

2021 PUBLIC WASHROOM UPDATE

RECOMMENDATION

That the January 17, 2022, City Operations report CO00791, be received for information.

Report Purpose

Information only.

City Council is being provided with information on activities, initiatives and interventions completed by Administration in 2021 and planned next steps for 2022 to implement the citywide Public Washroom Strategy.

Executive Summary

- In 2021, Administration's effort to implement the citywide Public Washroom Strategy has focused largely on responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and continuing the attendant service model at some existing washrooms to keep washrooms clean, safe and accessible.
- This report describes accomplishments in 2021 and plans for 2022 and beyond.

REPORT

Public washrooms play an important role in enhancing public space vibrancy, encouraging outdoor activities and providing an essential service to all users of public spaces. Particularly, accessible, safe and clean public washrooms are critical amenities for people experiencing houselessness, health issues or children and families. At the April 24, 2019 Community and Public Services Committee meeting, Administration presented the Citizen Services report CR_5859, City-Wide Public Washroom Strategy, to address the challenges associated with the provision of accessible, safe and clean public washrooms. That report outlined the three phases of planning and improvement to effectively and efficiently manage public washrooms.

- Phase 1: Improve how the current inventory is managed.
- Phase 2: Increase access to washrooms through temporary facilities and partnerships.
- Phase 3: Develop more permanent public washrooms.

At the December 2, 2020 Community and Public Services Committee meeting, Administration presented an annual update on the public washroom strategy (CR_7185) which included

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information on the launch and success of the first year of the Whyte Avenue Attendant Pilot, expansion of the attendant program to other permanent washrooms as part of the City's pandemic response and progress on a pilot with a local business, The Nook, which focused on keeping the restaurant's washrooms open to the public leveraging an attendant model.

This report summarizes the activities, initiatives, and interventions completed by Administration in 2021 and reviews the planned next steps in 2022 for implementing the citywide Public Washroom Strategy. In 2021, the attendant model was continued and expanded and a summer mobile washroom pilot was launched. A large focus in 2021 was the continuing response to the pandemic, with the goal of keeping washrooms open, accessible, and safe for all users.

2021 Accomplishments:

Continuation of the Washroom Attendant Pilot Program: From December of 2019 onwards.

Administration has worked with Boyle Street Ventures to provide attendants to clean and monitor the Old Strathcona public washrooms. This intervention has been successful in ensuring the washrooms are cleaner, safer and accessible to patrons. It has also created jobs for people who may have barriers accessing the formal labour market. The washroom attendant service model was extended to other washrooms in Edmonton to ensure safety and cleanliness, prevent undesirable behaviors, and ensure users follow COVID-19 public health measures. These include the washrooms at Churchill Square, Louise McKinney Riverfront Park, Borden Park and Queen Elizabeth Park.

Another benefit of having attendants at the washrooms is the opportunity to gather data. Attendants are equipped with mobile devices that have an application to count the number of users, as well as non-identifying information about why they visited that particular location. Attachment 1 provides a data summary from January to October 2021 at permanent washroom locations: Whyte Avenue, Churchill Square, Borden Park, Louise McKinney Park and mobile washroom sites in Downtown and Alberta Avenue. In 2021, there were 90,128 visits to these washrooms. Whyte Avenue, Churchill Square and Louise McKinney Riverfront Park washrooms had a combined 137 per cent increase in visitation in 2021 (63,574 visits) in comparison to 2020 (26,806 visits).

Summer Mobile Pilot (2021): As part of the efforts to ensure Edmonton's vulnerable population and people experiencing houselessness have access to washroom facilities, the City provided mobile washrooms in high traffic areas in Downtown and on Alberta Avenue. The pilot started on May 1, 2021, and ended on October 31, 2021. Mobile washrooms were equipped with hand washing stations and staffed with attendants to ensure cleanliness and safety of users. This pilot also included the provision of menstrual products at each mobile washroom location.

