

Report

City of Merritt
REGULAR Council Meeting
May 26, 2020

File Number: 3800

To: Scott Hildebrand, Chief Administrative Officer
From: Don McArthur, Planning Manager
Date: May 21, 2020
Subject: Economic Recovery Initiatives: Permit Relaxations

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Council temporarily waives the Development Permit application fee and requirement to submit professional design drawings for commercial patio construction;

And

THAT Council temporarily waives the Sign Permit application fee and requirement to submit a colour rendering for sign installation;

And

THAT Council temporarily waives the Development Permit application fee for commercial façade improvements;

And

THAT Council temporarily enables retail businesses to apply for approval of outdoor display of goods which do not conform to the Business Licence Bylaw regulations, subject to approval by the Planning and Development Manager.

Background:

Due to restrictions on businesses as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, many businesses are experiencing financial hardship. In conjunction with the Economic

Recovery Task Force, staff have developed a number of potential initiatives to assist businesses in re-starting the local economy.

Each of the below potential initiatives would be temporary (ending December 31, 2020) and subject to the business submitting a completed application form for the proposed development. Receipt of an application will enable staff to evaluate the proposed development to ensure it does not pose a risk to public safety.

Development Permits for Patios

Proposed Initiative: Temporarily waiving the Development Permit application fee and the requirement to submit professional design drawings for the development of a commercial patio.

This initiative would reduce the costs of patio creation, enabling restaurant and bar owners to take advantage of outdoor space to spread out their clientele and therefore ensure adherence to physical distancing requirements.

The business owner would be required to complete and submit an application form, provide a hand drawn sketch with measurements, and if the patio is located on City property, provide proof of \$2,000,000 liability insurance with the City of Merritt as a named insured.

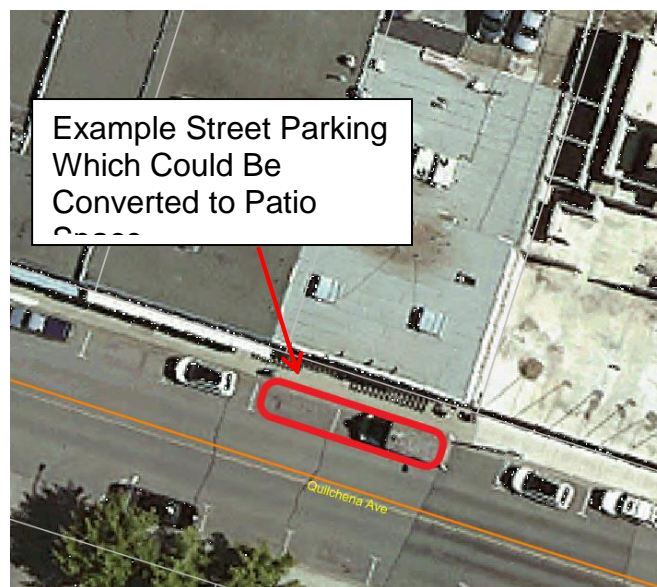


Figure 1: Street Parking to Patio Conversion

In order to ensure safety of patio users, staff would work with business owners to ensure barriers are established between vehicle lanes and seating areas. Potential barrier items could include planters, cones, traffic barricades or other similar objects. Staff will also explore reducing traffic speed limits on certain streets, such as Quilchena Avenue.

Sign Permits for Sign Installations

Proposed Initiative: Temporarily waiving the Sign Permit application fee and the requirement to submit a colour rendering for the installation of a sign for a home-based business, or commercial or industrial signs.

Sign Permits are required for many types of signs. The permit process enables staff to ensure proposed signs are aesthetically pleasing and do not pose any safety risks for residents. By temporarily waiving the application fee and requirement to submit a colour rendering, business owners would reduce their costs for installation of signage.

The business owner would be required to complete and submit an application form, provide a hand drawn sketch with measurements, and in the case of a sandwich board sign located on City property, provide proof of \$2,000,000 liability insurance with the City of Merritt as a named insured.

Development Permits for Façade Improvements

Proposed Initiative: Temporarily waiving the Development Permit application fee for commercial façade improvements.

This initiative would reduce the costs of façade enhancements, enabling retail business owners to beautify their premises, which will enhance the appearance of the City's commercial districts, thereby inspiring residents and visitors to shop locally.

The business owner would be required to complete and submit an application form and meet the Development Permit Area requirements in order to obtain a permit.

Permits for Outdoor Display of Goods

Proposed Initiative: Temporarily enabling retail businesses to apply for approval of outdoor display of goods which do not conform to the Business Licence Bylaw regulations, subject to approval by the Planning and Development Manager.

The Business Licence Bylaw includes regulations which enable the outdoor display of retail goods on sidewalks, as follows:

5.3. Any retailer with a valid Business Licence may exhibit, offer for sale, or display goods on sidewalks immediately abutting and within one (1) metre of their retail premises, provided that such display does not impede pedestrian traffic.

To provide more flexibility for retail business owners, staff could accept applications for alternative display plans which do not conform to the Bylaw, such as the use of more than 1 metre of sidewalk where the sidewalk is wide enough to accommodate pedestrian traffic, the display of goods on the street during a street closure or the conversion of a street parking space into display space. This initiative could be

particularly helpful for retail businesses where physical distancing of clientele is difficult due to with limited internal square footage.

The business owner would be required to submit a written request to the Development Services department, along with a hand drawn sketch of the proposed display and proof of \$2,000,000 liability insurance with the City of Merritt as a named insured. The application would be subject to Planning and Development Services Manager approval.

Options / discussion

Option 1: THAT Council temporarily waives the Development Permit application fee and requirement to submit professional design drawings for commercial patio construction;

AND THAT Council temporarily waives the Sign Permit application fee and requirement to submit a colour rendering for sign installation;

AND THAT Council temporarily waives the Development Permit application fee for commercial façade improvements;

AND THAT Council temporarily enables retail businesses to apply for approval of outdoor display of goods which do not conform to the Business Licence Bylaw regulations, subject to approval by the Planning and Development Manager.

Option 2: THAT Council receives this report for information

Financial / Risk Implications:

Waiving the fee requirements would mean a loss of Development Permit revenue of \$750 per development and Sign Permit revenue of \$50 per application.

Others Consulted:

- Economic Recovery Task Force

Attachments:

None

Respectfully submitted,

Don McArthur
Planning and Development Services Manager