

DOWNTOWN KEMPTVILLE COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN

2021

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Introduction ►

Starting in November 2020, the Municipality of North Grenville began the process to create a Downtown Kemptville Community Action Plan (DKCAP), replacing the former Community Improvement Plan (CIP) with a more robust program to encourage development in downtown Kemptville.

This is a four-year plan in place from February 2021 to December 2024.



“ When you are in downtown Kemptville we want it to be a place where you want to stay, enjoy, and live. ”

What We Heard ►

Key stakeholders were asked to provide feedback in the preparation of this plan.

Engagement included:

- » One-on-one stakeholder interviews with key players such as the Old Town Kemptville Business Improvement Area (BIA), Mayor and Council, and developers
- » A community session with leaders from groups with an interest in Downtown Kemptville
- » A developer session with downtown property owners

Many insightful pieces came from these sessions, and you will see what we heard and how it informed this plan throughout.

Two key themes that came from the consultation were: **Connectivity** and **People**. There is a desire to better connect downtown's assets, and a need to have more people living in the core.

Background ►

Downtown Kemptville lies at the centre of the Municipality of North Grenville. Once the main commercial district, it has evolved over the years to its current state. It is located south of County Road 43, the present-day commercial hub.

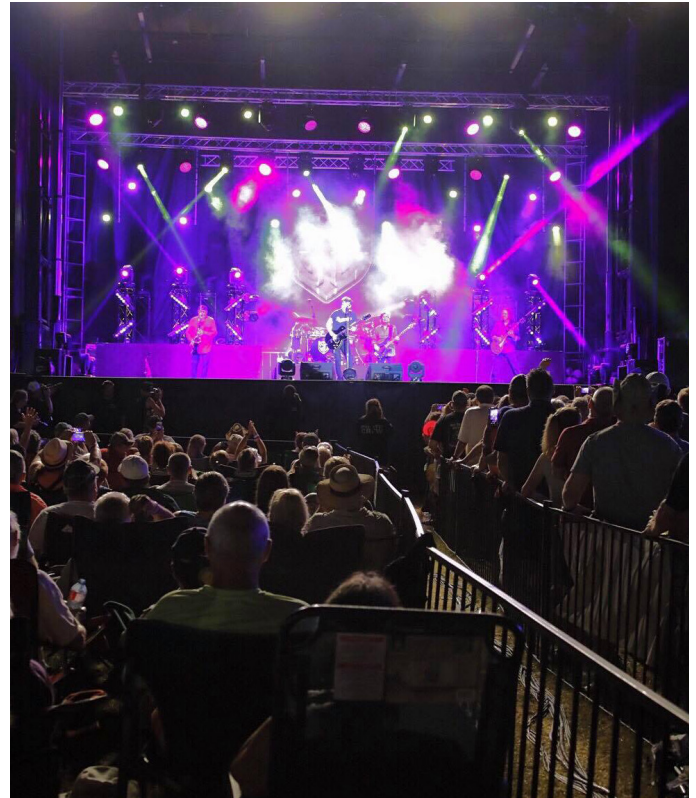
Before 1840, downtown Kemptville was a cleared area south of the river where cows grazed. By 1870 the street was occupied by an impressive range of wood-framed buildings containing hotels, blacksmith shops, doctors' offices, and stores. On May 13, 1872, all of this was destroyed in the worst fire in Kemptville's history. Prescott Street from Asa to Water Street was razed, as every building on both sides of the street went up in flames.

Kemptville Creek, a south branch of the Rideau River, runs through downtown and was once wider and faster than it is today. The Clothier family built grist and saw-mills here that attracted settlers, businesses, and visitors to the new village. Over the years, the river was narrowed and 'tamed', its power diverted to the use of foundries, woollen mills, cheese, and timber factories. A concrete bridge was built in 1928 and replaced by the present structure in 1961.

Prior to the opening of Highway 416 in 1999, the Rideau-Sanders-Prescott area was the highway commercial corridor along the original Highway 16 route, connecting Kemptville to Ottawa in the north and Prescott in the south. With the advent of the 416 and the subsequent change in traffic patterns, County Road 43 evolved as the new highway commercial corridor changing the function of the Rideau-Sanders-Prescott area.

Downtown Kemptville is comprised of Rideau, Sanders, Clothier and Prescott Streets. Clothier and Prescott Streets are included in the BIA footprint (Figure 1). Rideau and Sanders Streets are north of Clothier Street and outside of the BIA boundary and this area is often referred to as the triangle.

Downtown Kemptville has seen a significant revival over the last few years. The Municipality of North Grenville, along with business groups such as the BIA and the North Grenville Chamber of Commerce, and private investors have brought investment to historic buildings and public spaces. Downtown has become a



destination for both residents and visitors and a focal point for North Grenville's art, culture, and heritage amenities all spanning the waterfront of the Kemptville Creek.

