



# City of Lethbridge Boards, Commissions and Committees Overview: Heart of Our City Committee (HOC) Annual Report

<b>Mandate</b>	<i>[To Be Completed by the City Clerks Office]</i>
<b>Existing Challenges</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Review of Mandate and Terms of Reference (part of Governance Review) including size of committee and attendance/participation</i></li> <li>- <i>Pressure from businesses and those with development interest for support of HOC for older areas of the City outside of Downtown.</i></li> <li>- <i>Committee tasked with staying on top of and addressing major challenges in the Downtown with Drug Crisis and Safety and Economic Slowdown further compounded by COVID-19.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Composition</b>	<i>[To Be Completed by the City Clerks Office]</i>
<b>Subcommittees</b>	<i>Governance and Strategy, Clean and Safe, Exciting and Vibrant, and Complete Neighbourhoods</i>

## Operational History:

Number of Meetings in 2018: 12	Number of Meetings in 2019:  12	Number of Meetings in 2020: 10
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## 2020 Plan:

Focus on continuing to “embrace the evolution of Downtown”, specifically as we focus on creating safe, vibrant, and resilient spaces where our local economy can thrive in the face of new and ongoing challenges. Important projects include:

- Continued implementation and monitoring of the Clean and Safe Strategy initiatives
- Implementation of the recommendations from the HOC/BRZ Governance and Operational Review
- Planning and advocating for continued financial support in the Downtown from the Operating and Capital Budget processes.
- Continued evaluation on the impacts of COVID-19 and being responsive to new ideas to ensure revitalization efforts continue to move forward.

## Request for Revisions:

Recommendations for committee revisions will likely come forward following HOC/BRZ Governance and Operational Review which will be completed by November 1, 2020.

### **Summary of Annual Report:**

2019/20 proved to be another challenging year(s) in the ongoing revitalization efforts in the Downtown as previously identified challenges were accelerated and made more challenging due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the HOC Committee is incredibly proud of the amount of work that it was accomplished over this time despite those challenges as progress was made on all of the key actions that were identified in the 2018 annual report for 2019, including:

- Embracing Evolution of Downtown;
- Undertaking a Strategic Governance Review of the HOC and BRZ;
- Build and Implement a New Downtown Brand;
- Implement the Council Approved Adaptive Reuse Policy;
- Implement Projects Funded from Public Realm CIP; and
- Continue to Implement and Monitor the Downtown Clean and Safe Strategy.

Other Initiatives, Programs, and Highlights include:

### ***Governance and Strategy***

- Subcommittee Restructuring
- Downtown COVID-19 Economic Recovery Task Force
- HOC and BRZ Governance and Operational Review

### ***Clean and Safe***

- Presentation to SCS Review Panel
- Urban Social Issues Study
- Downtown Clean and Safe Strategy Implementation and Monitoring

### ***Exciting and Vibrant***

- Brand Development and Implementation
- 2019 and 2020 Activity Grant including pivot to Online Events
- Parklet and Patio Program
- Public Realm Enhancements including Oki Project, parklets, planters, street light banners, and other improvements.

### ***Complete Neighbourhoods***

- Personas Development and Survey
- Development based grants and incentives including new Adaptive Reuse Program and expanded Main Street Program.

### **Summary of HOC monthly meetings:**

- ***January 2019*** – LPS Update, Celebrate Downtown, Clean and Safe Strategy, Strategic Planning Workbook, Park n Ride Transit Terminal Update, Development update on Oliver Building, HOCHIP Signage, Quarterly Budget
- ***February 2019*** – LPS Update, Update from BILD, Celebrate Downtown, Strategic Planning Discussion

