

## HEART OF OUR CITY ANNUAL REPORT – 2017

### 1. Heart of Our City Housing Incentive Program (HOCHIP)

The HOCHIP is a \$2.5M incentive program which will facilitate the construction of 83 Downtown dwelling units over the 4-year budget cycle. Development is incentivized at \$30,000 per eligible dwelling unit. Funding for the program comes equally from Subdivision Surplus and the Municipal Revenue Stabilization Reserve (MRSR). Both new development and redevelopment of existing space, provided it is not currently residential, is allowed.

- 17 units complete
- 4 units substantially complete
- 32 units in progress
- 13 units proposed



### 2. Heart of Our City Activity Grant

The Heart of Our City Committee is committed to enhancing the vibrancy of Downtown Lethbridge. The grant assists Lethbridge organizations host events that attract audiences and create an exciting downtown. The 7-year old, \$120,000 annual program helped support 23 festivals and events in 2017. Events took place in every month and consisted of:

- 92 days of events
- 14 multi-day events (increase over 2016)
- 9 single day events (increase over 2016)
- 4 new events (Crossing Together, Independent Dance, Wide Skies Roots & Blues Festival, & Proud)
- 60,000+ attendees (10,000 increase over 2016)
- 174% increase in attendees since 2011



### 3. First Friday Promotion

First Friday's continue to be a popular event for businesses and customers. Approximately 50 businesses participate in First Friday's each month. Besides promoting the event heavily on the BRZ website and social media, advertisements appeared in Lethbridge Living Magazine throughout the year. The Lunch and Listen noon-hour music concert series sponsored by the U of L Conservatory of Music and partially supported by an HOCC Activity Grant, is held at Casa to coincide with and promote First Friday.

The First Friday initiative has received a declining amount of Heart of Our City funding as it has taken root within the Downtown with management provided by the BRZ. Within the current Operating Budget period, funding has gone from \$15,000 in 2015 to \$10,000 in 2016 to \$5,000 in 2017, which is the last year of approved funding.

### 4. Celebrate Downtown Event

May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2017 marked the occasion of the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Celebrate Downtown Awards which recognize and celebrate those special persons, businesses and organizations that have contributed to the development of our vibrant Downtown. Eighty nominations were received recognizing 49 downtown champions in 7-categories. Chosen by the Heart of Our City Committee, award recipients were determined on their alignment with the fundamental Downtown building blocks of accessibility, beautification, livability, sustainability, excitement and vibrancy.

The following awards were presented:

- **Back in the Day Award** - Belinda Crowson
- **Hip Downtown Transformation Award** - Stone Arbour Developments (Suites 601)
- **Running with the Bulls Award** - Lorelee Edwards - Drunken Sailor
- **Taking Care of Business Award** - Joseph Eufemia – Telegraph Tap House
- **Event of the Year Award** - Lethbridge Pride Fest
- **From the Heart Award** - CMARD (the Coalition of Municipalities Against Racism and Discrimination)
- **Champagne Award** - Penny Coffee House



## **5. The Main Street Program**

The Main Street Program is managed, on a fee-for-service basis, by the BRZ. There were 11 projects undertaken during 2017 which included 9 signage projects and 2 combined signage and façade projects.

## **6. Business Improvement Loan Program**

The Business Improvement Loan Program is a three-way partnership between Community Futures Lethbridge (CFL), the Downtown Lethbridge Business Revitalization Zone (BRZ) and the Heart of Our City Committee (HOCC). 12 Business Improvement Loans were approved in 2017 bringing the total to 74 since the program inception in late 2011.

## **7. Cleanliness and Security**

Cleanliness and safety are hallmarks of a successful Downtown. Resources are made through the Heart of Our City to improve both the cleanliness and sense of security in Downtown Lethbridge. The following initiatives have been created to achieve those purposes.

### **a. Galt Gardens Safety and Security**

Provision of enhanced security in Galt Gardens was again extended to provide coverage during the “shoulder” months of April and September when the weather can be very nice thus attracting more people to the park. The presence of security in the park provides both an on-site deterrent to those who have a tendency to misbehave and a reassuring effect to other users who might otherwise choose not to visit the park. The contracted security service provider is Paladin Security and management of the security contract is provided by the Community Services Department.

At the beginning of each summer season, a start-up, orientation meeting is held among stakeholders to discuss procedures strategies to manage safety and security issues that may arise over the course of the summer in Galt Gardens. Generally, the issues tend to arise among to those park users with complex needs whose activities, from time-to-time, can be disruptive to more passive park users. In addition to City Park staff and the BRZ, participation in the orientation process includes entities that provide some level of social or harm reduction service.