Enhanced Custodial and Sanitation Services: The park washrooms not staffed with attendants continue to receive enhanced service in order to ensure they are safe and clean for public use and do not contribute to the spread of COVID-19.

Borden Park Pavilion Awarded Best Restroom In Canada: In August 2021, Borden Park Pavilion was named the best restroom in Canada by Cintas Canada. The pavilion was chosen out of the five finalists for the contest. Nominees for the nationwide contest were judged on cleanliness,

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visual appeal, innovation, functionality, and unique design elements. Cintas' contest showcases businesses that have invested in developing and maintaining exceptional washrooms that are accessible to the public.

Plans for 2022 and Beyond

In 2021, Administration created a new internal project charter that consolidates all the current and future work on the Public Washroom Strategy. In 2022, Administration will focus on the following:

- Using the Council approved one time operating budget increase of \$2.26 million to support an expanded and enhanced public washroom services pilot, including transitioning from Porta potty mobile sites to washroom trailers, for use beginning in the summer of 2022. While washroom trailers increase the overall cost for site preparation and operations, the overall user experience is vastly improved. Administration will also use these funds to expand the attendant program to additional existing city washrooms, to assist in the day to day management of the locations and make connections with the Edmontonians accessing these facilities. Administration will continue to engage with Business Improvement Areas and business districts on placement and operations of these facilities.
- Continuing the attendant service model at Whyte Avenue, Borden Park and Churchill Square, and enhanced sanitation and custodial services at park washrooms that are not staffed with attendants, based on the success of 2020 and 2021. Council approved an operating budget funding request of \$3.6 million as part of the one time adjustment for COVID-19 related impacts to support existing initiatives in 2022 that ensure the provision of safe, clean and well-managed washroom facilities. This funding will ensure continued implementation of the attendant program at stand-alone washrooms on Whyte Ave, Churchill Square, Borden Park, the placement of mobile washrooms and attendants in high visitation areas and for increased sanitation in stand-alone park washroom buildings.
- Council approved a Capital budget increase of \$2 million for design and delivery of permanent washroom facilities in Edmonton. Administration will activate this newly available capital funding to accelerate where possible the design and delivery of permanent washroom facilities.
- Determining ongoing costs associated with washroom strategy implementation for the next budget cycle including location selection, design of permanent and procurement of prefabricated facilities, and public engagement. These costs will be presented to Council in 2022, ahead of the 2023-2026 budget cycle.

Administration recognizes the importance of working with businesses to open up their washrooms to non-patrons in areas that see high washroom usage. The recently approved funding allows Administration to hire a dedicated public washroom coordinator in 2022, who will help local businesses with the challenges they face should they open their washrooms for public use by providing support and potential additional custodial services. This temporary washroom strategy coordinator will also lead the execution of the washroom strategy and its goals.

Park Development Projects Integrating Permanent Washrooms: Administration is working on a number of park development projects that will include the integration of permanent washroom

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facilities, as well as the renovation of existing permanent washrooms to make them accessible to the public. These projects include:

- Warehouse Park (Downtown) - Currently in the Concept phase, a washroom facility has been identified to support the park programming. This project will include development of a new permanent washroom as part of the park design. Funding for this facility will be confirmed at checkpoint 3 of the Project Development and Delivery (PDDM) model.
- Beaver Hills House and Michael Phair Park Enhancements - Washroom facilities are not accessible to the public and are in need of renovation. The current project scope focuses on preserving access to the building to accommodate potential future washroom renovations. Washroom redesign is not included in the current scope and there is no approved funding for the washroom facilities. If additional funding was made available to the project to redesign/renovate the nearby washrooms, the project team would evaluate incorporating it into the project scope.
- Emily Murphy Park Washroom - Renewal of mechanical and electrical systems, interior finishes, and accessibility improvements with construction planned for 2022.
- Kinsmen Park Washroom - Renewal of critical structural and mechanical systems with construction planned for 2022
- Hawrelak Park Washrooms - As part of the upcoming park renewal all washroom facilities will be extensively renovated with a specific focus on gender inclusivity and accessibility.