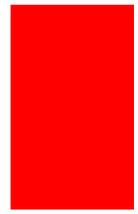
- **March 2019** – Administrative Changes w/ Changes to Planning Director, LPS Update, Solar System Education Project, Strategic Planning Next Steps, Celebrate Downtown, Clean and Safe Strategy Update, New West Activity Grant Application, HOCHIP Updates, TRIP Update for Six08 Health, Park N Ride Transit Terminal Update, Bow on Tong/Manie Opera Update, Budget Discussion.
- **April 2019** – LPS Update, 2018 Annual Report, Strategic Planning Subcommittee Updates, Celebrate Downtown, Clean and Safe Strategy Update, Public Washroom Update
- **May 2019** – Membership Discussion on Adding Tourism Lethbridge, LPS Update, Public Realm Enhancement Update, Adaptive Reuse Program Draft(s), TRIP Update
- **June 2019** – Change of time for meetings, LPS Update, Subcommittee Updates, Public Realm Enhancement Update, Clean and Safe Strategy Update, Downtown BRZ Fall Festival Activity Grant, Adaptive Reuse Program Draft(s)
- **July 2019** – Tourism Lethbridge New Member, LPS Update, Downtown BRZ Fall Festival, Subcommittee TORs and Updates, Celebrate Downtown Final Report, Quarterly Budget Update
- **August 2019** – LPS Update, Subcommittee Updates, Parklet Program, Transformer Wrapping, Adaptive Reuse Program Application Form, Request for Funding from LSIDA, Bow on Tong/Manie Opera Update, Park n Ride Grand Opening Invite.
- **September 2019** – Update of Joint HOC/BRZ Meeting, LPS Update, BILD Membership Change, SCS Review Panel, Subcommittee Updates, Celebrate Downtown, Adaptive Reuse Application, Six08 Health Groundbreaking, Post Office Redevelopment Presentation
- **October 2019** – Parking Rates (InCamera), LPS Update, Park n Ride Tour Recap, Branding Strategy, Subcommittee Updates, Activity Grant Review, Imperial Oil Reclamation Information, Quarterly Budget
- **November 2019** – Citizen at Large Appointments, Joint HOC/BRZ Meeting Minutes, Parking Rates and Fines CIC Presentation Review, Branding Strategy, Subcommittee Updates, Discussion on Purchase of HOC Banners and Promotional Materials
- **December 2019** – Downtown Clean and Safe Strategy Funding Request, 2020 Activity Grant Funding Recommendations, Parklet Pilot Report and Recommendations, Back Alley Signage Project
- **January 2020** – LPS Update, City Clerks Committee 101 Presentation, Celebrate Downtown Update, 2020 HOC Committee Discussion
- **February 2020** – Celebrate Downtown, Subcommittee Updates, Downtown Branding Project, HOC Master Plan 2.0 Update, March 24 Community Conversation, 2020-2022 Updated Budget
- **March 2020** – Celebrate Downtown Legacy Award (InCamera), BILD Resignation, LPS Update, Subcommittee Updates, Downtown Infrastructure Updates, Downtown Branding Update, 2020 Committee Conference and Training Opportunities, Allied Arts Council Summer Vibrancy Funding Request
- **April 2020** – LPS Update, Bylaw 6205 Review (Code of Conduct), Joint HOC.BRZ COVID-19 Task Force, Subcommittee Reports, Downtown Branding Update
- **May 2020 Special Meeting** – Virtual Activity Grant and Persons Project

- **May 2020** – Approval of motions made at special meeting on Virtual Activity Grant and Personas Project, COVID-19 Task Force Update, Subcommittee Updates, Letter of Support for BRZ Levy Cancellation, HOC/BRZ Governance Review, Downtown Infrastructure Updates
- **June 2020** – Subcommittee Updates, Festival Square Concept Designs, 2020-2025 Downtown CIP Projects Strategy,
- **July 2020** – Downtown BRZ Testing Area/Better Block Presentation, Subcommittee Updates, Festival Square Concept Designs, Downtown Parking and COVID-19 Discussion, Bylaw 6205 Review (Code of Conduct)

### **Additional Attachments**

*Please list any supplemental attachments you may be attaching to this report. For example:*

- *Attachment 1: HOC Annual Report 2019/20*



# HEART<sub>OF OUR</sub> CITY

## 2019/20 Annual Report

HEART OF OUR CITY COMMITTEE

**NOTE:** Due to the unique nature of 2020 the 2019 annual report which would be prepared in January and presented in March was pushed until September, as such the report provides an update of both 2019 and the majority of 2020 (up to August 31).