This stakeholder group includes:

- Lethbridge Police Services
- Lethbridge Fire and EMS
- Canadian Mental Health Association & the Diversion Outreach Team (DOT)
- Contracted security services provider
- ARCHES

### **b. Diversion Outreach Team – DOT**

The DOT is an alternative and more appropriate response to substance abuse issues and public intoxication which has proven to reduce pressure on the Lethbridge Police and EMS. The team seeks to reduce the barriers for multiple risk factors such as street issues, by coordinating access to a range of shelter, medical, financial, housing and addiction programs.

The DOT works throughout the City and has received positive feedback from Police and EMS services and many community stakeholders, including the Downtown Business Revitalization Zone Board. Since April, 2017 (when the current stat format was introduced) there have been over 4,700 interventions. Downtown generally accounts for close to 50% of the call volumes.

**c. Clean Sweep Program (CSP)**

The Clean Sweep Program is Fee-For-Service program operated on behalf of the Heart of Our City Committee by the Downtown Lethbridge BRZ. The program supervisor is funded through the Community and Social Development Department with funds provided through OSSI (Province of Alberta Ministry of Community & Social Services).

The Clean Sweep Program (CSP) continues to be a highly visible and successful program. 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.

**d. Crabb Street Public Restroom**

The self-cleaning public restroom, installed in Downtown Lethbridge in the late summer of 2016, continues to address the pressing need for those with limited or no access to public restroom facilities and makes downtown a more welcoming place for all who visit the area.

Located along the east side of 6 Street South, just south of 4 Avenue, the barrier-free restroom is free for all users. It automatically cleans and sanitizes the toilet, sink and floor after every use. It's open daily from 6:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m., making it available to transit riders and all others who visit the Downtown.

**e. Summer Ambassador Program**

The Summer Ambassador Program, a Fee-for-Service program managed by the BRZ, operates during July and August. The ambassadors are high school students who fulfill a variety of duties such as cleaning back alleys, cleaning tree grates, maintaining cleaning poster kiosks and pole collars, plugging expired meters, assisting with events and assisting Galt Garden staff with

**8. Third Avenue Reconstruction**

Associated Engineering was selected through a competitive bidding process to undertake the preliminary and detailed design for the reconstruction of 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue South. The reconstruction project will build upon conceptual designs from the Public Realm and Transportation Study. The reconstruction project will rehabilitate underground utilities and will incorporate streetscaping design features. The design phase of the project commenced in November 2016 and will be finished in early 2018. Construction funding was recently approved in the 2018-2027 Capital Improvement Plan.

**9. Parking Technology Project**

While the Transportation Department has led the Parking Technology Upgrade Project, the Heart of Our City Committee has played a significant advocacy role which helped to secure support from the business community. The project is about looking holistically at the downtown as we explore what technology will work for Lethbridge now and in the future as we replace the existing, aging parking meters. The project to supply a better system has had a strong customer focus. The project is now part of the way through the 3rd and final phase, procurement and installation. The new system will consist of 170 pay-by-plate multi-space machines that will handle over 1900 parking spaces that will be convenient located throughout the Downtown. In addition, 60 single space smart parking meters will be added specifically designed at supporting those with accessibility needs. Payment options will include coin and a smart phone apps. Enforcement officers will monitor parking using a license plate recognition system.

## **10. Galt Gardens Master Plan**

Upon the recommendation of the Heart of Our City Committee, City Council approved funding in the current Operating Budget to undertake a Master Plan to direct the reconstruction of Galt Gardens. The Master Plan project was completed in early 2017. Order of magnitude cost estimates were provided to assist in the preparation of an application for CIP funding for park reconstruction, based on the preferred concept. Construction funding, commencing in 2022, was recently approved in the 2018-2027 Capital Improvement Plan.

## **11. Winter Ambassador Program**

The Christmas shopping period is one of the most important retail sales time period for many downtown merchants. The Heart of Our City Committee, together with the BRZ, recognizes the importance to the community of Downtown during the Christmas season as well. The Festive Season Parking Meter Program helps stimulate business during the Christmas sales period. The Program, also known as the Winter Ambassador Program is a “Fee-For-Service” program operated by the BRZ on behalf of the Heart of Our City. The program was initiated in 2007 and continues to be a very popular and effective program for the downtown. However, a new program involving the new multi-space and single space smart meters that will replace the parking meters, may be derived for 2018.