The Public Washroom Strategy - Annual Update, report CR_7185, presented to Community and Public Services Committee on December 2, 2020, also included the following next steps for 2021:

- Finalize a governance model and standard operating procedures for permanent and temporary washrooms in parks and open spaces.
- Explore opportunities to work with partners, businesses and advertising companies, and investigate alternative strategies for funding operational costs of providing attendants at washrooms.
- Create a formal 10-year implementation plan to address challenges associated with managing public washrooms and enable Administration to react proactively to washroom challenges rather than reactively. This plan will be based on goals, principles and objectives of the Washroom Strategy (Attachment 2) which were originally presented to Community and Public Services Committee in 2019 as part of CR_5859. This plan will include, but are not limited to, the following elements:
 - Establishing criteria and a method for prioritization for locations for permanent and temporary washrooms to be placed/constructed in the city.
 - Heat mapping to demonstrate which areas of the city have adequate public washroom availability and which areas are lacking.
 - Identifying the role of the City and the business community in ensuring accessible, safe and clean public washrooms.
 - Creation of a partnership framework with socially conscious businesses to provide washrooms to non-paying patrons.

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- Identifying where Public Engagement will be required for different elements of strategy implementation, including but not limited to involving stakeholders such as Business Improvement Areas and the wider public.
- Development of an evaluation framework to assess the impact of interventions
- Create and enhance guidelines that may be incorporated into the City's construction standards and taken into account for future planning and construction projects. Guidelines may include spacing or availability of washrooms dependent on type of area, and take into account accessibility and GBA+ design elements.
- Exploring existing bylaws and policies that include requirements for provision of public washrooms as part of new and existing private developments.

Due to a continued focus on responding to COVID-19 challenges and resource capacity limitations, Administration was able to complete some work, but was unable to fully complete and implement these commitments and will continue this work in 2022. Work related to finalizing the governance model and standard operating procedures as well as heat mapping of washroom availability has progressed. Administration anticipates that hiring a dedicated public washroom coordinator as well as the increase in dedicated funding to the program will result in these priority actions being completed by the end of 2022.

GBA+

Public washrooms contribute to healthy and equitable urban places. Public washroom accessibility allows diverse user groups to explore and enjoy the city without worry of not having access to facilities. Access to safe and clean public washrooms is also critical for vulnerable user groups, including those without stable housing, as well as for those caring for children, and for people who have health issues where washroom facilities close-by are required. GBA+ considerations are integrated into initiatives and interventions undertaken by Administration to provide safer, clean, and accessible washrooms.

Provision of summer mobile washrooms ensured that people experiencing homelessness had access to public washrooms. Administration consulted the business improvement areas and associations in the areas where mobile washrooms were placed (Downtown, Old Strathcona, Chinatown and Alberta Avenue) before deciding on the appropriate locations for the mobile washrooms. To address gender needs, Administration ensured that all mobile washrooms placed downtown and on Alberta Avenue during the summer of 2021 were gender-neutral. In addition, Administration worked with No Period Without to distribute free menstrual products at the mobile washroom locations to support individuals who require such products but might not have the financial means to pay for them. Menstrual products will be included in the proposed Washroom Strategy as part of the City's commitment to providing free menstrual products at all women and gender inclusive washrooms located in city-owned facilities.

Furthermore, working with Boyle Street Ventures (Hire Good) to staff, monitor and clean stand alone washroom facilities, such as Whyte Avenue, Churchill Square, Borden Park and the summer mobile washrooms, ensured that these washrooms were safer and cleaner for the public. This initiative also provided jobs for people that have barriers to accessing the formal labour market.

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Another added benefit of working with attendants from Boyle Street Ventures is that most of the attendants have lived experience that allowed them to interact more compassionately with people experiencing houselessness and direct them to social organizations for support if needed.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Summary of Public Washroom Visitation in 2020 and 2021
2. Washroom Strategy Goals and Objectives