



Staff Report

Report To: River District Board of Management
Report From: Viveca Gravel, River District Coordinator
Meeting Date: September 11, 2024
Report Code: CS-24-062
Subject: 2024 River District Metrics Update

Recommendations:

THAT in consideration of Staff Report CS-24-062 respecting, 2024 River District Metrics Update, the River District Board of Management receives the report for information purposes.

Highlights:

- The River District Action Plan has 4 key initiatives under the areas of River District Branding, River District Management, River District Experience Development, and River District Promotion;
- The River District vacancy rate is at its lowest rate in recent history; and
- owensoundriverdistrict.ca continues to see growth.

River District Action 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.
 - c. Encourage new and continued programming.

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

Climate and Environmental Implications:

There are no anticipated climate or environmental impacts.

Previous Report/Authority:

[CS-22-116 River District Rates and Metrics Update](#)

Background:

Among other goals, the River District Action Plan (RDAP) sets out tactics to increase pedestrian counts and decrease commercial vacancy in the River District.

While vacancy rates, social media/website traffic, and pedestrian counts do not tell the whole story, they do provide a baseline by which to measure annual increases or decreases.

This report provides rates and metrics to show the progression of certain elements of the River District Action Plan and provide a snapshot of a moment in time.

Analysis:

The River District Action Plan is ready to be reevaluated and used as part of a more long-term and sustainable direction for the membership. Through the last several years, it has seen many leaps forward in its execution, such as the launch of the new website and the undertaking of a social media overhaul based on the RDAP (River District Action Plan). The vacancy rate has been closely monitored during this time frame as well as a measure of impact.

a. owensoundriverdistrict.ca

The River District website was designed based on the approved prototype approved by the Board on September 8, 2021. The website is easy to navigate, provides a clean and updated look, aligns with the goals and objectives of the River District Action Plan, and is in line with the River District Brand Style Guide. From July 31, 2023, to July 31, 2024, the following analytics are provided for owensoundriverdistrict.ca. Year over year (+/-) is included in the parenthesis.

- Views: 59,791 (+37.59%)
- New users: 24,000 (+59.46%)
- Events (actions on the website): 170,300 (+40.64%)
- Top 10 most popular content interactions:
 - Home Page 20,160
 - Upcoming Events 10,587
 - Hottest Street Sale (River District News) 9,334
 - Shops & Boutiques 7,634
 - Business Directory 7,346
 - Hottest Street Sale (Events) 6,314
 - Scones of the River District 4,823
 - Just Say Yes 4,260
 - Food & Drink 4,035
 - Pride Parade 2,871

b. Social Media metrics

Since June 2021, there has been more thorough management of the social media platforms with a renewed focus as outlined in the River District Action Plan. From July 31, 2023, to July 31, 2024, the following analytics are provided for @RiverDistrictOS channels year over year (+/-) is included in the parenthesis.

- Page Reach
 - Facebook: 284,100 (+94.8%)
 - Instagram: 250,400 (+713.6%)
- Page & Profile visits
 - Facebook: 34,700 (+97.2%)
 - Instagram: 5,800 (+37.4%)
- New Page Likes & Followers
 - Facebook: 831 (+8.1%)
 - Instagram: +292 in the last 90 days. Instagram collects data in shorter intervals.

These increases can be attributed to active and engaging management of the social media platforms, including, but not limited to, business-focused posting, events, and active invitations to join.

c. Pedestrian Counters

The pedestrian counters at the Queen's Park locations have been damaged, and we cannot provide data at this time. Planning is underway to replace these counters.

Pedestrian counters are available in the River District at the 10th Street East intersection through the traffic management software Miovision. The data was pulled between June 1 to July 31.

- 2023 daily median: 1,224
- 2024 daily median: 1,282

This data reflects that the summer months continue to be strong and that the River District has not seen a decrease in foot traffic. The 2024 Hottest Street Sale saw an increase of 1,477 for the one-day event.

d. Vacancy Rate

In 2021 the River District Board of Management reported a 12% vacancy rate to OBIAA (Ontario Business Improvement Area Association). In March of

2022, the vacancy rate dropped to 11.5%, and with the ongoing implementation of the River District Action Plan, the River District has seen the vacancy rate drop to 9% as of August 2024.

In addition to the 3% decrease in vacancy since implementation, several building permits have been issued. Five new businesses have opened this year, and three are ready to open their doors before the end of September. Various programs under the City's Community Improvement Plan give priority to buildings and businesses in the City's River District.

Financial Implications:

The cost of supporting the River District is shared based on the agreement between the City and the River District Board. Spending has been in accordance with the Board-approved budget.

Communication Strategy:

This report to the Board. Updates are to be included in the October 2024 River District Review newsletter for the membership.

Consultation:

Pamela Coulter, Director of Community Services
Eckhard Pastrik, Manager of Parks and Open Space

Attachments:

None.

Recommended by:

Viveca Gravel, River District Coordinator
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 or 519-376-4440 Ext. 1209.