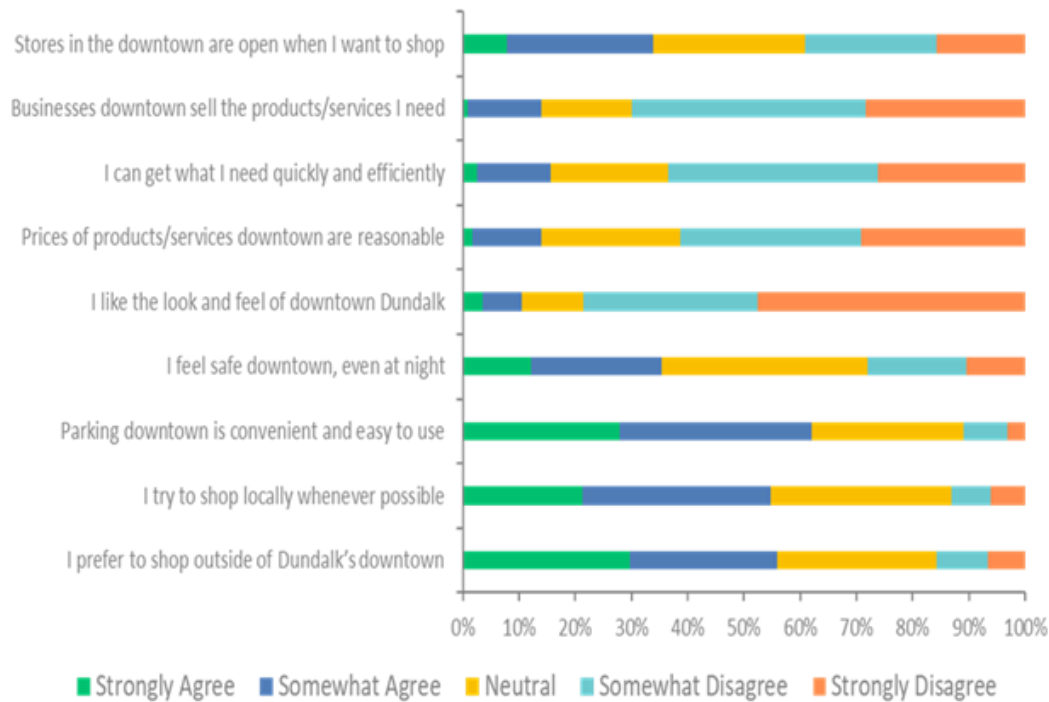
The Resident Survey was used to assess the reasons that residents did or did not shop downtown and the improvements in which they were most interested. The survey was launched in May 2025 and reflected key priorities for residents for downtown revitalization. The survey was available online and in hardcopy at the Southgate Public Library and the Township office in Hopeville.¹⁰ The survey was completed by 230 respondents with the postal code N0C 1B0.¹¹ It is important to note that the Foodland grocery store and Dundalk Memorial Park were included within the downtown boundary in this survey to help analyze the reason for which residents came downtown.

The main reason that residents reported going downtown was for grocery shopping, this appeared to have little impact on other downtown businesses as the grocery store is on the periphery of the commercial core. Although business owners reported that their most important customer segment was residents, a high number of residents surveyed indicated that they “rarely” or “never” visited the downtown. The primary reasons that respondents shopped outside of Dundalk were “selection” (87%) and “price” (77%). Most residents surveyed said that they preferred to shop outside of Dundalk and that they disagreed with the statement that “I like the look and feel of the downtown” (48% strongly disagree, 31% somewhat disagree).

¹⁰ EDO2025-010-Downtown Dundalk Resident Survey Results: <https://pub-southgate.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=32022>
EDO2025-010-Attachment 1 - Downtown Dundalk Resident Survey: <https://pub-southgate.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=32023>
EDO2025-010-Attachment 2 - Downtown Dundalk Resident Survey Results: <https://pub-southgate.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=32024>

¹¹ Six of the respondents only listed “N0C” as their postal code.

