

NOVEMBER 23, 2023**2024 DRAFT BUDGET RELEASED AND DELIBERATIONS SET TO BEGIN****Moderate 3.45 per cent tax increase proposed, resources added to advance community safety and organizational capacity, and investments made into Campbell River's future.**

The City of Campbell River (the City) has released the draft 2024-2033 Financial Plan. Staff provided an overview of the draft 2024 Financial Plan to Council during the Committee of the Whole meeting on November 21, 2023. The draft budget invests in community safety and downtown revitalization, which are among Council's and the community's top priorities, and proposes additional resources to maintain core service levels and accommodate community growth.

The draft plan reduces existing spending, increases revenues, optimizes processes, and aligns resources with Council priorities with a proposed tax increase of 3.45 per cent. This is below the rate of inflation over the last year and follows Council's direction to keep the tax increase within the City's financial policy parameters of 3.5 per cent. This was reduced from an initial projection of 8.13 per cent and works out to an estimated \$6 monthly increase for the average homeowner.

"The draft budget, and proposed tax increase of 3.45 per cent, is a collaborative effort that the City can be proud of. In a time when inflation is high and many other municipalities are facing significant increases, we have remained committed to responsible spending and made focused investments in community safety, growth and downtown revitalization – just as we campaigned on in 2022," says Mayor Kermit Dahl. *"Staff listened to these priorities of Council and responded by keeping affordability top of mind and taxes low. They offered a practical, balanced draft budget that reduces existing spending while continuing to fund ongoing operational needs and investing in the future of Campbell River through increased revenues, finding efficiencies and budget realignments. Council looks forward to diving deeper into the plans at next week's budget deliberations."*

The draft 2024 budget has five components: the base operating budget, capital and operating projects, capital operating costs, capital investment, and new or enhanced ongoing services. The proposed 3.45 per cent tax increase is comprised of a 0.17 per cent increase in the operating costs of capital, a 1 per cent increase in investment in capital, and a 2.52 per cent increase in new or enhanced ongoing services. There are no increases proposed for the base operating budget; as a result of increased revenue, there is a proposed 0.24% decrease. There is also no proposed increase for capital and operating projects as they are funded by reserve contributions.

Highlights of the 2024-2033 Financial Plan include:

- Investments in improving community safety, including additional supports to assist with increasing challenges due to substance use and addictions, mental health challenges and homelessness, including:
 - investments in low-barrier housing to address existing challenges with encampments and support the City's most vulnerable
 - \$1.4 million over three years to improve downtown safety (including increased security, Downtown Safety Office operations, public works clean-ups and the addition of two bylaw enforcement officers)
 - the addition of four RCMP members
 - the addition of a bylaw enforcement manager
 - completion of the City's Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan
- Projects that support community vibrancy, amenities and revitalization of the downtown core
- Maintenance of the core services that residents rely on every day amidst abnormally high levels of inflation
- Integration of asset management and future planning to accommodate growth and changing community needs
- Supports for Council's commitment to improved Indigenous relations and increased opportunities to collaborate on development and economic initiatives with the Wei Wai Kum and We Wai Kai First Nations
- Additional resources to provide critical organizational support and capacity to fulfill strategic priorities, support process improvements, and explore new revenue opportunities and efficiencies

- Promotion of transportation enhancements, park amenities, and economic drivers such as the airport

“Staff began work on the 2024 budget in March 2023 and Council has made difficult decisions throughout the year that have allowed us to develop a draft financial plan that continues the award-winning work of previous budgets, yet also views things through a new strategic lens,” says Alaina Maher, Director of Financial Services and Chief Financial Officer. “Staff undertook a rigorous, comprehensive review of revenue, services, processes and department base operating budgets. Through early forecasting, proactive planning, and collaboration, the City found opportunities to align resources with Council’s strategic priorities in a fiscally responsible manner and brought the projected 2024 tax increase down from 8.13 per cent to 3.45 per cent. The draft 10-year financial plan maintains core services, includes additional investment in critical infrastructure to meet current and future needs, and includes resources to support the safety and wellbeing of our community.”

How to Get Involved

The 2024-2033 Financial Plan is currently in draft form. Council will deliberate the budget beginning at 9:30 a.m. on November 28, 2023. The public is encouraged to review the draft budget and provide written comments ahead of, or to present feedback during, the meetings. Written comments must be submitted via email to info@campbellriver.ca or in person at City Hall, 301 St. Ann’s Road, by noon on Monday, November 27. To present at the meeting, register at City Hall reception or via the email address above, or attend the meeting in Council Chambers, City Hall, on November 28, 2023, at 9:30 a.m. Presenters must be available at the start of the meeting.

To access the Draft 2024 Budget, visit campbellriver.ca/financial-plans. To watch the pre-budget Council meeting presentations online, visit campbellriver.ca/webcasts.

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