Township of North Kawartha
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www.northkawartha.ca

Report to Council

To: Mayor and Council Members

From: Edward Hilton, Economic Development Officer

Date: September 9, 2026

Subject: Strategic Economic Development Plan Updates 2026

Recommendation:

For Council to receive this report for information.

Background:

The 2023-2026 Strategic Economic Development Plan represents the first formal economic development plan for the Township of North Kawartha. Extensive consultations were conducted with a range of community stakeholders in order to understand the issues and concerns of ratepayers and businesses. The current Strategic Economic Development Plan and action items were approved for a three-year period (2023-2026). The current Economic Development Officer is overseeing the implementation of the 2023-2026 Strategic Economic Development Plan. This report is an update on the action items as of September 2026 by section and primary heading.

Analysis:

Development

1.0 Residential Development

Staff continues to prioritize the right mix of housing to meet our current and future needs. This includes a review of a range of housing including purpose-built rentals, townhomes, multi-unit, single family homes, housing for seniors and those with accessibility needs. Staff have started outreach with housing providers, program administrators and other groups to explore housing development opportunities in North Kawartha.

The Township applied in 2024 and 2025 for the Housing Accelerator Fund, but was not selected for funding, impacting the ability to accelerate housing development and

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infrastructure support. The Township also applied for the FCM Green Municipal Fund Sustainable Affordable Housing (SAH) grant in 2025 but was not successful as the program was over subscribed. Staff will continue pursuing alternative funding opportunities and are collaborating with Peterborough County on the Municipal Services Corporation project.

2.0 Residential Intensification

Staff have commenced work on draft policies and implementation measures aimed at increasing the uptake of Additional Dwelling Units (ADUs). ADUs are also recognized and supported in the Township's new Official Plan as additional dwelling units. In addition, staff are undertaking a feasibility study to assess the viability of communal wastewater servicing through a Municipal Services Corporation (MSC), which could help facilitate future residential intensification. Recent amendments to the Township's Zoning By-law have also expanded housing opportunities by permitting a broader range of residential development options.

3.0 Employment Lands

The County's new Official Plan does not identify any designated Employment Lands in North Kawartha. Economic development efforts therefore remain focused on supporting commercial development, entrepreneurship, tourism, home-based businesses, and investment opportunities within existing settlement areas and through appropriate mixed-use development opportunities.

4.0 Mixed Use Zoning

Staff continues to provide input into planning initiatives and zoning discussions that support opportunities for appropriate mixed-use development, including residential and commercial uses within the same property or development area. These considerations will be important during the Comprehensive Zoning By-law Review process.

5.0 Master Plan

Apsley Downtown Revitalization initiatives continued through 2026, building upon previous background research and consultation efforts. While the formal Downtown Master Plan process remains on hold, staff continue to advance key revitalization projects including redevelopment planning, municipal asset utilization initiatives, parking improvements, and enhancements within the downtown core. Projects related to 135 and 143 Burleigh Street represent important components of these efforts.

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6.0 Innovation in Housing

Council has previously approved by-laws to allow for shipping containers to be used as component parts in the construction of new dwellings. Staff continue to review opportunities that would promote new, innovative solutions for housing. Recent amendments to the Township's Zoning By-law have also expanded housing opportunities by permitting a broader range of residential development options.

7.0 Municipal Surplus Property List

Staff have completed a review of municipally owned properties to identify lands that may be suitable for future development, redevelopment, disposal, or alternative uses. The review determined that the majority of municipal properties fall within one of the following categories:

- Properties currently required for active municipal operations.
- Former waste disposal or landfill sites with limited or no market value due to ongoing environmental monitoring requirements.
- Landlocked parcels or small, unbuildable remnant lands that generally have value only to adjacent property owners.
- Submerged lands or environmentally protected lands with significant development limitations.
- Properties utilized for water access, portage, or other public access purposes.

Based on the review, staff have concluded that there are relatively few municipally owned properties that would be considered marketable surplus assets. Staff will continue to focus on those properties identified as having potential economic development, redevelopment, or disposition opportunities while ensuring municipal operational and community needs are maintained.