Question 8: How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements?



The open-ended survey questions showed that residents were disappointed by the state of buildings downtown, with many empty storefronts, rundown businesses, and lack of curb appeal. As in the business owner surveys, residents emphasized that the primary issues downtown that needed to be resolved were 1) physical improvements to the buildings, and 2) attraction of new businesses to meet community needs. The top words or phrases mentioned throughout the survey were follows below:

- i. Building or Buildings – Mentioned 253 times
- ii. Groceries or Grocery Store – Mentioned 183 times
- iii. Restaurant or Restaurants – Mentioned 157 times
- iv. Dollar Store, Dollarama, Dollartree, etc. – Mentioned 56 times
- v. Walmart – Mentioned 34 times
- vi. Coffee or Coffee Shop – Mentioned 30 times
- vii. Giant Tiger – Mentioned 20 times

The Resident Surveys revealed that public perception of the downtown is overwhelmingly negative. Despite many residents expressing that they appreciated downtown's "heritage," "small town vibe," "murals," "Town Hall," and more, a high number reported that there was "nothing" unique about the downtown. This negative attitude represents a barrier for businesses in reaching new customers.

Customer Origin Surveys

The Customer Origin Surveys consisted of brief, on-street interviews with downtown customers over a period of eight days from July 15-22, 2025. Approximately 283 customers were surveyed and asked about the top three businesses, services, or improvements they would like to see downtown Dundalk. Postal codes were also collected from each customer to determine the trade area for the downtown. Of the 283 customers surveyed, 201 indicated that their postal code was N0C 1B0, the postal code for Dundalk which also includes Hopeville, Ventry, and other rural areas in Southgate. The most common area of origin of customers outside of the Dundalk postal code was Melancthon. These results confirmed the feedback from business owner surveys that indicated that downtown customers are largely residents of Dundalk and the surrounding rural areas.

The Customer Origin Survey data will be incorporated into a Trade Area Analysis and Market Threshold Analysis with support from the Ministry of Rural Affairs. The report will include a map of the trade area, demographic information about residents within the trade area, and the purchasing habits for these individuals. The Market Threshold Analysis will look at the size of the market necessary for a business to survive; this helps identify potential business gaps/strengths and opportunities that may exist downtown. These analyses will be provided as a separate document.

Stage III: Develop Goals & Action Plans

Following the gathering of data and preliminary analysis, staff and Taskforce members worked to craft a strategy and action plan that responds to community feedback. The strategy is meant to exhibit a razor-sharp focus, clear target demographic, and a foundation in community needs, that builds off the strengths of the community, addresses critical gaps, and prioritizes social and economic growth.

The MRA Downtown Revitalization directives hinge on the four-point approach, a methodology of the Main Street Four-Point Approach® and the National Trust Main Street Center® in the United States.¹² This approach

finds that there are four components necessary for downtown revitalization, which consist of 1) economic development, 2) leadership and management, 3) marketing and promotions, and 4) physical improvements. As a result, this strategy seeks to address each of these four points to create long-term sustainable change in Dundalk's downtown.



Market Position Statement

Utilizing the data gathering throughout Stage II, the Downtown Revitalization Taskforce developed a market position statement to guide the revitalization strategy and actions. The statement was developed by examining downtown Dundalk's target audience, differentiators, key assets, and strategic focus as outlined in the chart below:

Target Audience:

- Youth and families
- New residents
- Seniors

Key Assets:

- Memorial Park and Rail Trail for recreation
- Historic buildings and municipal library
- Community amenities like recreational facilities, benches, and floral displays

Differentiators:

- Off-highway location for a quieter, safer experience
- Historic Olde Town Hall and cultural events
- Mennonite presence adding unique character and local goods

Strategic Focus:

- Enhance directional signage from highway and trails to downtown
- Increase resident awareness of local businesses, resources, and services
- Attract essential services to meet growing community needs

The strategy focuses on the target demographic identified in survey results when considering downtown improvements and activations. The market position statement is as follows:

Downtown Dundalk is a welcoming, family-oriented hub experiencing rapid residential growth that blends small-town charm with unique cultural diversity. Positioned off the highway, it offers a safe, accessible environment for youth, families, seniors, and new residents seeking connection, recreation, and essential goods and services.