## **Heart of Our City Committee**

The Heart of Our City Committee was established in 2007 with the mandate to champion the revitalization of Downtown Lethbridge and to provide strategic leadership through the implementation of the Heart of Our City Master Plan.

Responsibilities include working with the Urban Revitalization Business Unit to:

- make recommendations to Council that affect the downtown;
- monitor planning and development activities downtown;
- provide input on strategic direction of initiatives to implement the Heart of Our City Master Plan;
- prepare and monitor the Heart of Our City Fund budget (Downtown Redevelopment Fund) on annual basis

### **Current Committee Members**

Dawn Leite, Allied Arts Council (Chair)  
Mark Campbell, Councilor (Vice Chair)  
Erin Crane, Economic Development Lethbridge  
Noorin Chatur-Muhammad, Chamber of Commerce  
Lorien Johansen, Lethbridge Historical Society  
Ken Harvie, Development Industry  
Sheri Kain, Downtown Lethbridge BRZ  
Jackie French, Southern Alberta Ethnic Association  
Jackie Stambene, Tourism Lethbridge  
Jordan Head, Indigenous Representative  
Clara Piedalue, Citizen at Large  
Marcia Nesch, Citizen at Large  
Melissa Wiebe, Citizen at Large  
Vacant, Citizen at Large

### **Former Committee Members**

Grace Duff, BILD/Development Rep  
Trent Fujita, BILD/Development Rep  
Richard Kofi Odei-Wontumi, Southern Alberta Ethnic Association  
Bonnie Greenshields, Citizen at Large  
David Foster, Downtown BRZ  
Zamir Ali, Chamber of Commerce

## **1. Introduction**

Heart of Our City is responsible for facilitating continuous improvement of the Downtown as identified in the Integrated Community Sustainability Plan/Municipal Development Plan, the Heart of Our City Master Plan, the Downtown Area Redevelopment Plan and the recently approved Civic Common Master Plan.

This is accomplished by the proactive leadership of the Heart of Our City Committee and the Urban Revitalization Department who leads engagement and coordination of internal departments, stakeholder groups, and public in the design, planning, transformation and overall revitalization initiatives.

## **2. Overview**

In the 2018 Annual Report the Heart of Our City Committee highlighted the development an initial implementation of the Downtown Clean and Safe Strategy, provided an update on the status of the various incentive programs, and a number of plans and infrastructure improvements that were being undertaken/completed in the Downtown including the Civic Common Master Plan, Park n Ride Transit Terminal; 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue Reconstruction Detailed Designs (4<sup>th</sup> Street to 8<sup>th</sup> Street), Cycling Corridors Functional Planning Study, Parking Meter Replacement Program, and Downtown Public Realm Enhancements.

Successes that were highlighted in 2018 included improving and leveraging key stakeholder relationships, undertaking critical infrastructure improvements, completing the Civic Common Master Plan, and developing and implementing the Downtown Clean and Safe Strategy.

Challenges that were identified in 2018 included the ongoing parking meter replacement, safety and drug crisis, economic slowdown, and suburban growth pressures.

2019/20 proved to be another challenging year in the ongoing revitalization efforts in the Downtown as previously identified challenges were accelerated and made more challenging due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the HOC Committee is incredibly proud of the amount of work that it was accomplished over this time despite those challenges as progress was made on all of the key actions that were identified in the 2018 annual report for 2019, including:

- Embracing Evolution of Downtown;
- Undertaking a Strategic Governance Review of the HOC and BRZ;
- Build and Implement a New Downtown Brand;
- Implement the Council Approved Adaptive Reuse Policy;
- Implement Projects Funded from Public Realm CIP; and
- Continue to Implement and Monitor the Downtown Clean and Safe Strategy.

### 3. Committee Initiatives, Programs, and Highlights

This section of the report will identify the key areas that the HOC Committee has been working to implement and/or influence. In late 2019, the committee reorganized its subcommittees to establish a better balance of committee representation as some members were not involved on any subcommittees and others were on three or more. Further, there were approximately 8 subcommittees on the go which was becoming difficult to manage. The result was four subcommittees based on areas of priority for committee, including Governance and Strategy, Clean and Safe, Exciting and Vibrant, and Complete Neighbourhoods.

