

NOVEMBER 29, 2023

2024 BUDGET INVESTS IN COMMUNITY SAFETY, GROWTH, DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION

The budget maintains service levels, invests in the community, with a moderate 3.47 per cent tax increase.

City of Campbell River (City) Council concluded financial planning and finalized the City's 2024-2033 Financial Plan on Wednesday, November 29, 2023. The 2024 Budget moves Council's strategic priorities forward, with an emphasis on community safety, growth, and downtown revitalization. It includes a moderate tax increase of 3.47 per cent, adds needed corporate supports and resources, and maintains current service levels for the community.

Following direction from Council, staff explored opportunities to increase revenue to offset pressures on the budget and reduce the cost to taxpayers, resulting in a final tax increase that was significantly reduced from the 8.13 per cent initially projected. A 3.47 per cent tax increase falls within policy parameters and Council's mandate to staff, working out to an estimated \$6 monthly increase on a home of average value in Campbell River (approximately \$716,000, according to BC Assessments).

"The 2024 Budget delivers on Council's priorities, meets the needs of the community and addresses residents' concerns," says Mayor Kermit Dahl. "Council hasn't wavered from the strategic priorities and expectations we set during 2023 financial planning, where we made it clear that we needed a moderate tax increase with investments in health, safety and community growth in the 2024 budget. Due to the hard work and strategic thinking that took place over several months, Council received a practical, balanced plan from staff that reflects these priorities, and that we could discuss, enhance, and approve during two days of deliberations. Thanks to Council and staff for their diligence and dedication."

What's included in the 2024 Budget?

The 2024 Financial Plan aligns resources with Council and community priorities with significant investments in improving community safety, particularly in the downtown, including:

- \$1.4 million over three years towards improving downtown safety, including the expansion of security patrols, Downtown Safety Office operations, public works clean-ups, and two additional Bylaw Enforcement Officers
- New positions supporting community safety, including a Bylaw Enforcement Manager and four Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) members
- Funding to complete the City's Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan
- Projects to support the revitalization of the downtown core

The 2024 Budget also includes funding to maintain the core services that residents depend on, as well as projects to support community vibrancy and amenities such as the much-loved CR Live Streets and Spirit Square Concert Series. Looking forward, it includes planning, asset management and infrastructure projects to accommodate growth and changing community needs, as well as commitments to improve Indigenous relations and increase opportunities to collaborate on development and economic initiatives with the Wei Wai Kum and We Wai Kai First Nations.

"Council provided staff with a clear mandate and direction, and set clear strategic priorities," said Elle Brovold, Chief Administrative Officer. "The 2024 Financial Plan gives staff capacity to action operational and strategic objectives and the priorities that Council and the community are looking for."

During deliberations, Council discussed the potential benefits of a centralized grant system to track the financial support non-profit organizations receive from the City. Staff will review the City's grant program in 2024 to help address this.

Council increased investments in workplace culture, allotting an additional \$5,000 towards staff-appreciation. This funding will go toward recognizing staff and the challenging work they complete to address Council's strategic priority of a health and safety community.

\$30,000 was also added by Council for the acquisition of a second rental unit to expand the City's Essential Workers

Temporary Housing Program. The City currently offers one rental unit for short-term use by essential workers who are considering a permanent move to Campbell River, which contributed to attracting and retaining a doctor for the community in 2023. While the program is currently funded through financial stabilization reserves it is intended to transition to self-funded through rental fees.

“The final 2024 tax increase of 3.47 per cent provides heavy investment in community safety and downtown revitalization; much-needed corporate supports; almost 200 projects and initiatives; adding resources for community safety, including four additional RCMP members and investment in bylaw services; resources to enhance service delivery, such as increased community engagement and continuing Downtown Safety Office operations; and additional resources to maintain core services,” says Alaina Maher, Director of Financial Services and Chief Financial Officer. *“Given current challenges and high inflation rates, achieving this budget is a testament to Council, staff and the community. Staff will continue to look at ways to grow revenues and balance fiscal responsibility, efficiencies and investment.”*

The 2024-2033 Financial Plan is approved in principal and will be considered for three readings and adoption at a Council meeting in the coming weeks.

View the financial plan documents at campbellriver.ca/financial-plans and watch the budget meeting recordings at campbellriver.ca/webcasts.

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