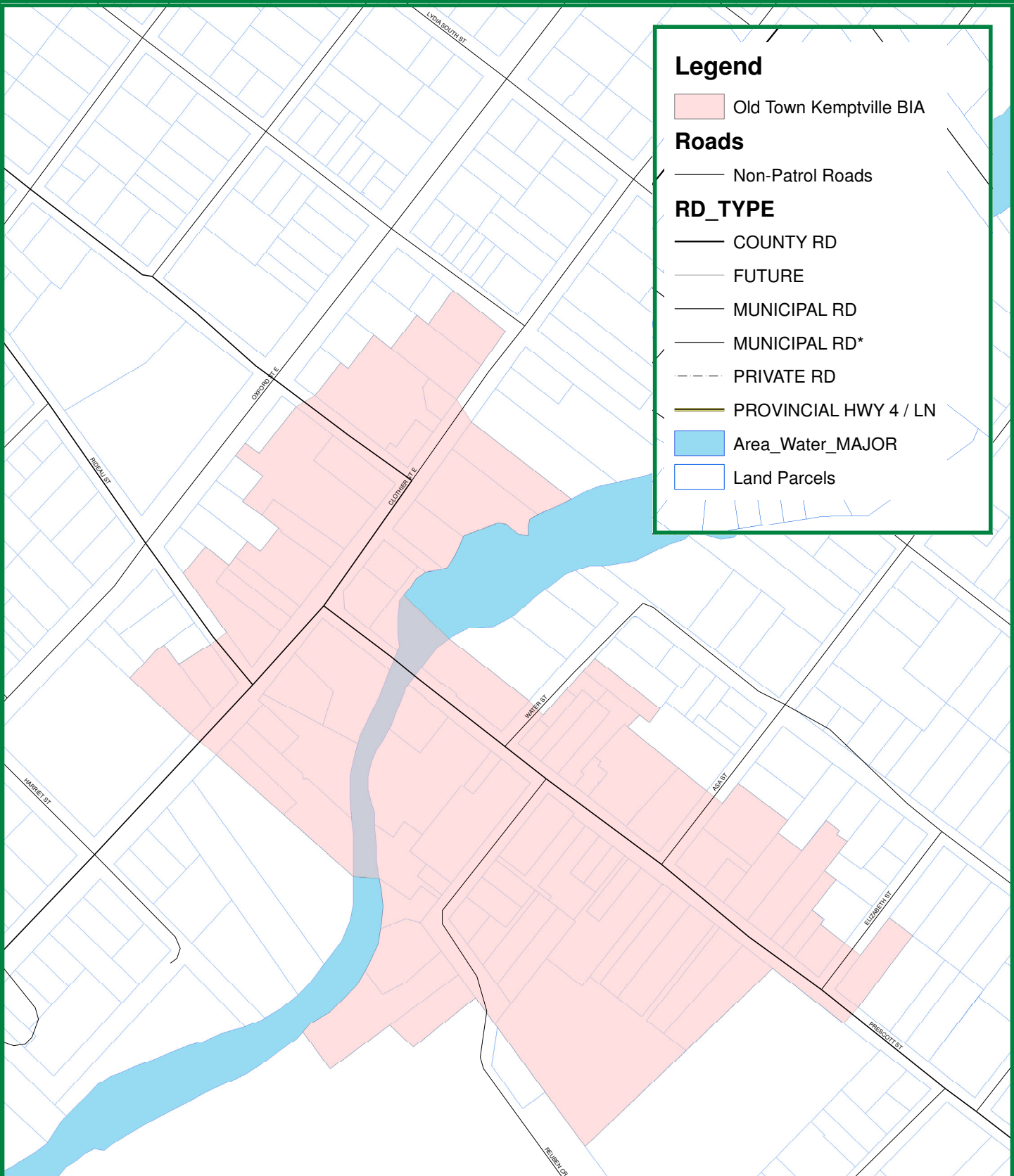
The downtown area has played host to many events and festivals. Since the ending of the annual Dandelion festival, several smaller-scale community events have been held including the BIA's Easter, Christmas, and Halloween events.

In August 2020, the first Downtown Promenade was held to provide space to shop amidst physical distancing requirements during the COVID-19 pandemic. The event was a success, drawing a few thousand people to the core area.

The downtown area also benefits from the successful Kemptville Live Music Festival. The annual event has been held in July for the past five years, with over 20,000 in attendance in 2019.

The successful Kemptville Farmers' Market is held in the parking lot of B&H Grocery on Rideau Street. It is open Sundays 12pm - 4pm from May to October.

Figure 1: Old Town Kemptville BIA



Previous Plans & Planning ►

The Municipality's 2006 strategic plan identified downtown Kemptville as a priority. In response, new resident and local artist Don Munz created a series of illustrations to allow people to envision the revitalization of downtown Kemptville. The illustrations inspired new investment and a number of buildings were renovated to match the vision.

In 2016, a Downtown Business Attraction Strategy was completed. The plan largely focussed on marketing initiatives, the majority of which have been completed. In 2018, the BIA began exploring the possibility of expansion. Efforts are still in the nascent stages and stalled due to COVID-19, but an associate membership program has been established.

The Municipality passed the current development charges bylaw on November 19th, 2019. Development charges were exempted for a one-year period for the downtown core. On October 6th, 2020 Council approved an extension of the exemption until March 2023. The Building Division undertook a review of the number of building permits that were exempted in the downtown core over the past five years. The original intent of the exemption in the downtown core was to stimulate investment, however to date only one permit for a single-family dwelling was issued.