Infrastructure

1.0 Communal Servicing

The Township continues to participate in discussions and feasibility work related to communal servicing opportunities in collaboration with Peterborough County and regional partners. The provision of communal water and wastewater services has the potential to support future residential development, housing diversification, and appropriate intensification within North Kawartha. Staff continue to monitor the progress of the Municipal Services Corporation initiative and assess potential implementation

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opportunities. Should the initiative not receive the necessary support to proceed at the County level, staff will explore alternative servicing models and partnerships that may help address long-term growth and development objectives.

2.0 VIA HFR Proposal

Staff have reviewed the current status of the VIA HFR project with Transport Canada. On February 19, 2025, the government announced a high-speed rail project in the Toronto–Quebec City corridor with speeds up to 300 km/h under the Alto name. Staff are waiting for information as a result of ongoing consultation and further studies. This service and right-of-way will be new and separate from the existing CPKS Havelock Subdivision. Additionally, staff do not anticipate any passenger rail services to be provided on the existing CPKS Havelock Subdivision in the short-term.

3.0 Internet & Cell Service

Staff have worked with EORN, and agents acting on behalf of Rogers to help facilitate new cell tower construction in North Kawartha. Public consultation and the Letter of Concurrence for the Rogers cell tower at 1480 County Road 504 were approved in 2025. Rogers has four new towers that are under construction or completed in 2026.

During 2026, staff participated in consultation processes and submitted comments to the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) regarding rural broadband and wireless service needs. Staff continue to advocate for improved connectivity and support infrastructure investments that will benefit residents, businesses, visitors, and emergency services.

The Township continues to monitor fibre deployment projects and cellular infrastructure expansion opportunities across North Kawartha. Ongoing engagement with service providers and EORN has helped ensure local connectivity needs remain part of broader regional discussions.

4.0 Transit

The Economic Development Officer has participated in the Rural Transit Working Group established by Peterborough County and has been involved in public consultation efforts undertaken in partnership with Community Care Peterborough and Dillon Consulting in 2026.

5.0 Off Road Vehicles (ORV) on County Roads

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This action item is complete. Peterborough County has previously approved the limited use of ORVs on County roads.

Labour

1.0 Partnership with colleges and skills training

The Township continues to promote educational and workforce development opportunities through partnerships and referrals to organizations such as Contact North. These efforts help improve access to training, education, and skills development opportunities for local residents.

2.0 Partnership with Trent University

Staff continue to monitor opportunities for collaboration with Trent University and other post-secondary institutions on initiatives that may support workforce development, research, and community engagement.

3.0 Supporting Entrepreneurship

The Township continues to work collaboratively with Peterborough County and regional partners such as Community Futures Peterborough and Contact North on business support initiatives, promotional campaigns, and programs designed to strengthen local entrepreneurship and economic activity, including local & virtual information sessions.

4.0 Home Based Businesses

Staff continue to support opportunities that improve flexibility for home-based businesses through planning and policy reviews where appropriate. This includes recent housekeeping by-law amendments that provide increased flexibility for business and residential uses.

5.0 Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot

The Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot ended on August 31, 2024. The federal government has announced the intention of a new program (The Rural Community Immigration Pilot) in the fall of 2024 to 14 selected communities. Staff will continue to monitor updates from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, as there were significant reductions regarding immigration levels for 2025 through 2027. Staff continue to monitor federal immigration programs and initiatives that may support labour force attraction and population growth opportunities for rural communities.

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Tourism

1.0 Township Branding

Township branding guidelines were finalized in Q3, 2024. New signage featuring updated branding was installed at five municipal locations in Q2 2025. Additionally, new branded pedestrian wayfinding signage was designed and installed in 2025, supported through funding from RTO8.

2.0 A by-law to regulate Short Term Rentals

Staff continue to support Council and committees in reviewing policy options related to short-term rentals and their role within the local tourism economy. STRAC recommendations have been presented to Council and a further update is anticipated during Q4 2026.

3.0 Visitor Accommodation Tax (VAT)

No formal implementation work has commenced. Staff continue to monitor developments in neighbouring municipalities and evaluate potential implications for North Kawartha.

At this time, staff do not recommend advancing a Visitor Accommodation Tax (VAT) initiative. The Township is not currently pursuing a licensing or regulatory framework for Short-Term Rentals, which would likely be necessary to effectively administer and enforce a VAT program. Furthermore, based on discussions with regional partners and a review of practices in other jurisdictions, a County-wide approach to accommodation taxation may provide greater administrative efficiency and generate more meaningful resources for tourism marketing and destination development. Staff recommend considering the matter again should regional discussions advance or Council's direction regarding STR regulation change in the future.