#### 3.1 Governance and Strategy

Tasked with ensuring overall implementation of the Heart of Our City Master Plan including committee governance, budgets, key stakeholder relationships, strategic planning, and advocacy.

- **COVID-19/Economic Recovery Task Force** – In mid-March at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and economic shutdown the Governance and Strategy Subcommittee invited 3 members of the Downtown BRZ to join in an ad-hoc task force that would meet weekly for one hour to keep a finger on the pulse of what was happening and discuss and promote ideas to support Downtown. Many of the ideas discussed in these meetings were then tasked to other subcommittees and/or City administration. This included but was not limited to:
  - Virtual Activity Grant
  - Expanded Main Street Funding for Parklets and Patios
  - BRZ Levy Support Funding
  - Parking Enforcement Advocacy
  - Farmers Market Support
- **HOC and BRZ Governance and Operational Review** – As part of the letter of support to Council in relation to the Downtown BRZ’s request for funding to cover their 2020 levy due to pressures of COVID-19, the HOC pivoted funding for the HOC Master Plan 2.0 project to fund BRZ’s request and to refocus on completing a HOC and BRZ Governance and Operational Review. A Steering Committee was established and as of July 2020 a consultant was procured to undertake the work, with a completion date of November 1, 2020.

#### 3.2 Clean and Safe

Tasked with championing the pillar of clean and safe in the downtown through the implementation of the Downtown Clean and Safe Strategy and other relevant plans and initiatives.

- **Presentation to SCS Review Panel** – In September 2019, members of the HOC were invited to present to the Provinces SCS Review Panel. The general points that were shared included:
  - Rely on unbiased analysis that combines data and experience to make decisions;
  - Seek local solutions that address nuances of local demographics, history, and culture as opposed to Province-wide solutions;

- Concern regarding large consumption sides with intensification of issues in one geographic area;
  - Concerns regarding current building design, site management, and operations including the amount of users who are forced into the surrounding public realm because of the buildings set up and number of users in one location;
  - Lack of critical infrastructure and services that address root causes such as supportive housing, intoxication, detox, etc
  - More support for reactive programs and initiatives until root causes are addressed as the municipal tax payer is currently on the hook for all of the DCSS initiatives.
- **Urban Social Issues Study** – In late 2017, the HOC undertook hiring the University of Lethbridge researcher Dr. Em Pijl to complete an Urban Social Issues Study to better understand the impacts of the Supervised Consumption Site on the community with unbiased and trustworthy data. The findings of this report were shared with the SCS Review Panel and presented to Council in February 2020.
  - **Downtown Clean and Safe Strategy Implementation and Monitoring** – Meeting every two weeks the subcommittee is joined by members of Lethbridge Police Service, Watch, and BRZ to provide community stakeholder perspectives on the implementation of the DCSS initiatives and to keep a finger on the pulse of issues. Recent discussions include the large increase in issues due to COVID-19, changes with SCS, and warm weather, specifically around Galt Gardens.

### 3.3 Exciting and Vibrant

Tasked with ensuring downtown is an exciting and vibrant hub of activity that is a source and expression of community identity and pride.

- **Brand Development and Implementation** - The City of Lethbridge, the Downtown BRZ and the HOC collaborated to gather feedback from businesses and use research for Economic Development Lethbridge's community brand project to develop the new direction for downtown. This new brand was developed with the support of a \$50,000 grant from the Alberta Government's Community and Regional Economic Support (CARES) program. The brand was launched in June 2020 with ongoing implementation taking place. ]
- **2019 Activity Grant** – In 2019, the HOC provided funding of \$130,000 to 25 events that took place over 114 days in the Downtown. Overall attendance of HOC supported events and festivals was down to approximately 45,000 from an average of 60,000 over the past 5 years however, Arts Days was severely impacted by a significant snowstorm in late September and other events were moderately impacted by ongoing concerns on the perception of safety in the Downtown.
- **2020 Activity Grant** – In 2020, the HOC provided funding of \$126,000 to 21 events that would take place over 117 days in the downtown with projections of attracting 60,000+ attendees. Unfortunately, with COVID-19 and its related social distancing requirements only

3 events were able to take place as originally planned. The HOC pivoted to support a modified application and funding process for online events that would support and promote the downtown. Further, the opportunity was presented to successful applicants to roll their approved funding forward to 2021 as opposed to having to reapply.