Public Results Presentation

Township staff summarized project findings and presented them to business owners and community members at the 2025 "Coffee with the Mayor" event. The event was held at the Frank McIntyre Building in Dundalk Memorial Park on Monday, November 3, 2025.

Approximately, 40 community members, businesses, and property owners attended. During the presentation, attendees had the opportunity to submit anonymous feedback through an online portal that was read out during the meeting. Township staff provided an opportunity to ask questions at the end of the session.

¹² (Downtown Revitalization Coordinator's Manual, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, vii).

The Township's Director of Development Services presented the proposed updates to the General Commercial (C2) zoning relevant to downtown businesses. The proposed zoning updates would respond to project data by clarifying downtown parking rules, encouraging the redevelopment of mixed-use properties, and supporting increased dwelling units downtown. This event represented the on-going public dialogue that will take place as the downtown revitalization strategy and action plan is implemented.

Strategy

The Dundalk Downtown Revitalization Strategy aims to resolve the two main problems identified through data gathered that – if resolved – would have the greatest impact on the commercial core. These problems are:

- 1) the poor physical appearance of the downtown area, and
- 2) the lack of businesses offering selection and affordable prices.

This strategy will focus on accomplishing the goals of:

- 1) enhancing the physical appeal of downtown, and
- 2) attracting new businesses to meet the needs of the growing population.

The data gathered for this project illustrates that there is an untapped market for downtown businesses right in Dundalk. This strategy aims to attract new residents downtown to shop and access services by increasing the number of occupied storefronts, enhancing streetscape appeal, creating points of connection, and promoting positive messaging.

Action Plan

To implement this strategy, the Taskforce identified 15 critical issues that fall within the scope of the strategy and developed an action plan to address each one. Following the approval of the strategy and action plan document by Southgate Council, the Dundalk Downtown Revitalization Project will move into Stage IV: Implement & Monitor.

1. Critical Issue: Entry Signs

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|--------------------|---|
| Objective | Update Dundalk's entry signs to refresh the gateways leading downtown. |
| Priority | High |
| Activity | Work with the community to develop a design that reflects Dundalk's growing and diverse population that will foster pride-of-place and interest in visiting Dundalk's commercial core. |
| Description | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Collaborate with residents and community groups to develop entry signs that are reflective of the character and aspirations of Dundalk. |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work with a design professional to develop a variety of design concepts that are reflective of the community and incorporate cohesive branding. - Engage residents, customers, and business owners to give feedback on the design concepts and select one to implement. - Acquire quotes for the construction cost. - Secure funding for the sign through grants and capital budgets. - Work with Grey County to ensure construction of signs is completed and aligns with all relevant policies. - Coordinate with the Dundalk Agricultural Society to refresh the “SMILE” sign at Dundalk’s eastern entrance. |
| Responsibility | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Township. - Community Groups. - Grey County. |
| Timeline | - January 2026 – December 2026 |
| Resources | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rural Ontario Development (ROD) Program intake 1 funding for streetscape and signage design (pending approval) and 50% match from Southgate Community Reserve Fund (approved Sept 17, 2025).¹³ - Funding from the Township’s 2026 capital budget. |
| Evaluation | - Entry signs are updated to the satisfaction of the community. |

2. Critical Issue: Wayfinding Signage

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| Objective | - Increase awareness of downtown businesses and services to residents and visitors using the public roads and trail system. |
| Priority | - High |
| Activity | - Install a wayfinding signage system that will guide residents and visitors into the downtown area to shop. |
| Description | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work with a professional to design a wayfinding signage system in Dundalk that directs residents and visitors to businesses and services downtown. Incorporate other promotional elements into the plan like a billboard. - Ensure that the wayfinding signage plan complements the streetscape design and presents a unified, cohesive brand. |

