

Report

City of Merritt
REGULAR Council Meeting
October 27, 2020

File Number: 1853

To: Mayor and Council
From: Sean Smith, Chief Administrative Officer
Date: October 23, 2020
Subject: CERIP Grant Application – Washroom at Spirit Square

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Council direct staff to apply for the Spirit Square Washroom project through the Community Economic Recovery Infrastructure Program – Community Economic Resilience Stream; AND THAT Council direct staff to include this project, with an estimated total cost of \$337,238, in the 2021-2025 Financial Plan Bylaw.

Background:

The City of Merritt has regularly heard from the public regarding the need for a downtown washroom. The lack of downtown washrooms has been identified as a concern in the *City Centre Improvement Plan (2008)*, *Age-Friendly Action Plan (2016)*, and the *Tourism Asset Inventory Report (2018)*.

Residents have expressed that any proposed bathroom must be accessible and in a safe, visible location.

Spirit Square has long been considered as a potential option for installing a downtown washroom. However, the drawback to this location is that the only empty portion of the parcel is behind the bandshell near the alley, which is a less than ideal location from a visibility and safety perspective. More recently, City staff have explored the idea of repurposing the existing water feature at Spirit Square as a washroom.

Credit goes to Marlene Jones, our Community Policing Office Coordinator, who identified this possibility in a 2020 Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) review of Spirit Square:

In addition to the flower beds, it is also the responsibility of the City Public Works Department / Parks Department to maintain the water feature that is located within the park. This water feature can serve as a catch all for garbage that blows through the space as well as an attractant for other behaviours including climbing, washing, smoking, and even public urination. On occasion, during the warm weather, we see children reaching into and playing in the recycled water, even though it is posted as not being a potable water source. If levels of street stress continue to increase in this space, this water feature may need to be re-evaluated and possibly repurposed. This could include a small self-contained public washroom feature, but it would have to be well designed to incorporate all the CPTED features presently recommended for public washroom facilities.

Figures 1 and 2 – Existing water feature at Spirit Square



CERIP Grant Opportunity

While staff were considering how the downtown bathroom project could best be executed, the Province announced the Community Economic Recovery Infrastructure Program. This is a 100% Provincially funded program (no contribution required), which was allocated \$90 Million, spread across the following 4 streams:

1. Community Economic Resilience (\$30 Million)
2. Destination Development (\$20 Million)
3. Unique Heritage Infrastructure (\$20 Million)
4. Rural Economic Recovery (\$20 Million)

Applicants can apply through a maximum of 2 streams, and applications must not exceed \$1 Million. As soon as the program was announced, City staff met to discuss potential projects and the various requirements under each stream. We identified the downtown washroom project as the most natural opportunity under the Community Economic Resilience Stream. The City did not have a shovel ready project that was eligible for the other streams. For more information on the CERIP program, visit the following link: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/economic-recovery/cerip>.

The application deadline for this program is October 29, 2020.

Washroom Project

The project, as proposed, would place a 'Portland Loo' style washroom in the place of the existing water feature, landscape the surrounding area, and add bike racks to support more active transportation.

This type of washroom was identified as a good fit primarily because of its ease of maintenance. City staff did consider self-cleaning bathroom options, but unfortunately, these types of washroom facilities have received poor reviews in Winter conditions. City staff understands that the City of Toronto has recently made the decision to remove self-cleaning washrooms from its downtown because of the poor performance and high maintenance cost from cold conditions.

The proposed location can be serviced relatively easily and is in a visible location that will encourage regular use and higher safety levels. Putting in a washroom at Spirit Square will not only encourage higher pedestrian traffic in the downtown area, it will dramatically increase the ability to establish more regular programming and activity at Spirit Square.

If Council were to direct staff to proceed with this project, staff would work with our local cleaning contractor to ensure regular cleaning of the washroom.

Total cost of the project, including a 25% contingency, is estimated at \$337,238.

Preliminary engineering plans for the washroom are attached to this report as Schedule "A".

Options / discussion

1. THAT Council direct staff to apply for funding for the Spirit Square Washroom project through the Community Economic Recovery Infrastructure Program – Community Economic Resilience Stream; AND THAT Council direct staff to include this project, with an estimated total cost of \$337,238, in the 2021-2025 Financial Plan Bylaw.
2. THAT Council receive this report for information.

Financial / Risk Implications:

The program is 100% grant funded, so there is no risk or financial commitment to the City in applying. However, if the City were to be unsuccessful in this grant application, Council would need to make the decision at a future time on whether to proceed with the project in 2021 or whether it should be pushed to a later year.

Others Consulted:

Charlie Henderson, Manager of Public Works and Engineering

Sky McKeown, Manager of Recreation and Facilities
Will George, Manager of Communications, Economic Development and Tourism
Marlene Jones, Community Policing Office Coordinator

Attachments:

Schedule "A" Spirit Square Washroom – Preliminary Engineering Plans

Respectfully submitted,

Sean Smith
Chief Administrative Officer