- **Parklet Pilot and New Parklet, Patio, and Street Vending Program** – In the summer of 2019, the HOC supported a parklet pilot program which would see temporary seating that replaces one or two parking spaces by extending from the sidewalk in front of the business into the street. A survey was open throughout the pilot and results of the pilot were evaluated by HOC and directly informed the development of a new program with support funding and the provision of infrastructure that can be borrowed by businesses for spring 2020. This initiative has proven successful and has acted as a form of economic recovery support for food based establishments.
  
- **D24 Public Realm Enhancements** – D-24 in the Capital Improvement Program 2018-2027 was approved for \$1,050,000.00 and the HOC has worked closely with City administration on the implementation of a variety of public realm enhancements as part of this program which includes a combination of several smaller “projects” including installation of new street furniture, replacement of obsolete or worn out street furniture, replacement of trees and tree grates, expanded use of public spaces through the creation of parklets and sidewalk "bump-outs" near existing eateries, creation of public art sites and installation of public art works and other complementary features. Some specific highlights that have been completed so far in 2019 and 2020 include:
  - Oki Project
  - Planter Boxes
  - Utility Box Wrapping
  - Street Light Banners
  - Parklets and Seating
  - Garbage’s
  - Street Lighting and Furniture at Transit Park n Ride
  - Festival Square Concept Designs
  - Mural Program Expression of Interest

### **3.4 Complete Neighbourhoods**

Tasked with defining what a complete downtown includes and key audience/profiles. Further, identify the needs of those audiences/profiles and outline business case to attract the necessary investments that meet their needs.

- **Personas Development and Survey** – In an effort to better understand what the public feel are all the essential businesses, amenities, and features that Downtown requires in order to have something for everyone and be considered a complete neighbourhood the HOC engaged a consultant to undertake a Persona’s development project which would create a set of 8-10 unique personas which would aid in understanding what we need to focus on

supporting and/or attracting. This project was completed in October 2020, and will look to be utilized throughout the work in 2021 and beyond.

- **Development Grants and Incentives** – A big component of the HOC’s focus and funding is on providing development based grants and incentives. In 2019, the Adaptive Reuse Program was approved by Council and became available for use. Further, minor modifications were made to the Main Street Program in order to support patios and parklets. Further, feedback was provided to feed into the City’s development of a more supportive development-based incentive program including the modification of a few HOC based programs.

#### **4. Look Ahead**

There are a number of key projects slated for 2021 and the focus will be on continuing to “embrace the evolution of Downtown”, specifically as we focus on creating safe, vibrant, and resilient spaces where our local economy can thrive in the face of new and ongoing challenges.

Important Projects for 2021 include:

- Continued implementation and monitoring of the Clean and Safe Strategy initiatives
- Implementation of the recommendations from the HOC/BRZ Governance and Operational Review
- Planning and advocating for continued financial support in the Downtown from the Operating and Capital Budget processes.
- Continued evaluation on the impacts of COVID-19 and being responsive to new ideas to ensure revitalization efforts continue to move forward.

## **ATTACHMENT 1 – DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT INCENTIVES STATUS REPORT (7/30/2020)**

The Heart of our City is part of the long-term project to revitalize Downtown Lethbridge. Successful downtowns accommodate a range of commercial, cultural, residential, and recreational activities; they are vibrant and prestigious destinations, attracting businesses, residents, and tourists; and they provide a high level of amenity and economic opportunity for the community at large.

The following incentive programs were developed at different times to support and stimulate development within the Downtown. The following is a brief overview summary reflecting on their effectiveness.