¹³ EDO2025-011-Alternative Rural Ontario Development (ROD) Program Application: <https://pub-southgate.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=32025>

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Acquire quotes for the construction of the wayfinding signage system. - Secure funding for wayfinding signage through grants and capital budget. - Work with Grey County to ensure construction of signs is successfully completed and aligns with all relevant policies. |
| Responsibility | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Township. - Grey County. |
| Timeline | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Begin working with a designer in 2026. Install signage in 2027. |
| Resources | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rural Ontario Development (ROD) Program intake 1 funding for streetscape and signage design (pending approval) and 50% match from Southgate Community Reserve Fund (approved Sept 17, 2025). - Funding from the Township's 2027 capital budget. - Apply to the Rural Ontario Development (ROD) Program to cover 35% of the construction costs (Intake 3 – Opens August 2026). |
| Evaluation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wayfinding signage is installed to the satisfaction of the community. - Increase in foot traffic downtown. |

3. Critical Issue: Unappealing Buildings

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| Objective | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rehabilitate downtown facades, signage, buildings, and landscaping. |
| Priority | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High |
| Activity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work with property owners to restore commercial and mixed-use buildings to their historic grandeur. |
| Description | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop renderings and design guidelines for storefront restoration (pending ROD application approval) so that they reflect community desire for the buildings. - Incorporate building and streetscape design guidelines into the Township's Official Plan, ensuring that language is as simple as possible to follow. - Develop a downtown building owner information package with details about the CIP, tax incentives, and landlord information. - Create a list of businesses that would be successful downtown that would be beneficial to attract. |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organize a “meet and greet” to bring property owners, business owners, real estate agents, and entrepreneurs together to encourage new business development downtown. - Connect potential entrepreneurs with training and consultations through the Business Enterprise Centre to strengthen the development of business plans for potential new enterprises. - Approach landlords with renderings and guidelines to propose they initiate the projects utilizing CIP funds. |
| Responsibility | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Property owners. - Business owners. - Township. |
| Timeline | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ongoing |
| Resources | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Economic Development Staff. - CIP funding. - Staff referral to other funding sources as they arise. |
| Evaluation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Approve 3 CIP rehabilitation projects downtown per year. |

4. Critical Issue: Accessibility

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| Objective | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Make downtown businesses and facilities accessible to mobility devices and strollers. |
| Priority | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High |
| Activity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work with business and property owners to access funding for physical improvements to buildings. |
| Description | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify various grant, loan, and other funding opportunities available to support business accessibility needs. - Work with Building, Planning, and Public Works staff to develop an alternative entrance strategy for businesses on Proton St N. - Incorporate streetscaping elements that make alternative entrances more welcoming and dignified in accordance with the Southgate Official Plan.¹⁴ - Conduct outreach to business owners to troubleshoot alternative entrance options for mobility devices and strollers that are dignifying to customers. |

¹⁴ Township of Southgate Official Plan: <https://www.southgate.ca/media/tkmb0krc/official-plan-may-4-2022-township-adopted-updated-with-county-amendments.pdf> (5.5.5 Downtown Commercial Designation).

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Connect business and property owners with funding options to make their buildings accessible. |
| Responsibility | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Business/Property Owners. |
| Timeline | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ongoing. |
| Resources | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Southgate Community Improvement Plan (CIP) grants. - Rural Ontario Development (ROD) program grants for businesses to support 35% of eligible costs up to a maximum of \$10,000.00 for <u>ROD business development projects</u>. These grants can be stacked with Southgate CIP funding. |
| Evaluation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of buildings that become accessible. |