The Downtown Commercial Official Plan Zone identifies cash-in-lieu as a method to allow proposed

development to be exempted from parking requirements through the payment of cash into a public fund for the purpose of enhancing parking in the area. Currently, the Municipality has no cash-in-lieu bylaw, and therefore cannot collect fees for this purpose. A cash-in-lieu bylaw could enable such things as the future construction of larger public lots and could promote more parking and pedestrian traffic throughout the downtown commercial zone.

A CIP is a tool that allows a municipality to direct funds and implement policy initiatives toward a specifically defined project area. A

CIP was originally created in 2013 for Rideau and Sanders Streets with a budget of \$100,000 over 5 years (2014-2018) for the Façade, Landscaping, and Signage portion of the program. The program was oversubscribed in 2014, 2015, and 2016. In 2017 the program was expanded to include properties on Clothier and Prescott Streets and the budget was increased to \$50,000 a year (2017-2018). In

2019 another \$50,000 was approved. Funds were not fully expended in 2018 or 2019.

The other CIP programs, the Tax Increment-Based Incentive Grant (TIBIG), Brownfields Financial Tax Assistance Program (BFTAP), and Residential Intensification Development Charges Exemption were underutilized, with only three initial applications for the TIBIG that never reached the grant stage and zero applications for the BFTAP since 2013.

Both residential and commercial buildings were eligible under this CIP program.





Challenges & Opportunities ►

The Municipality has identified the investment required for the Urban Service Area as it pertains to the Municipality's water and wastewater infrastructure. The North Grenville Potable Water and Wastewater Master Plan Update was undertaken in 2015 to evaluate the existing infrastructure and present servicing alternatives to accommodate anticipated development. The report identifies the requirement for increased capacity, the upgrading of pumping stations, the need to expand the wastewater treatment plant, and identifies where new municipal wells are required. These improvements are required to accommodate future growth within the municipality.

The small 40ft road allowance on downtown streets poses challenges. As well, the shared ownership of roads with the United Counties of Leeds and Grenville creates both obstacles and opportunities.

There are approximately 40 on-street parking spots in downtown Kemptville. On-street parking is restricted to three hours. Public parking lots exist at the North Grenville Public Library and at Riverside Park. A free private parking lot exists at 19 Clothier Street East until the owner begins development. Limited parking is available behind buildings facing the main streets and is usually restricted to customers and residents of those buildings. A 2011 study determined there was sufficient parking downtown, but general perception was otherwise. Figure 2 illustrates the available parking in downtown Kemptville.

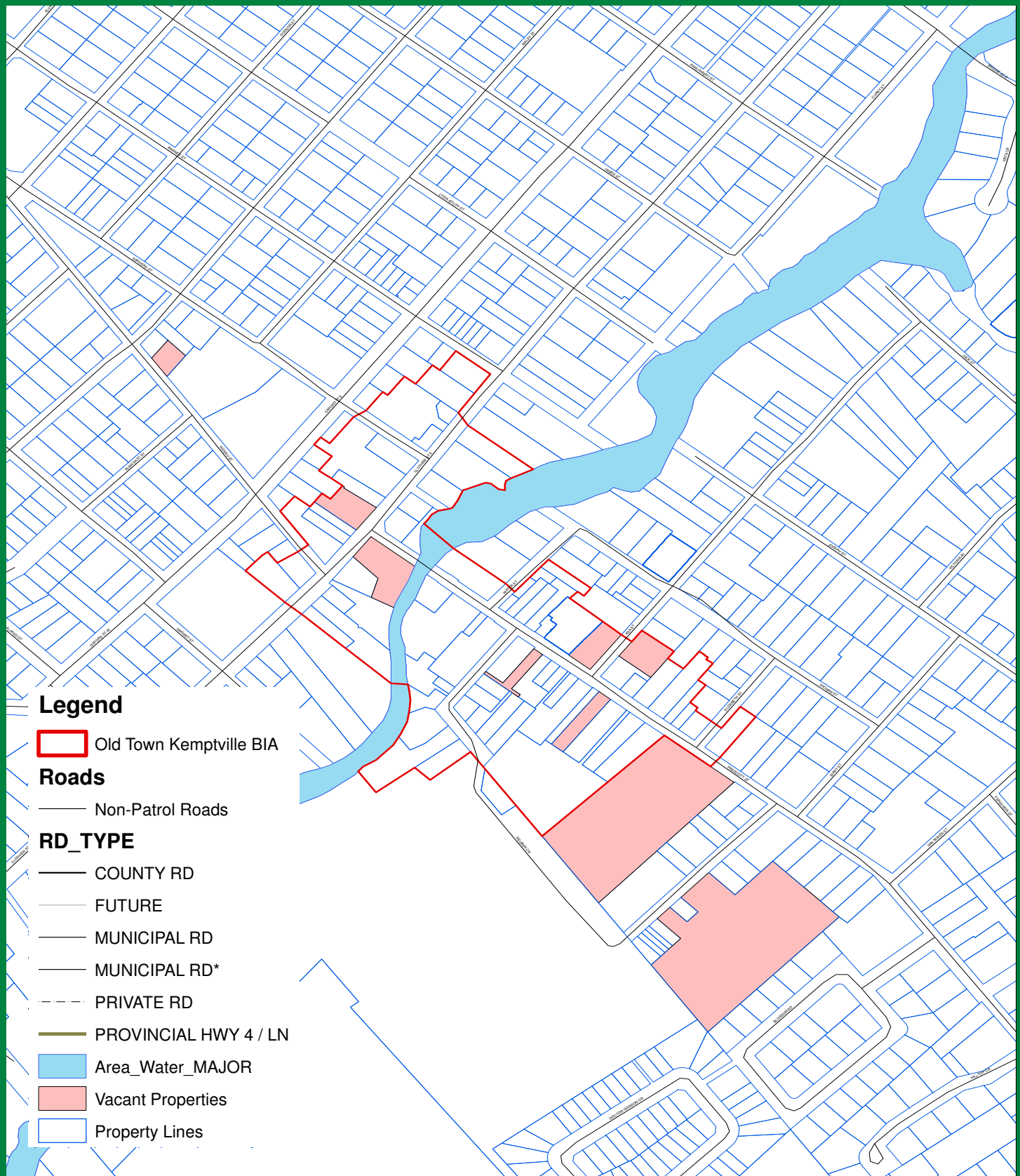
It is recognized the downtown has beneficial amenities including the waterfront and parks, but there is a need for better connectivity.

