

Report

City of Merritt
REGULAR Council Meeting
August 26, 2025

File Number: XXXX

To: Cynthia White, Chief Administrative Officer
From: Dave Zakall, Director of Community Services
Date: July 10, 2025
Subject: Request to Partner with Merritt Neighborhood Welcome PR Corp

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Council direct staff to proceed with establishing a partnership with Merritt Neighborhood Welcome to enhance community engagement, support local economic development, and provide a warm and inclusive welcome to new residents.

THAT Council direct staff to include \$2,500 in the 2026 budget to purchase City branded items or facility passes to include in the welcome package.

THAT Council supports the inclusion of a 'Welcome to the Community' letter from the Mayor, to include in the welcome package.

Background:

This report seeks Council approval to establish a formal partnership with Merritt Neighborhood Welcome (Merritt NW), a community organization dedicated to welcoming newcomers and supporting local economic growth. The partnership aims to enhance community integration, promote local businesses, and showcase City resources to new residents.

Brooke Bara, Area Coordinator for Merritt NW, recently approached the City with a proposal to collaborate on welcoming new residents. Merritt NW specializes in creating meaningful connections between newcomers, local businesses, and community services through welcome packages, social media promotion, and targeted outreach.

She has been in Merritt for 6 years but has started doing this business in the past month. So far Brooke has 5 businesses committed and is continuing to work on collecting 5 more before she launches the program. The NW organization has 21 area coordinators throughout BC and Alberta.

Merritt NW proposes to distribute welcome packages to residents who have moved into Merritt within the past 12 months. These packages will include:

- **Community Information:** Essential city services, programs, community events, fire safety (Firesmart), recreation facilities, and other pertinent resources.
- **Local Business Promotions:** Business directories, promotional items (e.g., gift cards, swag), and service information provided by local partners.
- **City Branded Items:** The inclusion of City-branded swag (e.g., pens, reusable bags, swim passes) to foster civic pride.

Benefits of the Partnership

- **Enhanced Community Welcome:** A personalized letter from the Mayor can be included to make newcomers feel valued and supported.
- **Support for Local Businesses:** Increased visibility and engagement with new residents, leading to potential new customers.
- **Promotion of City Resources:** Greater awareness of municipal services and programs among new residents.
- **Economic Development:** Encouraging newcomers to support local businesses, thereby strengthening the local economy.
- **Community Engagement & Visibility:** Demonstrates the City's commitment to being a welcoming and inclusive community.

Operational Details

- **Reporting:** Merritt NW will provide quarterly reports on the number of packages distributed and recipient demographics, with a comprehensive report in December.
- **Reciprocal Cost Considerations:** Expenses include printing of welcome letters, swag items, and promotional materials. Costs would be managed through existing Economic Development budget.
- **Partnership Duration & Cancellation:** Contracts are ongoing with a 30-day notice required for termination. Monthly billing is based on the volume of packages distributed, with rates varying by business size and type.

Options / discussion

1. Receive for information purposes only.
2. Direct staff to engage with Merritt Neighbourhood Welcome to develop a partnership and in 2026 offer city branded items and facility passes to include in the welcome package.

Financial / Risk Implications:

- **Cost Considerations:** The cost of printing a welcome letter and promotional materials, such as the recreation guide, are minimal. If Council wishes to approve in principle \$2,500 for promotional items in the 2026 budget, staff have determined that this should be sufficient for 1-2 years of items purchased.

Strategic Plan Reference:

Economic Development Strategy

Partnering with Merritt Neighborhood Welcome aligns with the City's goals of fostering a welcoming, inclusive community and supporting local economic growth. This initiative offers a proactive approach to welcoming new residents, promoting city resources, and strengthening community ties.

Others Consulted:

Kim Mullen, Communications and Engagement Manager
Alix Legouffe, Community Services Manager

Attachments:

Partnership Proposal
Merritt Neighbourhood Welcome Business Profile

Respectfully submitted,

David Zakall
Director of Community Services