

City of Lethbridge 2015 Financial Annual Report



Brief Description of Business Unit:

The Heart of Our City Business Unit is responsible for facilitating the continuous improvement of the Downtown core as identified in the Integrated Community Sustainability Plan/Municipal Development Plan, the Downtown Area Redevelopment Plan and the Heart of Our City Master Plan and through the proactive leadership of the Heart of Our City Committee in engaging the public and stakeholder groups.

2015 Success Stories, Stats & Highlights

1. Heart of Our City Housing Incentive Program [01/01/2015 – 31/12/2018]

City Council approved \$1,600,000 to create new, market based housing units in Downtown Lethbridge. Through the Heart of Our City Housing Incentive Program (HOCHIP) additional benefits expected include increasing the downtown population and thereby increasing business, employment and entertainment opportunities. The first unit under this program was completed in November, 2015.



2. Heart of Our City Service Agreements

The City of Lethbridge, through the Heart of Our City Committee, entered into the following Fee-For-Service Agreements for the 2015 to 2018 budget period:

a. Business Improvement Loan Program [01/01/2015 – 31/12/2018]

This is a grant funding program available to qualified Downtown business and not-for-profit tenants for eligible improvements to their business premises. The program is a three-way agreement between Community Futures Lethbridge Region (CFLR), the Downtown Lethbridge Business Revitalization Zone (DLBRZ) and the Heart of Our City Committee (HOCC). The DLBRZ receives and screens

applications, the CFLR provides the capital and administers the loans (maximum of \$15,000 repayable over 3 years) and the HOCC pays then interest on approved loans with funds derived from the Heart of Our City Fund. There have been 8 loans approved in 2015 through this program and 40 since 2012.

b. **First Friday Initiative** [01/01/2015 – 31/12/2017]

This program is administered on behalf of the Heart of Our City Committee (HOCC) by the Downtown Lethbridge Business Revitalization Zone (DLBRZ) for the promotion of businesses and cultural activities taking place in the Downtown on the First Friday of each month. The program is funded as follows: \$15,000 for 2015; \$10,000 for 2016; and \$5,000 for 2017, the final year of support from the HOCC.



c. **Municipal Main Street Program** [01/01/2015 – 31/12/2018]

This \$60,000/year program is administered on behalf of the Heart of Our City Committee by the Downtown Lethbridge Business Revitalization Zone for purposes of restoring facades of Downtown buildings and creation of new commercial signage on a fund business matching basis. There were 4 façade and 6 signage projects match-funded in 2015. The Lethbridge Main Street Program is still heavily involved in the Bow-On-Tong and Manie Opera House projects and continues to work closely with the volunteer Save Chinatown group on fundraising efforts towards complete building restoration.



d. **Clean Sweep Program** [01/01/2015 – 31/12/2018]

The Clean Sweep program is a holistic approach to maintaining a clean, welcoming and safe physical downtown public realm is followed. It also provides an entry level work experience opportunity for people in our community who have complex needs. Through this agreement and the combined resources of the

Heart of Our City, (\$75,000/year) the Downtown BRZ (program administration), and the Community Social Development Department, the Clean Sweep Program (CSP) continues to be a highly visible and successful program.



e. Summer and Winter Ambassador Programs [01/01/2015 – 31/12/2018]

The Summer Ambassador Program, administered by the BRZ, employs 8 high school students as Ambassadors. This \$24,000/year program involves having the Ambassadors fulfill a variety of duties such as cleaning back alleys, cleaning tree grates, maintaining and cleaning poster kiosks, plugging expired meters, assisting with events and assisting Galt Garden staff with flower bed weeding.

The Winter Ambassador Program also known as the “Festive Season Parking Meter Program” helps stimulate business during the Christmas sales period. The \$12,000/year program was initiated in 2007 and is operated by the BRZ on behalf of the Heart of Our City. University and college students as well as clients from Lethbridge Family Services are hired to plug meters during the weeks leading up to Christmas. The program continues to be a very popular and effective program as evidenced by numerous calls from people happy to get their meters plugged along with a seasonal greeting instead of getting a parking ticket.

3. Heart of Our City Activity Grant [01/01/2015 – 31/12/2018]

The Heart of Our City Activity Grant provides funds to assist Lethbridge organizations host events that create an exciting and vibrant downtown and attract audiences to the Heart of Our City. During 2015, 20 organizations were assisted in hosting a wide variety of events on 115 days taking place in every month of the year and drawing over 40,000 persons. Larger events included: Love and Records Festival; New West Theatre; Word on the Street Festival; Lethbridge Jazz Festival; Shakespeare in the Park; Pride Fest and Oktoberfest.



4. Round Street Gateway Project [01/06/2015 – 31/05/2016]

The Round Street Gateway Project commenced during the summer of 2015, in conjunction with a major renovation project that is converting the former 6th Avenue Fire Station into an office building and activity centre for the Southern Alberta Ethnic Association. The \$218,000 gateway project will enhance the identity of Downtown at one of the key entrances while contributing to pedestrian and vehicular orientation, particularly for visitors. The gateway has been designed to fit seamlessly into the reconstruction of Round Street if or when that occurs and is also intended to create a responsive interface between the London Road neighbourhood and Downtown.

5. Historic Plaque Program [01/01/2015 – 31/12/2018]

This \$7,500/year program is a partnership with the Lethbridge Historical Society that involves the placement of bronze plaques on buildings of historical importance in the Downtown. During 2015, 6 plaques were unveiled.



6. Galt Gardens Master Plan [01/01/2015 - 30/06/2016]

This \$50,000 project will generate a concept/design plan and budget of sufficient design detail to enable the submission of a request for a CIP expenditure to construct the preferred improvements to Galt Gardens.

7. Galt Gardens Security Enhancement Program [01/01/2015 – 31/12/2018]

The Heart of Our City Committee contributes \$42,000/year to top-up funding to City-contracted Sentinel Security in Galt Gardens. This funding/service helps reassure park users that the park is a safe place to be. Security personnel deal with a wide variety of minor issues that might otherwise occupy the police but will call the police if necessary.