5. Critical Issue: Streetscape Beautification

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| Objective | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Create a unified theme for the downtown streetscape that incorporates unified elements. |
| Priority | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High |
| Activity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Create a visual streetscape beautification plan and implement the elements of design downtown. |
| Description | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work with a design professional to develop a visual plan for the downtown that incorporates existing streetscape elements (benches, planters, murals, etc.) (pending ROD application approval). - Work with the community to select a design that is appreciated by residents, customers, and business owners. - Have the design approved by Council. - Apply for funding to implement streetscape changes and incorporate maintenance of new features into capital budget. |
| Responsibility | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Township. - Business Sponsors. |
| Timeline | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - January 2026 – December 2026. |
| Resources | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rural Ontario Development (ROD) Program (pending approval). - Economic Development budget. - Business Sponsorship (ex. flowers). |
| Evaluation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of features added to the downtown. |

6. Critical Issue: Commercial Vacancies

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| Objective | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fill vacant commercial spaces with businesses reflective of resident needs for goods and services. |
| Priority | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High |

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| Activity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Connect entrepreneurs with viable business ideas to appropriate commercial spaces. |
| Description | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conduct outreach to local landlords that have available commercial spaces. - Ensure that spaces are move-in ready for businesses by connecting property owners with CIP funding and resources through the Planning and Building departments. - Conduct outreach to local entrepreneurs looking to start downtown businesses, connect them with support via the Grey County Business Enterprise Centre (BEC) and Saugeen Economic Development Corporation (SEDC). - Conduct informal exit surveys with business owners that have closed their storefronts to understand their challenges. |
| Responsibility | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Township. - Business Support Organizations. |
| Timeline | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ongoing. |
| Resources | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Business Enterprise Centre. - Saugeen Economic Development Corporation (SEDC). - South Grey Chamber of Commerce. |
| Evaluation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of vacant spaces filled. |

7. Critical Issue: Business Attraction

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| Objective | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Make essential products and services available downtown. |
| Priority | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High |
| Activity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Draw new businesses downtown such as new restaurants, dollar stores, small department stores, and medical services. |
| Description | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop a business attraction package showcasing the demographics of the local customer base. - Create a webpage with more information and support on the Township website. - Establish personal connections between business owners and downtown property owners. - Identify businesses in other communities that could successfully expand to downtown Dundalk. - Reach out to potential entrepreneurs of relevant ventures to discuss expanding into Dundalk. - Develop a marketing strategy to promote downtown Dundalk as a positive place to start or expand a business. |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organize an event to connect potential entrepreneurs with local landlords (as described under “3. Critical Issue: Unappealing Buildings”). |
| Responsibility | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Township. - Property Owners. |
| Timeline | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - January 2026 – December 2027. |
| Resources | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Economic Development staff. - Funding options as they arise. |
| Evaluation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of new businesses that open in Dundalk. |

8. Critical Issue: New Medical Centre

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| Objective | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Encourage the completion of the new medical centre development downtown. |
| Priority | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High |
| Activity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continue to urge the Province to move forward on its commitment to build the medical centre in Dundalk. |
| Description | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Compile information about Dundalk’s need for medical services in a persuasive format. - Ensure that this information is utilized by staff and Council when making delegations to the Province. - Work with the South East Grey Community Health Centre (SEGCHC) to create more public awareness about the existing medical centre and its services in Dundalk. |
| Responsibility | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Province. - South East Grey Community Health Centre. - The Township of Southgate. |
| Timeline | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In process. On-going priority for Council and staff. |
| Resources | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regional collaboration. - Staff time. |
| Evaluation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Medical Centre is completed and operating in Dundalk. |

9. Critical Issue: Grocery Options

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| Objective | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide alternative, affordable grocery options to meet the needs of the community with culturally relevant options. |
| Priority | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Medium |
| Activity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attract another grocery store to suitable land (possibly outside of downtown Dundalk). |
| Description | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Build a positive connection with the existing grocery store and encourage improvements to meet changing community needs. |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work with the planning department to identify suitable land for a new grocery store development. - Connect with property owners that have suitable commercial land to highlight the need for more grocery options and develop a plan to reach out to grocery store chains. - Create a business attraction package with statistics and information relevant to the attraction of a new grocery store. |
| Responsibility | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Township. - Property owners of suitable commercial land. |
| Timeline | - June 2026 – December 2027 |
| Resources | - Township (Economic Development and Planning Staff). |
| Evaluation | - New grocery store is built in Dundalk. |

