



## Staff Report

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**Report To:** River District Board of Management  
**Report From:** Pamela Coulter, Director of Community Services  
**Meeting Date:** July 9, 2025  
**Report Code:** CS-25-073  
**Subject:** River District Action Plan – Options to Approach for Update

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### Recommendations:

THAT in consideration of Staff Report CS-25-073 respecting the River District Action Plan Update, the River District Board of Management provides direction to staff regarding the preferred option to undertake the Action Plan Update.

### Highlights:

- The River District Action Plan was initiated in 2020 and approved in early 2021 for a three-year term. A budget of up to \$30,000 was approved by the River District Board to update the plan. The original project focused on creating a downtown identity and marketing plan.
- The plan was developed as a three-year plan, and while an update is required, the original pillars of the plan and strategic objectives remain relevant. The actions under the objectives should be updated.
- The Board is presented with various options in terms of how to proceed with the update.

### River District Action Plan Alignment:

The River District Action Plan was created in 2020 and approved in early 2021. It was intended as a 3-year strategy, and it is time to review and update the actions in the plan.

## Climate and Environmental Implications:

There are no anticipated climate or environmental impacts.

## Previous Report/Authority:

[River District Action Plan 2021](#)

[CS-24-071 Draft 2025 River District Budget Considerations](#)

## Background:

In September of 2024, the River District Board considered a report (CS-24-071) with initial considerations for the 2025 budget as well as items to be considered for one-time funding.

The River District Action Plan was a joint project of the City and River District Board approved in 2021.

The Board approved a budget amount of up to \$30,000 to update the River District Action Plan. At that time, the report noted that if approved by the Board, staff would request a proposal from BC Hughes outlining the scope of work, and this would be presented to the Board for input and approval.

## Analysis:

BC Hughes was contacted by staff regarding this work and requested to make a presentation to the Board. Unfortunately, BC Hughes does not have the capacity to take on this project in 2025/26. At its meeting May 14, 2025, the Board was made aware and staff indicated they would bring forward a report with options to advance the update of the River District Action Plan. It merits note that the Plan is not intended to be a new plan.

Options to advance the River District Action Plan Update include:

1. **Prepare an RFP and request consultants submit proposals to be evaluated to select a consultant to undertake the update.** The cost for this is estimated to be approximately \$30,000. Staff time would be required to prepare the RFP and work with the Board or a working group to score and select a consultant.
2. **Request that staff undertake the update.** If this is the preferred option, staff would propose the work be completed at the end of 2025 into 2026. There would be limited costs to the Board for this approach to

support print materials, communications etc. If this option is preferred, staff would work to develop an approach and methodology for the update, including the strategy for engagement.

The original goals of the project to create the Action Plan were to:

1. Create a refined downtown identity (brand) that captures the story and rallies people together; and
2. Develop a marketing plan with clear actions and objectives to tell that story.

The recommendations of the Plan fall within 4 main pillars with strategic objectives and actions for each. These are:

- River District Branding
- River District Management
- River District Experience Development; and
- River District Promotion.

Staff believe the Plan, the pillars, and strategic objectives remain relevant. The actions should be updated to reflect current conditions and input as well as to reflect where certain actions are complete.

## **Financial Implications:**

If the Board opts to issue an RFP, it is estimated that the cost would be up to \$30,000.

The option using staff will use River District and City staff time and resources that are within the current River District and City budgets. The project will be reflected in 2026 work plans. The Board is requested to allocate up to \$10,000 to support this option if preferred.

## **Communication Strategy:**

The plan for communication would come back to the Board together with the methodology.

## **Consultation:**

The plan for consultation would come back to the Board together with the methodology. It is anticipated that the consultation would include the River District businesses, owners and other stakeholders.

**Attachments:**

None.

**Recommended by:**

Pamela Coulter, Director of Community Services

**Submission approved by:**

Tim Simmonds, City Manager

For more information on this report, please contact Pamela Coulter, Director of Community Services at [pcoulter@owensound.ca](mailto:pcoulter@owensound.ca) or 519-376-4440 ext. 1252.