



**District of Fort St. James Spirit Square Revitalization Project**  
*immediate release*  
**October 25, 2024**

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The District of Fort St. James has obtained funding from Northern Development Initiative Trust (NDIT) to undertake a feasibility and design study for the expansion and revitalization of its popular Spirit Square Park.

[NDIT's Mainstreet Revitalization Program](#) has provided funds which have allowed the District to develop a comprehensive design plan for a renewed Spirit Square Park. This is a much needed step in revitalizing the downtown core of Fort St. James, as it brings newly acquired District lots into the Spirit Square footprint.

The subsidence of the slope along the Spirit Square portion of Stuart Lake has been a long-standing challenge to a more complete use of the park. In 2023, two lots adjacent to the existing Spirit Square Park were purchased, in order to expand access District park spaces, and to provide access for slope stabilization activities. Additionally, the District set aside a total of \$2,300,000 over several years' budgets to address slope stabilization and park renewal activities. Archaeological studies in advance of stabilization work are currently underway.

As a result of this land purchase, the District finds itself with a valuable opportunity to effectively double the existing footprint of Spirit Square Park, and to further increase value to the expanded site by slope stabilization activities.

“As part of our commitment to responsible, community-focused growth and development, a professional design team has been contracted to undertake a design of the expanded park site,” says Mayor Martin Elphee. “[Stantec](#) engineers and landscape architects are working with staff, Council and community to incorporate livability, accessibility and welcoming features into a final, shovel-ready design proposal. This allows the District to go to funding partners such as the [Green Municipal Fund](#), [NDIT](#) and industries to assist us in making the proposal a timely reality.”

The Design team recently completed a community consultation process with District and area residents, from which a wealth of advice and information were obtained.

“The consultation was an excellent opportunity to gather the community and ignite excitement for the new park,” reports CAO Rachele Willick.

“We received a large variety of important feedback, including the location of an



endangered tree which needs to be preserved, the white bark pine. Our community's overwhelming response to the consultation was that it wants a welcoming, safe space for healthy community activities, such as expanded farmers' market and food truck facilities, safe play and educational spaces for our schools, daycares and library to use, and landscaping that reflects the historic and resourceful nature of our community."

The design team has completed its community consultation and Council feedback meetings; the final design report is expected to be delivered to Council for their approval by the end of January, 2025.

"Once the design plan has been finalized, funding partners will be approached, and then the exciting work of revitalization can begin. The renewed Spirit Square Park should be completed within the next few years, funding dependent. It will serve our growing community well for decades to come," concludes Mayor Elphee.

"This design study is the first step in a thoughtfully undertaken revitalization of Fort St. James's public buildings and spaces, which will prepare our community for development and expansion. Although we are in difficult economic times, the District is looking ahead to the increase in mining, value-added resource industries and tourism, and is committed to making Fort St. James a healthy and vibrant place to live, work and play."

Although the consultation meetings are completed, public feedback is still welcomed – residents and Spirit Square patrons can visit

<https://www.fortstjames.ca/live/current-projects>

and review the Spirit Square design preliminary drawings. A survey is also available on this page, with responses recorded until mid-November.

For more information, please contact the District of Fort St. James at:

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