10. Critical Issue: Parking

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| Objective | - Resolve perceived parking issues identified by businesses. |
| Priority | - Medium |
| Activity | - Develop a strategy to redirect customers to alternative parking locations, creating new spaces as needed. |
| Description | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work with Planning and Public Works to identify alternative parking options. - Develop a plan for alternative parking downtown that is mindful of tenant parking needs in mixed-use buildings. - Work with businesses to communicate alternative parking options to their staff and customers. - Utilize signage to make customers aware of alternative parking options (as part of the wayfinding plan). - Work with By-law, Planning, and Public Works departments to monitor parking situation and adapt plans as needed. |
| Responsibility | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Township (Economic Development, Public Works, Planning). - Business owners. - Property owners. |
| Timeline | - Started in 2025 – June 2027 |
| Resources | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Township staff time. - GIS and other Township software. - Grant funding as options are made available. |
| Evaluation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increased number of parking spaces. - Positive review of parking conditions from business owners. |

11. Critical Issue: Downtown Leadership

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| Objective | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Implement a sustainable downtown leadership mechanism that would support downtown strategy and action plan execution. |
| Priority | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Medium |
| Activity | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Establish a group or network that would coordinate downtown promotions, events, marketing, maintenance, and streetscape improvements. |
| Description | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Research various options i.e. Business Improvement Area (BIA), Business Association, Downtown Committee, partnership with local service group, etc.- Present the options to business owners to see which they would consider as a viable possibility within the downtown.- Gain Council approval for the leadership mechanism.- Establish a partnership with the leadership group and work to ensure that it is a sustainable means of managing downtown promotions, outreach, and engagement. |
| Responsibility | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Township.- Community Groups.- Businesses. |
| Timeline | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- January 2026 – December 2026 |
| Resources | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Economic Development staff and network. |
| Evaluation | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Downtown leadership mechanism established. |

12. Critical Issue: Negative Perception of Downtown

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| Objective | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Promote a positive perception of downtown Dundalk as a place to shop, visit, and run a business. |
| Priority | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Medium |
| Activity | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Develop marketing and events that bring people into the downtown core to shop at businesses and develop a personal connection to the space. |
| Description | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Create a marketing plan for downtown that incorporates promotion of established annual events.- Ensure that the marketing plan is cohesive with the brand reflected in the streetscape and wayfinding signage design.- Utilize social media channels to promote the changes that have taken place downtown to date. Include before and after photos of Community Improvement Plan (CIP) projects. |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promote downtown events and community initiatives that showcase Dundalk's "small town charm." - Develop physical marketing materials such as banners and window clings that highlight downtown businesses and events. |
| Responsibility | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Township. - Downtown businesses. - Event organizers. |
| Timeline | - June 2026 – June 2027 |
| Resources | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Economic Development staff. - Grey County Business Enterprise Centre for support in developing a marketing plan. - Provincial and Federal Grants for Downtown Marketing and Promotions (RT07, ROD, etc.). |
| Evaluation | - Increase in foot traffic downtown. |

13. Critical Issue: Event Coordination

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| Objective | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Utilize events to draw new residents and customers downtown to increase sales at local businesses and develop positive connections with the commercial core. |
| Priority | - Low |
| Activity | - Ensure at least four events a year are conducted downtown and promoted through Township channels. |
| Description | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Connect with the main event organizers in Dundalk. Discuss ways to support them and promote a calendar of downtown events and activities. - Ensure that event organizers have access to funding opportunities through the Township and other sources. - Promote downtown events through the Township website, Facebook pages, and other mediums. |
| Responsibility | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Downtown event organizers. - Businesses. - Township. |
| Timeline | - Ongoing. |
| Resources | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Township website/social media. - Community Fund, Township Grants and Donations Policy. - Regional Tourism Ontario 7 (RTO7) funding for event promotions and content development. |
| Evaluation | - Number of visitors downtown during events. |

