



Quality of Life is the Focus for City's 2019-2022 Strategic Plan and Budget 2019

Date: Friday, March 15, 2019

For Immediate Release

VICTORIA, BC — The City of Victoria is making meaningful investments in liveable neighbourhoods, affordable housing and safer streets to improve the quality of life for residents, in Council's new four-year Strategic Plan and Budget 2019.

"Victoria is enjoying a period of unprecedented growth and prosperity. We are re-investing the benefits of a strong economy to improve life for people," said Mayor Lisa Helps. "The actions in our four-year Strategic Plan are focused on what our residents want and asked us to do, to make Victoria more affordable, create welcoming neighbourhoods, and to act now on climate change."

In addition to continuing to invest in better City services for people, Council's 2019-2022 Strategic Plan puts a priority on things that will make a real difference in people's daily lives.

To make Victoria more affordable for families, the City is investing \$1 million into the Housing Reserve Fund in 2019 and implementing a new suite of housing initiatives to increase the number of affordable homes for people and to support renters.

To create infrastructure that will keep us all healthy, the City is investing in active transportation, street improvements and traffic calming, with more than \$31.6 million over the next four years going to keep people moving around the city safely and efficiently.

To help them deliver high-quality services, Victoria's eight community centres and three seniors centres are receiving a \$234,000 boost to their annual base funding. Neighbourhood associations will receive a total of \$100,000 to support neighbourhood planning.

The City will also convene seniors in a Seniors Task Force to learn more about their needs and desires, and to develop the first-ever Seniors Strategy. This will support seniors in remaining independent, healthy, active and socially-connected in the community.

A new investment of \$858,000 annually will expedite implementation of the Urban Forest Master Plan, to maintain the trees we have and to plant new trees. In 2019, a total of more than \$3.3 million will go to maintain and enhance the urban forest, with the long-term goal to increase tree canopy coverage to 40 per cent.

The Strategic Plan and Budget were developed with broad public input. More than 1,500 people provided their ideas and feedback to Council in the budget survey and town hall meeting, and another 150 people participated in the Strategic Plan Engagement Summit to share their knowledge and experience to help Council shape the plans.

Council has endorsed the following goal statement for the four-year Strategic Plan: “By 2022, Victoria will be a bold, thriving, inclusive and happy city that people love. We will be known globally for our climate leadership practices, multi-modal transportation options, innovative approaches to affordable housing, and for meaningful reconciliation with the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations on whose homelands our city was built.”

The 2019-2022 Strategic Plan includes more than 170 actions in eight strategic objectives:

1. Good Governance and Civic Engagement
2. Reconciliation and Indigenous Relations
3. Affordable Housing
4. Prosperity and Economic Inclusion
5. Health, Well-Being and a Welcoming City
6. Climate Leadership and Environmental Stewardship
7. Sustainable Transportation
8. Strong, Liveable Neighbourhoods

In addition, Council has set the following operational priorities, reflecting the shared values of Council and City staff, residents and the business community:

- Heritage conservation and heritage designation
- Nurturing and supporting arts, culture and creativity
- Creating and maintaining a high-quality public realm
- Continuous improvement with regard to open government
- Meaningful and inclusive public engagement
- Sound fiscal management
- Accessible information, facilities and services

Highlights of the 2019-2022 Strategic Plan

Objective #1 - Good Governance and Civic Engagement

- Working with Saanich Council to develop and implement a Citizens Assembly process to explore amalgamation.
- Offering free childcare at City Hall during public hearings.
- Establishing a Rental Advisory Committee to advise Council on renters' issues and concerns.
- Releasing closed meeting decisions and Council member expenses quarterly.

Objective #2 - Reconciliation and Indigenous Relations

- Working with First Nations and the community to create the Victoria Reconciliation Dialogues.
- Reinstating the City's Indigenous Artist in Residence program, providing the opportunity for a local Indigenous artist to develop artistic works and engage the community in dialogue and events.
- Establishing an Indigenous Relations function and appointing Indigenous Elders in Residence to provide advice on City programs and operations will be considered in 2020 with guidance and support from the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations.
- Exploring co-governance of Meegan (Beacon Hill Park) and shoreline areas with the Lekwungen speaking people.

