



## Budget 2021 Supports Well-Being and Economic Recovery

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For Immediate Release

VICTORIA, BC –The City’s 2021 Budget is keeping tax increases low while making strategic investments to maintain services, and support residents and businesses in rebuilding and recovery.

“This year’s budget is an investment in our residents’ well-being and our businesses’ economic recovery. It delivers on the priorities residents and businesses have told us are important to them,” said Mayor Lisa Helps. “The budget helps build back from the pandemic, prepares the city for a changing climate and tackles the affordability crisis, all while keeping the tax increase low, as we recognize the difficult economic times residents and businesses are facing right now.”

Yesterday, Council adopted Budget 2021, which invests over \$260 million to deliver more than 200 core programs and services and delivers on Council’s strategic plan. In addition, the budget invests \$104 million in capital improvements to city infrastructure that people depend on. Capital spending is a boost to the local economy through the procurement of local goods and services.

The City received more than \$6.5 million from the Federal-Provincial Restart Grant, which has helped to make up some of the revenue shortfalls brought on by the pandemic. In addition, City staff are implementing a number of cost-saving measures, keeping the overall tax increase this year to 2.03 per cent – below Council’s target of inflation plus one per cent.

For every \$1 homeowners pay in property taxes, businesses contribute approximately \$3.32. Businesses and downtown – particularly local retailers, restaurants, arts and culture and tourism related businesses – continue to struggle with the fall out of the pandemic. If Council had adhered to its tax policy, this would have meant that this year businesses would pay \$3.59 for every \$1 that residences pay. To support businesses during this unprecedented year, Council decreased business taxes, resulting in a typical business saving approximately \$146.

### **Affordable Housing**

The City is allocating \$660,000 to the Affordable Housing Reserve which helps to leverage investment in affordable housing from the provincial and federal governments.

The City is also continuing to accelerate the implementation of its Housing Strategy to increase housing choice and affordability for families. This includes non-market housing, affordable rentals, market rental housing and affordable or entry-level ownership.

In response to the housing crisis in Victoria, the City has created an expanded set of housing targets to meet growing demand and catch up to the already existing need. Supported in part by the Victoria Housing Reserve Fund of more than \$3.9 million, the plan is to partner with senior government and non-profit housing providers to create approximately 1,450 new affordable non-market homes over the next six years, as part of a total of 3,900 new homes across all housing types.

## **Infrastructure and Economic Recovery**

Timely investments in the maintenance, repair and improvement of City infrastructure support community safety, avoid the need for more expensive costs for taxpayers in the future, and attract businesses and industry as they look for locations to invest, creating a dynamic environment for job creation.

In 2021, the City will invest \$24.5 million to improve city streets, fill potholes, upgrade crosswalks and sidewalks, traffic calming and investments to make the city more walkable and safer for cyclists and pedestrians. An investment of \$33.7 million will continue the renewal of essential underground infrastructure including aging water mains, sanitary sewers and storm drains.

Economic recovery and resiliency are also at the top of the list in this year's budget. The South Island Prosperity Partnership will receive close to \$220,000 to support their work collaborating with government, First Nations and private sector partners to accelerate recovery and build a resilient, diversified economy on the South Island.

The City will also allocate more than \$459,000 to support economic development and recovery to implement the *Victoria 3.0 Recovery Reinvention Resilience Economic Action Plan*, work with stakeholders to create an Oceans Future Hub, taking shape as the Centre for Ocean Applied Sustainable Technologies (COAST), and continue to make it easier for new and existing businesses to do business in Victoria.

## **Climate Leadership and Zero Waste**

Having declared a climate emergency in 2019, the City of Victoria is committed to taking serious climate action to reduce carbon pollution by 80 per cent and transition to 100 per cent renewable energy by 2050.

Through its Climate Leadership Plan, the City will invest up to an additional \$350,000 in 2021 to top up CleanBC's Better Homes and Home Renovation Rebate Program, that encourages homeowners to transition from oil to electric heat pump heating. Climate action will also include the continued transitioning of the City's fleet to electric vehicles, in addition to \$175,000 for public EV charging stations.

Last year saw the introduction of new zero waste stations across the city. An additional \$95,000 will be invested in 2021 to install more stations.

## **Health and Well-Being**

Providing outdoor spaces for people to enjoy and stay active, but apart, has never been more important. Parks, recreation and facilities will see more than \$24.1 million in 2021 to maintain and enhance the City's 137 parks and open spaces, gardens, community centres and other facilities.

In addition to the \$3.8 million funded last year to design and build a new bike and skate park, the City is investing \$4.5 million to replace the artificial turf field at Topaz Park. Further improvements include \$600,000 to replace the playground equipment at Stadacona Park and \$85,000 will fund preliminary design work to install new lighting at Vic West Skate Park. An investment of \$2.8 million will substantially improve and expand Songhees Park on the west side of the Johnson Street Bridge.

This year will also see the design for the new *sc̓amaθən* Peter Pollen Waterfront Park, improvements to Pemberton Park, and expansion of the Banfield Park dock.