14. Critical Issue: Gathering Spaces

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| Objective | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Create and/or enhance gathering spaces downtown to encourage community cohesion and connection with local businesses. |
| Priority | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Low |
| Activity | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Make current gathering spaces more appealing and multifunctional while developing new gathering spaces. |
| Description | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Work with Planning, Building, Public Works, and Recreation to look at the parkette and other available sites downtown. Evaluate how sites can be enhanced or repurposed for community events and activities. Examine ways to make sidewalk and street spaces more engaging.- Incorporate increased shade-cover, activations, bike racks, picnic tables, benches etc. for use by the community in the downtown core.- Access grant funding to enhance and develop gathering spaces downtown. |
| Responsibility | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Township (Economic Development, Planning, Recreation). |
| Timeline | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- June 2026 – December 2027. |
| Resources | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Township staff expertise.- Grants to implement ideas. |
| Evaluation | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Number of improvements to gathering spaces downtown. |

15. Critical Issue: Public Bathrooms (Events)

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| Objective | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Ensure public bathrooms are available to residents and visitors during events. |
| Priority | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Low |
| Activity | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Collaborate with Library, Recreation, Public Works, and local businesses to coordinate bathroom availability during events. |
| Description | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Identify specific days and times when there are increased needs for bathrooms downtown or at the park.- Collaborate with other Township departments, businesses, and event organizers to ensure that there are restrooms available during events. If necessary, work to identify suitable locations for portable toilets during events.- Create temporary signage that can be utilized during events to communicate where restroom facilities are located. |
| Responsibility | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Event organizers.- Local businesses. |

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| | - Township. |
| Timeline | - June 2026 – December 2027. |
| Resources | - Community Collaboration. - Possible grants and funding to support portable toilet rental. |
| Evaluation | - Restroom facilities are available during main events. |

Stage IV: Implement & Monitor

The implementation of the strategy and action plan will be monitored at the Township level by the Economic Development Officer (EDO) from early 2026 to the end of 2027. The EDO will ensure that actions are initiated and implemented in a timely manner. The EDO will regularly touch base with Southgate Council, relevant Township departments, and community partners about moving forward on strategic action items in consultation with the community.

