



The Corporation of the
City of Sault Ste. Marie

COUNCIL REPORT

August 11, 2025

TO: Mayor Matthew Shoemaker and Members of City Council
AUTHOR: Nicole Maione, Director of Community Services
DEPARTMENT: Community Development and Enterprise Services
RE: Sault Ste. Marie Downtown Development Committee –
Terms of Reference

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to seek Council approval of the Sault Ste. Marie Downtown Development Committee Terms of Reference.

Background

The following resolution was passed at the October 21, 2024 Council meeting:

Whereas the City of Sault Ste. Marie has had a Business Improvement Area known as the Downtown Association (formerly the Queenstown Association) since 1976, a time when Queen Street was the major commercial district within the community; and

Whereas since 1976, commercial activity in the community has become more spread out throughout the community, including the expansion of the mall, redevelopment of the St. Mary's Paper site into the Canal District, and expansion of offerings on Great Northern Road, Northern Avenue and Trunk Road; and

Whereas downtowns have, over the course of several decades, transformed from being solely commercial hearts of communities, to being the social hearts of a community, hosting festivals and events, all while continuing to offer commercial and retail draws; and

Whereas it is prudent to review if the model for downtown marketing and promotion that worked in 1976 continues to be the best model for our Downtown, recognizing that the community's definition of downtown is different than the Downtown Association's geographic boundaries; and

Whereas if Council believes downtown development is a community priority, it should be supported by the community, not just those businesses that front directly on Queen Street between Gore Street and East Street; and

Whereas dissolution of a Business Improvement Area is an option available to municipalities under the Municipal Act, 2001; and

Now Therefore Be It Resolved that staff be requested to investigate how comparable communities are activating, promoting, and marketing their Downtowns, and report to Council on options available to it, either with a recommendation or with options from which Council could choose to best activate, promote and market Sault Ste. Marie's downtown.

On April 7, 2025 Council passed the following resolution:

Resolved that the report of the Deputy CAO, Community Development and Enterprise Services dated April 7, 2025 concerning Downtown Business Improvement Area Review be received and that implementation of Option 3 be approved (dissolve the current DTA and reallocate activities under the City umbrella with a supporting business advisory committee and incremental staffing);

Further Be It Resolved that the funding currently allocated to the Downtown Security Pilot Program of \$150,000 be allocated to a municipal downtown development budget line item in the 2026 preliminary budget, with staff to report back on whether further funding might be required to properly fund downtown development and marketing on a go-forward basis, and that such report be brought to Council for consideration during the 2026 budget deliberations.

Analysis

Following the direction from Council to dissolve the current Downtown Association and reallocate activities under the City umbrella, City staff developed Terms of Reference for the Downtown Development Committee (Appendix A). The development of the Committee's Terms of Reference represents one step within the broader strategy to reallocate all related activities under the City's umbrella, supporting a successful transition with planning efforts currently underway.

The Sault Ste. Marie Downtown Development Committee will be a committee of Council, composed of up to thirteen members, with a minimum of five members. Downtown business owners (three seats reserved as a minimum) and other community members, non-profit or social services representatives are encouraged to apply, with all members being appointed by Council. One member of the Committee will be a member of City Council. The Supervisor of the Downtown Plaza will act as the Secretary and Administrator of the Committee. Existing Downtown Association Board Members who are interested in participating are encouraged to submit their interest as part of the open call for the new Committee.

This Committee will serve as a collaborative forum to support the ongoing revitalization, safety, and functionality of the downtown core. It will guide the efforts that foster a vibrant, inclusive, and economically sustainable hub that meets the needs of businesses, residents, and visitors.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications.

Strategic Plan / Policy Impact / Climate Impact

The recommendation supports the Corporate Strategic Plan 2024-2027 in a variety of focus areas:

- Within the Community Development focus area, it will promote economic activity and growth.
- It will contribute to the Quality of Life by fostering a vibrant downtown through and supporting the Arts and Culture sector of the community.
- It will build collaborative relationships to enhance service delivery through community partnerships.
- Finally, it will ensure transparency and fiscal responsibility to meet the needs of the community.

Recommendation

It is therefore recommended that Council take the following action:

Resolved that the report of the Director of Community Services dated August 11, 2025 concerning the Sault Ste. Marie Downtown Development Committee be received and that the Terms of Reference for the Sault Ste. Marie Downtown Development Committee be approved.

Respectfully submitted,

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