Victoria's neighbourhood associations, community associations and seniors centres will receive \$1.5 million in funding to deliver important services and programs to residents and help make the community healthier and age-friendly for seniors.

There will be a continued focus on public safety with \$60.89 million for police services, \$18.68 million for fire services and \$2.77 million in bylaw and licensing services.

Finally, to make Victoria more accessible and inclusive, the City is investing up to \$40,000 for the development of a Welcoming City Strategy, as well as allocating funding to establish a new Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion with three full-time staff. Having a staff position in both community planning and recreation services divisions will imbed equity in policies, programs and services to advance the removal of systemic barriers.

Also, in line with Victoria's Strategic Plan, the City will continue to seek deeper and more engagement with the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations, including with both hereditary and elected chiefs. As part of this work, \$37,500 has been allocated to scope out potential future positions to advance a new Indigenous Relations and Elders in Residence Function in 2022. The Victoria Reconciliation Dialogues series will continue once large-scale public events can be held again.

A backgrounder outlining the City's 2019-2022 Strategic Plan is below.

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**For More Information:**

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**Backgrounder**

The City's 2019-2022 Strategic Plan includes more than 180 actions under 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

**Highlights of 2021 Strategic Plan Actions**

**Objective #1 - Good Governance and Civic Engagement**

- Initiating a governance review
- Continuing implementation of the City's Youth Strategy
- Hosting a virtual Engagement Summit to obtain feedback on an updated Engagement Framework that aims to increase equity and inclusion in the City's engagement practices to inform Council decision making

**Objective #2 - Reconciliation and Indigenous Relations**

- Delivering Reconciliation training to more City staff
- Continuing to work with First Nations and the community to deliver the remaining two Victoria Reconciliation Dialogues
- Working to establish an Indigenous Relations function
- Continuing the Witness Reconciliation Program

### **Objective #3 - Affordable Housing**

- Accelerating implementation of the Victoria Housing Strategy
- Considering a comprehensive amendment to the Zoning Bylaw to permit all “Missing Middle” housing forms without the need for rezoning or development permit
- Incentivizing the development of rental housing stock
- Continuing work on the development of Village and Corridor planning for North Park, Hillside-Quadra and Fernwood neighbourhoods

### **Objective #4 - Prosperity and Economic Inclusion**

- Developing the Create Victoria Cultural Spaces Road Map and establishing the \$125,000 Create Victoria Cultural Infrastructure Grant program
- Investing \$10,000 in the Pro Art Alliance Grant to support the local arts and culture community
- Creating a vision and implementing the Arts and Innovation District
- Providing \$678,400 in 2021 to support economic development initiatives and make it easier to do business in Victoria, including the Business Hub at City Hall and the South Island Prosperity Project

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

- Continuing to implement the City’s TNB2S+ Inclusion Plan and the Accessibility Framework’s Short-Term Action Plan, as well as completing the City’s Equity Framework
- Investing \$75,000 for International Decade for People of African Descent initiatives and up to \$25,000 to develop a new grant program that supports leadership opportunities for children and youth of African descent
- Implementing the Seniors Action Plan’s recommendations
- Allocating \$50,000 to extend hours at Our Place and another \$50,000 for the storage of belongings

### **Objective #6 - Climate Leadership and Environmental Stewardship**

- Working with the community to implement Zero Waste Victoria, that will chart the course to a circular economy where nothing is wasted
- Reintroducing the Checkout Bag Regulation Bylaw in April and additional installations of Zero Waste Stations across downtown and parks
- Engaging the construction industry on salvaging and reusing material from demolished buildings, encouraging reusable takeout container services, and engaging stakeholders on source separation of recyclables and organics in multi-family and commercial properties
- Continuing implementation of the BC Step Code, mandating electric vehicle charging capacity in all new developments

### **Objective #7 - Sustainable Transportation**

- Investing in traffic calming initiatives, crosswalk upgrades or new installations to improve safety
- Continuing to build out the All Ages and Abilities cycling network to include connectors in Oaklands, Fernwood and along Fort Street west of Cook Street, and engaging the community on new corridors for James Bay, Gorge Road and Pandora Road East
- Investing \$700,000 to provide free bus passes to youth living in the City of Victoria
- Allocating \$135,000 for the City to participate in the Motor Vehicle Act Pilot Program to reduce default speed limits without a continuing centre line from 50 km/hr to 30 km/h

**Objective #8 - Strong, Liveable Neighbourhoods**

- Providing \$60,000 for the City's Participatory Budgeting program to empower the community to direct investment in neighbourhoods, with improving neighbourhood spaces being the theme for 2021
- Investing \$4.5 million in community-driven initiatives and economic activity through the City's suite of grant programs that include Direct Award Grants, Strategic Plan Grants, Festival Investment Grants, Community Garden Volunteer Grants and Great Neighbourhood Grants
- Hosting *Community Virtuals*, an online lunch and learn series to inform and inspire Victoria residents to create small connections and access the My Great Neighbourhood Grant program
- Creating a new policy to ensure that a portion of new assessed revenue is allocated to the neighbourhoods where new development occurs