4.0 Integrated Marketing & Communications Plan

The Township continues to implement tourism marketing and communications initiatives in coordination with Peterborough County and other tourism partners. Tourism promotion remains focused on increasing awareness of local attractions, events, businesses, and recreational opportunities.

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The Discover North Kawartha social media platform has continued to expand its reach and engagement. Mid-year 2026 engagement and viewership levels have already exceeded total annual results achieved during 2025.

5.0 Signature Yearly Event

At this time, a specific yearly signature event has not been selected. Significant Economic Development staff resources were dedicated in 2026 to supporting the Apsley Lions Home & Cottage Show. Staff assisted with event coordination, tourism promotion, business engagement, and visitor outreach activities.

The event coincided with Peterborough County's Road Tripping in the Kawarthas campaign, creating additional opportunities to showcase local businesses, attractions, accommodations, and visitor experiences to a broader regional audience.

Staff also continue to support community-led tourism initiatives and events that contribute to shoulder-season visitation and local economic activity, including the Apsley Holiday Hop.

6.0 Work in collaboration with the County of Peterborough to transition tourism marketing programs.

This action item reflects the dissolution of PKED and the transition to new organizational structures for the delivery of tourism programs within Peterborough County. In Q1 2025, the Township hosted a Tourism Talk at the NKCC in collaboration with the County and the Peterborough Chamber of Commerce. A dedicated tourism-focused Facebook page, Discover North Kawartha, was created in Q4 2024 with expanded posting beginning in Q1 2025. Collaboration with the County was also expanded for the promotion of events on TheKawarthas.ca calendar, as well as for the “Road Tripping in The Kawarthas” series and branded editorial features. Design work for a shared information kiosk at Eels Creek Rest Stop started in 2025, with installation planned for 2026, supported by funding from Peterborough County and RTO8. In addition, assistance was provided with marketing and promotion of local events, including the Apsley Autumn Studio Tour and the Middle Path Trail Race, enhancing tourism visibility and community engagement. The Township continues to work collaboratively with Peterborough County on tourism marketing, destination promotion, event support, and visitor information initiatives. These partnerships help leverage regional resources and maximize exposure for North Kawartha tourism assets.

Economic Diversification

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1.0 Investment Strategy

Although a formal investment strategy has not been established, investment attraction efforts continue through the Township's day-to-day economic development activities. The Economic Development Officer has been actively involved in pre-consultation meetings, responding to investment inquiries, providing front-line support to prospective investors, and connecting proponents with key contacts, agencies, funding programs, and other resources as appropriate.

2.0 Community Engagement – Seasonal Residents

Staff continue to explore opportunities to strengthen engagement with seasonal residents and property owners. The Township's EngagementHQ platform provides enhanced opportunities for consultation, project feedback, public participation, and community outreach to both permanent and seasonal residents.

3.0 Business Hub

This action item is complete. The Business Hub had previously been established at the Library.

Foundational Piece

1.0 Service Delivery Review

This item was previously completed.

2.0 Review of Comprehensive Zoning By-laws

Staff continue to provide input into planning and zoning reviews that support economic development, housing opportunities, tourism, and business growth. Additionally, more input is expected during the update process of the Comprehensive Zoning By-law.

3.0 Red Tape Reduction & Streamline Approval Processes

Staff continue to identify opportunities to improve development review processes and enhance customer service for residents, businesses, and developers.

4.0 Positioning the Township as a Trusted Business Partner

Staff continue to strengthen relationships with businesses, investors, tourism operators, community organizations, and development interests through regular engagement, site visits, business outreach, and collaborative problem solving.

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Staff continue to undertake business retention and expansion activities by meeting with local businesses, responding to economic development inquiries, attending networking and community events, and connecting businesses with support organizations and programs. These efforts help identify emerging opportunities and challenges while reinforcing North Kawartha's reputation as a responsive and business-friendly municipality.

Financial Implications:

None**.**

Strategic and/or Other Plans:

2023-2026 Strategic Economic Development Plan

In Consultation With:

None.

Attachment:

None.