There are several properties that are primed for development with developers eager to build. This creates a great opportunity if an easy development process is facilitated.

Figure 2: Parking



Figure 3: Downtown Kemptville Opportunities



Properties ►

The vacancy rate of main street level commercial units in the BIA in October 2020 was 13%. This is down from a 21% vacancy rate at the end of 2019. Several larger units, however, have remained vacant for over three years including 126-128 Prescott Street (the old Butler's Victorian Pantry, vacant since 2017), 2 Prescott Street (former garage, vacant since 2016), and 139 Prescott Street (former Scotiabank, vacant since 2012).

A large vacant property is the former North Grenville District High School (NGDHS). A proposal was envisioned for a mixed-use residential/commercial development by the owner but has not been active for some time. The former Kemptville Public School is also a large vacant property in the downtown area with significant development potential. As well, 8 Asa Street, 211 Sanders, and 311 Rideau Street may have development applications in the near term. These opportunities are illustrated in Figure 3.

Mayor's Task Force on Affordable Housing ►

The Mayor's Task Force on Affordable Housing was convened by the Mayor and Municipal Councillors as a means of identifying priority short-term and longer-term objectives and implementation strategies aimed at advancing affordable housing availability and options for the residents of North Grenville. Recommendations from the report include encouraging more secondary dwelling units, examining the dwelling types allowed in each residential zone, providing priority to affordable developments in terms of capacity allocation, and reviewing available surplus land.

Eleven new units were completed in September 2020 for families at a new affordable housing project on Jack Street just east of the downtown core. It is suggested that the implementation of the findings of the Task Force be extended comprehensively on a Municipal-wide basis and subsequently reflected in this plan.



Capital Planning ►

In addition to the capital improvements noted in the challenges and opportunities section, there are several capital projects slated for the near future that will affect the downtown. The Municipality plans to install new streetlights in 2021. New crosswalks are being considered, like the recently installed crosswalk at the intersection of Asa and Prescott Streets. There are plans to reconfigure Rideau and Sander Streets to be one-way and to add bike lanes, sidewalks, parking, and bump-outs.

Although not directly downtown, the County Road 43 redevelopment will have an impact during and after construction. Many businesses feel this will benefit the downtown.

Inventory ►

Demographics

As of October 2020, the business mix in the Old Town Kemptville BIA is 62% service, 17% retail, 17% food, and 4% short-term accommodation. Of the tourism businesses interviewed in the 2019 Tourism Business Retention and Expansion (BR+E) survey 24% were located downtown. The report also noted downtown could be a better tourism draw with a more attractive mix of businesses and enhanced beautification.

Heritage Assets

There are six designated heritage properties in or near downtown Kemptville (Figure 4). One of those, 304 Prescott Street, the former NGDHS, is vacant. The other, 15 Water Street (former town hall), is used occasionally by the provincial offences court and the North Grenville Historical Society.

“*There are some real gems downtown - Grahame's, B&H... it makes for a unique experience.*”

Municipal Assets

Municipal buildings in the downtown include (Figure 5):

- » 1 Water Street (North Grenville Public Library)
- » 15 Water Street
- » 200 Reuben Crescent (curling club)
- » 25 Rueben Crescent (former fire hall, storage)

There are two parks located in or adjacent to downtown Kemptville. Rotary Park is located at the corner of Clothier and Prescott Streets. It overlooks the Kemptville Creek and acts as a gateway to downtown, as well as a space for events including Wellness in the Park.

Riverside Park is located just west of Prescott Street. It includes the municipal pool, skateboard park, baseball diamonds, and tennis courts as well as ample green space.

Just south of downtown lies the Kemptville Campus. The Campus includes 630 acres and 17 main buildings as well as woodlands, croplands, wetlands, greenhouses, an agroforestry and maple shack, and trails. Several schools have located on the campus, as well as businesses including Catered Affairs and My Local Markets who host events. It is also the site of the Kemptville Live Music Festival.