### **HOUSING INCENTIVE PROGRAM (HOCHIP)**

- Incentive of \$30,000 per unit towards the creation of new market based housing units in Downtown. The incentive is intended to offset the cost disadvantage between Downtown and sub-urban development sites.
- Approved in 2015-2018 Operating Budget cycle with \$1.6million in funding (53 units). In 2017, all funding was either paid out or reserved in potential development so a motion was brought forward to Council to add an additional \$900,000 (30 units) to support the program for a total funding of \$2.5 million.
- Program Stats
  - 23 units are currently built
    - 325 5 Street S (2 units); 601 4 Avenue S (15); 111 7 Street S (2); 710 3 Avenue S (1); 319 6 Street S (1); 506 6 Avenue (1); 616 3 Avenue S (1)
  - 20 additional units are approved and pending construction completion
    - 316 5 Street (7 units); 506 6 Avenue S (1); 118 5 Street S (12)
  - 2 applications currently submitted for review
    - (11 units); 102 Scenic Drive S (400+ units)
  - 1 project with intent to apply
    - (1 unit)
- Financials:
  - \$690,000 paid out
  - \$600,000 being held with an approval in place
  - \$1,210,000.00 currently unattached (albeit 2-3 pending applications which would utilize all of this)

### **ADAPTIVE REUSE INCENTIVE PROGRAM**

- An incentive that provides a 50% matching incentive up to \$100,000 to facilitate critical improvements to facilitate continued use of historic building stock including accessibility, structural, life safety, and historic preservation.
- Approved in 2019-2022 Operating Budget cycle with \$900,000 in funding.

- Program Stats:
  - 5 Projects have been completed
    - 303 3 Avenue S (\$100,000), 522 3 Avenue S (\$262.50), 200 4 Avenue S (\$20,000), 122 5 Street S (\$2,637.50), 518 5 Street S (\$34,781.25)
  - 2 Applications currently submitted with approval
  - 1 application submitted pending review
- Financials:
  - \$157,681.28 paid out
  - \$105,185.00 being held with an approval in place
  - \$637,133.72 unattached

### TARGETED REDEVELOPMENT INCENTIVE PROGRAM (TRIP)

- Municipal tax cancellation policy to provide an incentive for the construction or major renovations of commercial/office/retail and mixed-use projects that lead to significant and ongoing enhancement of the assessment base generated in the Downtown.
- Program Stats
  - 1 approved project
    - 608 5 Avenue S - Six08 Health
      - Approved by Council in 2019; construction underway
      - Tentative Incentive Period: 2021 – 2027
      - Estimated Tax Cancellation over 7 years = \$679,000.00 (\$97,000.00/yr)
  - 2 pending projects each with nuances in policy that need addressing with approval
    - 704 4 Avenue S (The Post)
      - Approval from Council required; need to address ownership and potential stacking
      - Estimated Tax Cancellation: TBD
    - (Oliver Building)
      - Approval from Council required; need to address potential stacking
      - Estimated Tax Cancellation: TBD

### MAIN STREET PROGRAM

- 50% matching incentive to improve businesses in the Downtown. Program was put in place in 2013 to carry on the Main Street Program which was previously funded by the Provincial Government.
- Annual budget of \$75,000.00 within Downtown Redevelopment Fund
- There are four components of the main street program:
  - Façade Treatments: Up to \$15,000 per 25' building frontage.
  - Signage: Up to \$1,000 per sign
  - CPTED Improvements (new as of 2019): Up to \$5,000 per property
  - Outdoor Patios (new as of 2020): Up to \$5,000 per property
- Program Stats
  - 2016: 18 projects totaling \$84,443.32
  - 2017: 14 projects totaling \$23,101.86

- 2018: 11 projects totaling \$59,745.58
- 2019: 16 projects totaling \$18,505.22 + 31 CPTED projects totaling \$50,428.67
- 2020 (TYD): 20 projects totaling \$34,617.02 + 8 CPTED projects totaling \$12,128.42

#### **BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT LOAN PROGRAM**

- Program put in place in 2012 in partnership with Community Futures and Downtown BRZ that provides interest-free loans up to \$15,000 for downtown businesses to improve the appearance and/or function of their business, with interest paid for by Heart of Our City.
- Annual budget of \$15,000 within Downtown Redevelopment Fund
- Program Stats:
  - 2016: \$16,123.21
  - 2017: \$11,283.64
  - 2018: \$14,026.52
  - 2019: \$5,828.69
  - 2020 (YTD): \$1,156.49