

King doing its part to help with economic recovery

By **Mark Pavilons**

While all eyes are fixed on provincial and federal support through the pandemic, King Township has risen to the challenge. King officials and staff have been pulling out all the stops since the pandemic hit hard. Mayor Steve Pellegrini joined members of the King Chamber of Commerce last week in a virtual Zoom session, discussing the supports and challenges faced by businesses. King's economic development division, led by Jamie Smyth, developed resources for a business information page on [EconomicKing.ca](#) website. The resources are updated regularly, often hourly, as new information becomes available. Economic development staff have been conducting daily, one-on-one phone calls and reaching out to the business community to get a handle on their needs. The ShopKING page lists essential business offerings physically distant shopping options. Social media accounts on Facebook and Twitter were created to promote essential services that were open and operating. Staff noted they saw unique visitors to the website triple once the resources for businesses and ShopKing pages went up. Unique visitors hit a high of 1,709 in April. Township staff sent out COVID-19 support email to King's business community. Staff met with the Schomberg Business Management Committee to discuss COVID-19 resources and programs available to Schomberg's Main Street businesses. They also developed the Northern York Region Business Recovery Centre, with economic development partners across the region and in all northern 6 municipalities. King staff also meets weekly (virtually) with ED colleagues. Staff pointed out they sent out Community Improvement Plan (CIP) mail to 340 property owners and business owners located in village core areas and are eligible for grants available in our CIP program. This promotion of the program has resulted in multiple CIP inquiries and some CIP application submissions. Approximately \$60,000 is available for CIP granting to eligible businesses over the next 5 months. An additional \$20,000 to be dispersed and granted through our CIP Grant program is anticipated to be reallocated from York Region's Innovation Investment Reserve Fund to King Township within the next few weeks. King also developed a temporary COVID-19 patio program and application process for restaurants looking to expand their existing patios and/or to create new temporary patios on private lands to help increase capacity and sales. They are developing a temporary public land patio pilot program for Main Street in Schomberg. This is for restaurants in need of patios located on public lands to help increase their capacity and sales while ensuring physical distancing is possible. In the bigger picture, King has improved 35 kilometres of local roads and millions have been invested in streetscaping projects. The new King Township Public Library Branch and Seniors Centre in King City is expected to open in early August. Economic Development staff will be working with the Chamber Board on the 2021 version of Business and Community Directory scheduled to come out in late November. The Township will be working with the Chamber board to establish a more formal and focused partnership with various initiatives in support of a viable and prosperous business environment and local economy. i.e. ShopKING campaign. A review and update of King's Community Improvement Plan is being prepared and will come before council this fall. It will be recommending a broader geographic area and range of eligible physical improvement for businesses. (Township wide). King's Community Tourism Plan Refresh, that was being worked on with a stakeholder committee pre-COVID, will be reignited later this summer and focus on recovery and adaptation in support of our tourism hospitality and recreation businesses. It is expected this will go to council this fall for endorsement. The final Schomberg Main Street Revitalization Strategy will be presented to council this fall. It has been transitioning from development into implementation and action. The strategy identified 65 action items that are in various stages of progress with several completed. The Main Street Schomberg Streetscaping Renewal design work (Action Item 4) has begun and it is anticipated will be entering a community consultation and engagement stage in the early fall. A new, more user friendly [www.king.ca](#) website with more on-line and digital services will be launched in the fall of 2020.