Objective #3 - Affordable Housing

- Investing \$1 million in the City's Housing Reserve Fund in 2019 and to acquire lands and partner with other agencies to end chronic homelessness.
- Investing an additional \$545,000 in 2019 on a suite of initiatives to encourage and incentivize more affordable homes for people, especially families, as well as look for further opportunities to speed up and simplify the development process for affordable rental homes.
- Assigning a Tenant Housing Ambassador at City Hall to make it easier for renters to navigate the Tenant Assistance Policy, Standards of Maintenance Bylaw and other programs to support renters, being considered in 2020.
- Considering grant programs for secondary suites and affordable garden suites, including those that are accessible and serve an aging population.

Objective #4 - Prosperity and Economic Inclusion

- Convening the Mayor's Task Force on Economic Development and Prosperity 2.0 to hit 2041 job targets.
- Allocating more than \$1 million in the City's Festival Investment Grants over the next four year years (\$270,000 annually) to create a vibrant city, strengthen downtown and enhance liveability.
- Investing \$1.5 million to support public art, festivals and events, including the City of Victoria Butler Book Prize, Indigenous Artist in Residence, Artist in Residence, and Poet/Youth Laureate programs.
- Providing nearly \$4.3 million each year to support economic development initiatives and make it easier to do business in Victoria, including the Business Hub at City Hall, the South Island Prosperity Project, the Victoria Film Commission and operating the Victoria Conference Centre.
- Exploring ways for businesses in Victoria to become living wage employers.

Objective #5 - Health, Well-Being and a Welcoming City

- Creating a Welcoming City Strategy to promote inclusivity, understanding and collaboration across cultures.
- Striking a Peer-Informed Task Force to identify priority actions to inform a Mental Health and Addictions Strategy, actionable at the municipal level.
- Creating a city-wide Childcare Strategy and Action Plan.
- Developing and implementing an Accessibility Framework to make City policies, services, infrastructure and facilities more accessible for all.
- Increasing local food security with urban agriculture initiatives to foster food production on private land, support farmers markets and community gardens, food storage and distribution systems.

Objective #6 - Climate Leadership and Environmental Stewardship

- Taking serious climate action to reduce carbon pollution by 80 per cent and transition to 100 per cent renewable energy by 2050.
- Working with the community to develop and implement a Zero Waste Strategy that will chart the course to a local economy where nothing is wasted.
- Allocating \$13.7 million in upgrades to the drinking water, stormwater and sewer system.
- Implementing the BC Step Code and mandating electric vehicle charging capacity in all new developments.

Objective #7 - Sustainable Transportation

- Providing a \$975,000 increase in capital investment for street improvements, for a total of \$3.6 million in 2019.
- Investing \$450,000 in traffic calming initiatives to make local streets safer, and reduce the speed limit to 30 km/h on neighbourhood streets by 2021.
- Investing \$2.5 million in crosswalk upgrades or new installations at 18 locations to improve safety and encourage walking.

- Fast-tracking completion by 2022 of the City's 32-kilometre, AAA cycling network through neighbourhoods.
- Providing free BC Transit passes for all Victoria youth, funded through new revenue raised by charging for Sunday on-street metered parking beginning May 1, 2019.

Objective #8 - Strong, Liveable Neighbourhoods

- Investing \$35 million in 2019 in the City's parks, recreation and facilities, which includes 137 parks, 207 hectares of parkland, 90 hectares of natural landscape, 40 playgrounds, 23 tennis courts, 12 dog off-leash areas, 45 sports fields and 104 City facilities.
- Expanding the LIFE program to provide low-income families with free year-round use of the Crystal Pool and Fitness Centre and ice skating at the Save-on-Foods Memorial Centre.
- Exploring partnerships to create meeting space and a home base for neighbourhood associations that currently do not have their own community centre.
- Providing \$60,000 for the City's Participatory Budgeting program to empower the community to direct investment in neighbourhoods, with youth-themed projects the focus for 2019, newcomers in 2020 and neighbourhood placemaking in 2021.

Read the full 2019-2022 Strategic Plan at www.victoria.ca/strategicplan.

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