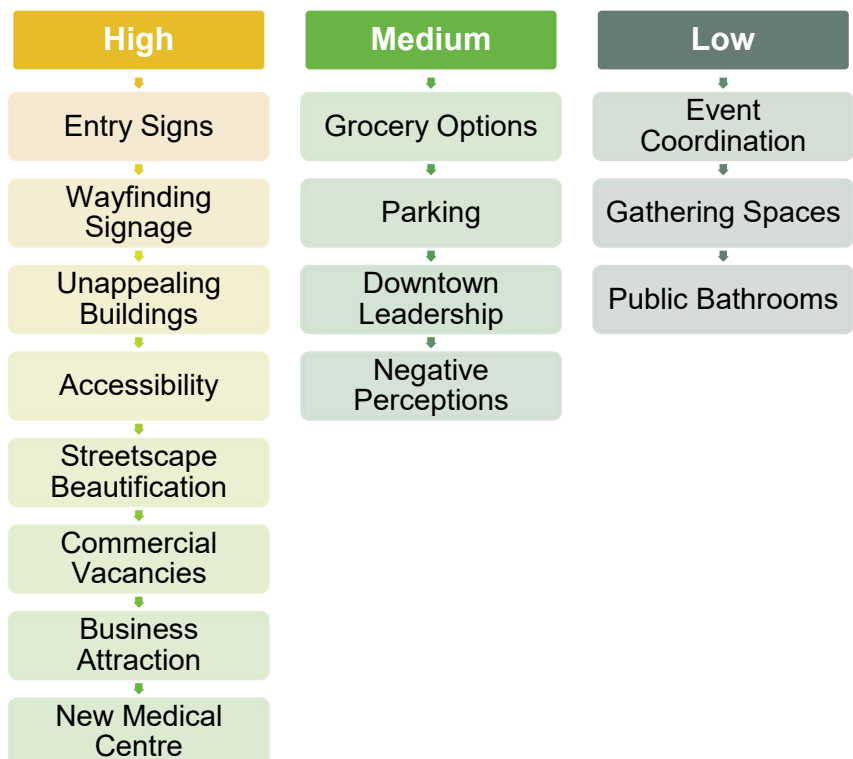
Early Wins

- As a result of this project, General Commercial (C2) zoning amendments have been proposed to address downtown parking and mixed-use developments.¹⁵
- In 2025, Southgate Council approved four Community Improvement Plan (CIP) grants to enhance downtown buildings located at:
 - o 20 Main St E,
 - o 92 Main St W,
 - o 10 Proton St N, and
 - o 1 Main St E.

Next Steps

- Once the strategy and action plan are approved by Council, staff will move forward with community members, business owners, and other partners to address the critical issues outlined. Issues will be addressed from highest to lowest priority as demonstrated in the figure. Project completion is dependent on availability of funding, staff support, and the approval of Council.

Critical issues listed according to level of priority.



Monitoring

- Staff will provide Council with year-end monitoring of this plan that will outline progress on the goals and objectives as outlined above. This monitoring may be an opportunity to reassess certain strategies and actions to consider changes in achieving intended goals as needed.

¹⁵ C24-25 C2 Zone Changes Newspaper AD (October 17, 2025) <https://pub-southgate.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=32758>

Relevant Links

Dundalk Downtown Revitalization Project: <https://www.southgate.ca/economic-development/dundalk-downtown-revitalization-project/>

2023-2027 Community Strategic Plan:

https://www.southgate.ca/media/nz2evoae/southgate_community-strategic-plan_final_nov-1-2023-accessible.pdf

Township of Southgate Official Plan: <https://www.southgate.ca/media/tkmb0krc/official-plan-may-4-2022-township-adopted-updated-with-county-amendments.pdf>

EDO2024-013-Downtown Revitalization Program: <https://pub-southgate.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=29322>

EDO2025-003-Downtown Revitalization Taskforce – Terms of Reference: <https://pub-southgate.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=29560>

First Impressions Community Exchange Report – Group 1: <https://pub-southgate.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=29867>

First Impressions Community Exchange Report – Group 2: <https://pub-southgate.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=29868>

EDO2025-007 – Waterloo Student Reports: <https://pub-southgate.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=31281>

EDO2025-007-Downtown Revitalization Final Report – Group 1: <https://pub-southgate.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=31282>

EDO2025-007-Downtown Revitalization MZO Analysis – Group 1: <https://pub-southgate.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=31283>

EDO2025-007-Downtown Revitalization Final Report – Group 2: <https://pub-southgate.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=3128>

EDO2025-009-Downtown Dundalk Business Owner Survey Results: <https://pub-southgate.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=32019>

EDO2025-009-Attachment 1 - Downtown Dundalk Business Owner Survey: <https://pub-southgate.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=32020>

EDO2025-009-Attachment 2 - Downtown Dundalk Business Owner Survey Results: <https://pub-southgate.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=32021>

EDO2025-010-Downtown Dundalk Resident Survey Results: <https://pub-southgate.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=32022>

EDO2025-010-Attachment 1 - Downtown Dundalk Resident Survey: <https://pub-southgate.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=32023>

EDO2025-010-Attachment 2 - Downtown Dundalk Resident Survey Results: <https://pub-southgate.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=32024>

EDO2025-011-Alternative Rural Ontario Development (ROD) Program Application: <https://pub-southgate.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=32025>