Figure 4: Heritage Assets

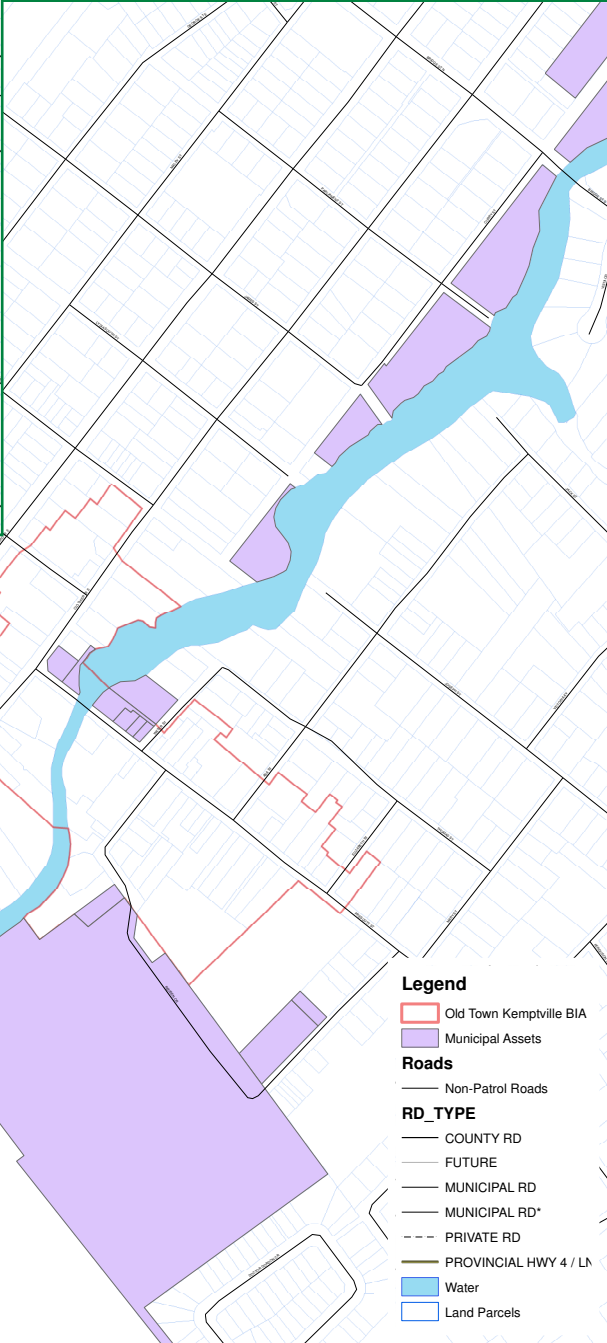
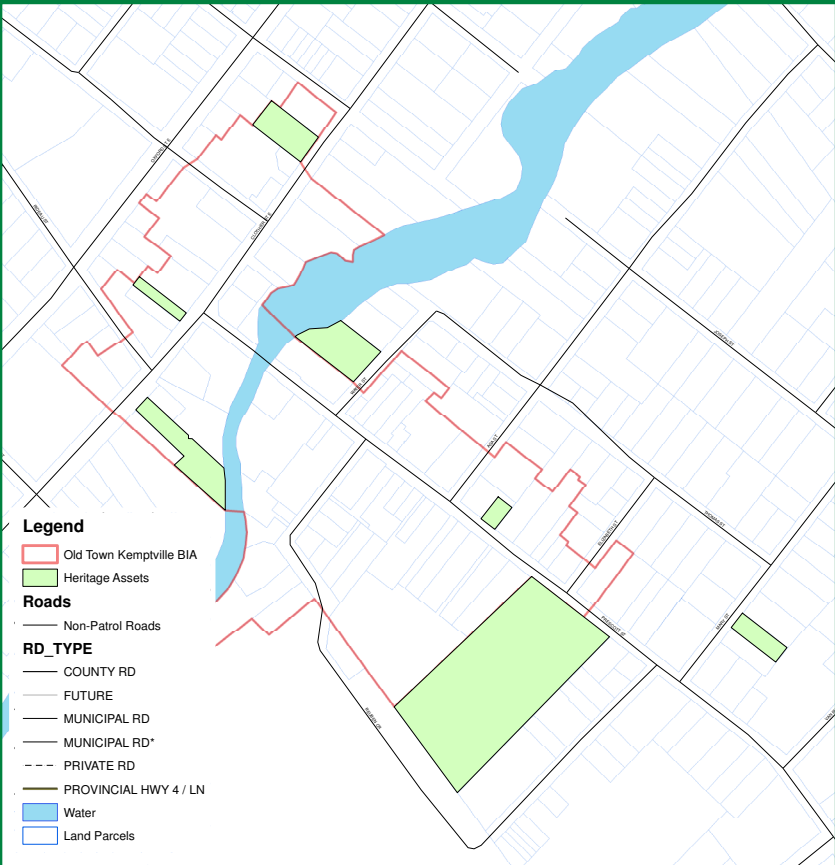


Figure 5:
Municipal Assets

Goals & Objectives ►

Vision

Downtown Kemptville is a vibrant gathering point that connects residents and visitors with unique experiences and amenities.

Goals

To develop a suite of financial, planning, and process tools to spur long-term investment in downtown Kemptville. There are three goals framing this plan:

Goal 1: Incent desired investment through financial tools

Goal 2: Establish flexible planning for creative development

Goal 3: Update practices to align resources and priorities

Targeted Development Goals

The consensus reflected through the engagement process was that the path to long-term vitality of downtown Kemptville will be achieved by increasing the number of people living in the downtown area. Property owners and developers acknowledged that their ventures are in line with this thinking. Engagement participants believed that an increase in residents living downtown would lead to more businesses opening in the commercial units. The vision of downtown includes an eclectic mix of businesses, including unique eateries and a well-rounded shopping experience.

“We are a growing community and well-known, but downtown needs to have more “stickiness”, it needs to be a destination.”

”





“Downtown revitalization is not a cost to the community, it’s a huge benefit.”

Community Improvement Toolkit ►

To stimulate investment in downtown Kemptville, a suite of tools and programs are being implemented to spur development.

The following incentive programs and tools are available for developments in the Community Improvement Plan Area (CIPA). All the programs and processes outlined below can be used together by developers to ease their development process.

Financial Tools

Full details on the following four incentive programs can be found in the Downtown Kemptville Community Improvement Guidelines.

Development Charges Waiver

As per our development charges bylaw, downtown developments are exempt from development charges until March 2023.

Tax-Increment Equivalent Residential Grant

Providing a grant equivalent to the municipal portion of the property tax for a new residential development.

People Make the Place Grant

\$5,000 grant per residential unit created in multi residential builds.

Building Fees Grant

A grant will be provided to cover building fees up to \$2,500.

Façade & Signage Grant

Grant to cover 50% of the costs up to \$10,000 of high-quality improvements to the frontage of commercial space.

Recommendations:

- » North Grenville should replace the current CIP with the above programs
- » Revise the CIPA to include 215 & 120 Reuben Cres.
- » Council allocate up to \$100,000 annually from the reserve fund for the People Make the Place Grant
- » Council allocate \$25,000 annually from the reserve fund for the Building Fees Grant
- » Council allocate \$50,000 annually from the reserve fund for the Façade & Signage Grant
- » The CIP programs should be actively promoted to potential developers

Planning Tools

Community Planning Permit System

Attempting to apply a single set of zoning standards to the downtown area has led to significant barriers to investment. The unique parcel fabric and building configurations that have developed over the long history of downtown Kemptville does not lend itself well to a “one size fits all” approach to zoning standards that is achievable in newer or greenfield areas. Many land parcels are small or undersized in area and are subject to historic easements or encroachments or are irregular in shape, which makes typical development a challenge. The way permitted uses are listed in downtown areas often reflect trends of the past, not necessarily designed to respond to current or future trends in the marketplace such as increased demand for shared office/collaboration space or working from home accommodations.

These issues make the traditional approach to developing zoning standards for historic downtown areas problematic for investors and municipalities alike. It was expressed that zoning standards should be used to promote creativity and innovation among downtown investors.

Additionally, the processes required to amend the planning documents are often cumbersome and unclear and can lead to significant cost and delay. Many investors choose to not proceed with projects in the context of these barriers.

Instead of applying a traditional zoning scheme, which regulates the use and location of buildings, a

Community Planning Permit System (CPPS) can be applied. A CPPS regulates the form, scale and character of development and allows investors to tailor unique solutions to the unique issues of a particular piece of land and consolidates all planning and building permit applications into a single process.

According to the Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing website: “*The community planning permit system (CPPS) is a land use planning tool that municipalities can use when planning for the future of their communities.*”

This tool can help to:

- » *make development approval processes more streamlined and efficient*
- » *get housing to market quicker*
- » *support local priorities (for example, community building, developments that support public transit, and greenspace protection)*
- » *create certainty and transparency for the community, landowners and developers”*

For the downtown Kemptville investor, this would add clarity to the process and represent significant reduction in the time required to move the project from concept to construction.

Recommendation:

- » **North Grenville should initiate a CPPS for downtown Kemptville**
- » **The CPPS should consider how developments will link to community assets**



“*‘Never done this before’
should not be in our
vocabulary, maybe just
‘not done here yet’.*”

Parking

During the community consultation sessions, the topic of parking sparked long discussions about its relative availability, location, and future directions. While there appears to be enough parking in theory, parking does not seem to align with the immediate needs of the businesses and users in the area.

Presently, the consensus of participants is that visits to downtown are purpose-driven, single destination events. In these types of interactions, visitors desire parking near their desired destination. This can be problematic in downtown Kemptville as parking for restaurants and shops is not always immediately available.

Visitors to downtown go for a specific purpose such as attending the library or go to the bank. In more mature downtowns such as Niagara-on-the-Lake, visitors are content to park in a central area and casually stroll through the downtown area either to their intended destination or to experience the sense of place.

Additionally, the actual requirement to provide on-site parking can also be a significant barrier to projects in the downtown.

The historic lot pattern in the area means that land parcels are small or awkward in configuration. On-site parking is land intensive and often occupies a substantial portion of land available for building. The actual zoning requirement for the number of on-site parking spaces required can be rigid and may not be in line with the demands of the users.

Regardless, flexibility is required in how parking standards are applied. To that end, the Municipality should consider allowing parking reductions, as justified, in the downtown area beyond the present zoning standard (50% for non-residential). This can be facilitated by implementing a cash-in-lieu of parking bylaw. Through this process applicants can reduce the amount of on-site parking that is required by contributing to a cash-in-lieu of parking reserve. The monies collected by the Municipality can then be applied to parking solutions on an area-wide scale such as acquisition of land for municipal parking, improvements to existing on-street parking or improvements to existing municipally owned parking areas.



Recommendations:

- » **The Municipality should implement a cash-in-lieu of parking bylaw and provide more parking signage and information**
- » **The Municipality should undertake a parking study to review parking standards and parking locations to meet future needs of the downtown area**
- » **The Municipality should continue to investigate parking leases with private property owners**

Patios, Amenities, and Encroachments

Patios and amenity areas attached to restaurants, coffee shops and other business add ambience, street presence and sense of place. North Grenville had success in implementing a summertime patio plan in support of local restaurants during the COVID-19 pandemic. The process of gaining permissions for patios can be cumbersome for applicants as they navigate municipal approvals and arranging appropriate insurance coverage for municipal indemnification.

Recommendation:

- » **The Municipality should prepare a “How To” guide on establishing a patio including relevant insurance requirements and key contacts at the Municipality**



Processes & Practices

One-contact service

Navigating municipal approvals can be a daunting task for investors. The relative speed to which a project can be brought to market is the biggest advantage that a Municipality holds. Having a single point of contact for investors that can assist in facilitating municipal approvals, agency feedback, infrastructure coordination, and general inquiries represents a signal to potential investors that the Municipality is equally invested in the outcome of their projects.

Recommendation:

- » **The Strategic Initiatives Coordinator position should be the single point of contact for downtown developments**

Top of the pile

Development pre-consultation meetings with potential applicants is a successful aspect of the development review process. The Development Review Team (DRT) assembles with the applicant and provides technical feedback on proposals before applications are made. Giving early feedback to potential investors allows them the ability to make quick business decisions on whether to proceed and what are the issues that need to be addressed. These meetings are typically convened within a regular two-week window. As a strategy to facilitate downtown investment, the Municipality should prioritize downtown development proposals and mandate the primary importance of these applications.

Developing a “top of the pile” approach to downtown development would mean that DRT would assemble within five business days. Once the application process is initiated, departments would prioritize these applications ahead of others that may be in the review line.

Outside agencies would similarly be asked to give these applications top of the pile review.

With outside agencies (i.e County, conservation authority) prior agreement should be sought to firstly narrow the applications where comment is required. Secondly, once circulation is deemed to be required, these applications should be given top of the pile service. Thirdly, comments should be confined to pre-determined issues of critical importance.

Similarly, internal circulation should be reviewed with each application so that formal responses are only sought from departments with direct interest. Internal response targets should be established as well (i.e one week for response).

Recommendations:

- » **A Special Downtown Development Review Team should be established with a goal to meet within five business days of an investor request for preliminary comments**
- » **The DRT should establish limited internal circulation lists for downtown applications based on DRT review pre-circulation comments**
- » **The Municipality should establish a top of the pile approach for development review and set early targets for identified departments to respond**
- » **The Municipality should meet with external agencies to establish narrow criteria for circulation, top of the pile comment protocols and, for circulated applications, a narrow scope of comment**
- » **The Municipality should investigate software to manage planning files**

BIA expansion

The mandate of the Old Town Kemptville BIA is to provide leadership and advocacy for their members and stakeholders (businesses, property owners, residents and those who work downtown) with the goal of creating the conditions for downtown Kemptville to become the premier commercial centre and community hub in North Grenville. The BIA's aim in expanding is two-fold: to continue their work reasserting the key importance of smart growth for Kemptville, and to expand their programs into adjacent areas, where they will add value to property owners and businesses.

Recommendation:

- » **The Municipality will support the BIA in expansion**

Bike Friendly

Ontario By Bike™ works to develop and promote cycle tourism in Ontario. The established business network is a program certifying and promoting bicycle friendly businesses and cycle tourism in a growing number of regions across Ontario. The Network is open to accommodations, food services, attractions, cycling related businesses and organizations, including BIAs interested in attracting cycle tourism. Businesses and organizations may register online, at no charge, to participate and ultimately reach the growing number of cycle tourists in Ontario. There are currently over 1,500 businesses certified as bicycle friendly, in regions spanning Ontario.

Recommendation:

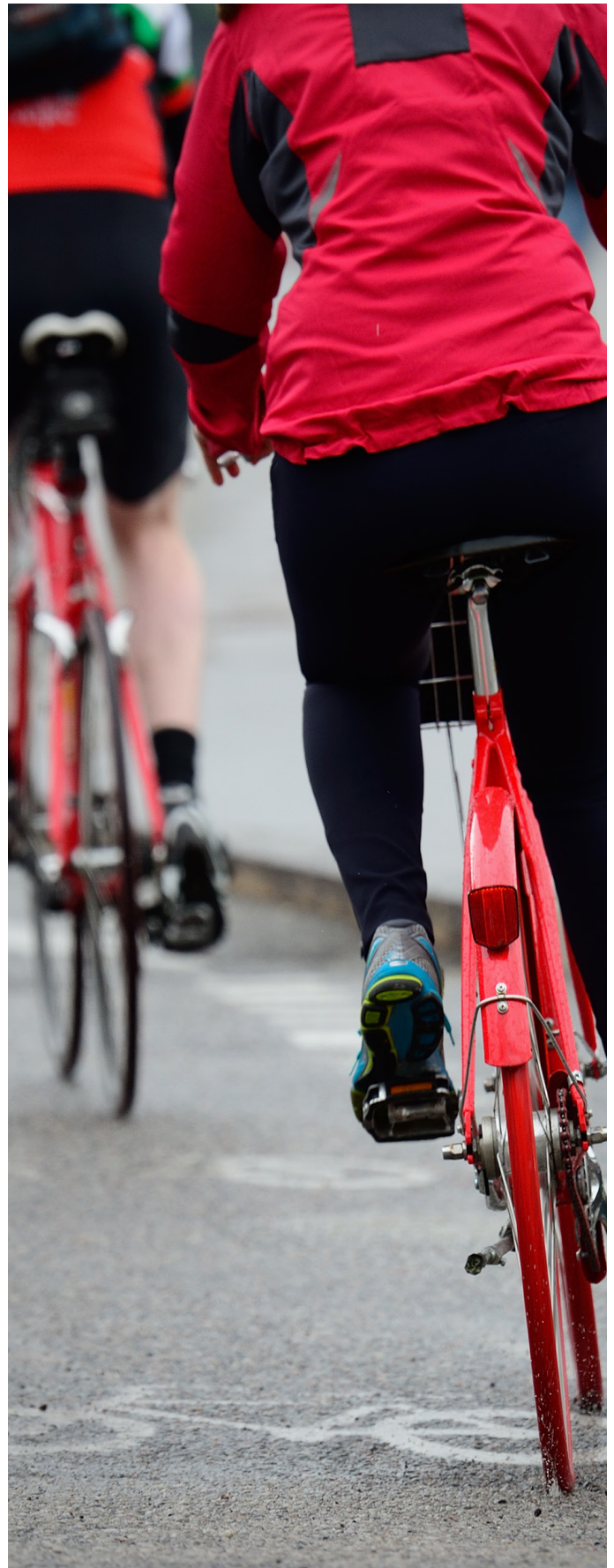
- » **The Municipality will support the BIA in becoming designated bike-friendly**

Continuous Review and Progress

The Municipality will endeavour to continually review best practices to provide the best level of service. The recommendations in this report will be monitored on an ongoing basis, with a status report done annually.

Recommendation:

- » **The Municipality should conduct a midterm review of this action plan in January 2023, including the possible extension of the downtown development charge waiver, expanded marketing plans, and an events strategy**



Action Plan ►

Objective	Task	Timeframe	Lead/Partners	Resources	Status
Incent desired investment through financial tools	Implement CIP tools	February 2021-December 2024	Strategic Initiatives Coordinator Economic Development Officer Planner I & II	Up to \$125,000 annually from reserves	
	Promote new CIP tools	February 2021-December 2024	Strategic Initiatives Coordinator Economic Development Officer Planner I & II	Economic Development Marketing Budget	
Establish flexible planning for creative development	Institute a CPPS	February-August 2021	Planner I Strategic Initiatives Coordinator	Staff time	
	Pass cash-in-lieu of parking bylaw	August 2021	Planner I Strategic Initiatives Coordinator	Staff time	
	Complete a parking study	September 2021	Strategic Initiatives Coordinator Consultant	\$25,000	
	Investigate parking leases	February 2021-December 2024	Strategic Initiatives Coordinator	Staff time	
	Create patio "How To" Guide	March 2021	Strategic Initiatives Coordinator Planner I Chief Building Official	Staff time	
Update practices to align resources and priorities	One-contact service in place	February 2021	Strategic Initiatives Coordinator Planner I Chief Building Official	Staff time	
	Establish Downtown Development Review Team	February 2021	Strategic Initiatives Coordinator Planner I Chief Building Official	Staff time	
	Limited DRT circulation lists	February 2021-December 2023	Strategic Initiatives Coordinator DRT	Staff time	

Objective	Task	Timeframe	Lead/Partners	Resources	Status
	Put top of the pile approach in place	February 2021	Strategic Initiatives Coordinator Planner I Chief Building Official	Staff time	
	Establish external agency agreements	February 2021	Strategic Initiatives Coordinator Planner I Chief Building Official	Staff time	
	Investigate planning software	February 2021	Strategic Initiatives Coordinator Planner I Chief Building Official	Staff time	
	Support BIA expansion	February 2021-December 2024	Clerk BIA	Staff assistance	
	Assist with BIA bike friendly designation	February 2021-April 2021	Economic Development Officer BIA	Staff assistance	
	Conduct a midterm review of the DKCAP	January 2023	Strategic Initiatives Coordinator	Staff time	

