



# Staff Report to Committee of the Whole

**DATE: Thursday, February 22, 2024**  
**DEPARTMENT: Finance**  
**SUBJECT: New budget items for Council discussion**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

At the February 13, 2024, Committee of the Whole meeting, the following resolution was passed:

*THAT Committee of the Whole request that staff bring back a report to the next Committee of the Whole meeting with further information briefly outlining each proposed new budget item as listed in the presentation.*

## BACKGROUND:

As mentioned in the budget presentation to the Committee of the Whole on Monday February 12, 2024, the following are new items that are included in the Proposed 2024-2028 Financial Plan for Council consideration and public input. These have been brought forward by both Council and staff for Council consideration and public input during the budget process.

For reference – this is the list of items as presented:

| Project   | 2024    | 2025    | 2026    | 2027    | 2028    |
|---|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Royal Roads Scholarship                                     | 75,000  | 75,000  | 75,000  | 75,000  | 75,000  |
| Royal Roads Innovation Studio                               | 150,000 | 150,000 | 150,000 | 150,000 | 150,000 |
| Langford E-Bike Rebate Program                              | 75,000  | 75,000  |         |         |         |
| Community Murals Fund                                       | 15,000  | 15,000  | 15,000  | 15,000  | 15,000  |
| City Centre Crosswalk Project                               | 140,000 |         |         |         |         |
| Largest Little Free Library                                 | 25,000  | 25,000  | 25,000  | 25,000  | 25,000  |
| Largest Little Free Library                                 | 35,000  |         |         |         |         |
| Pedestrian Plaza/Walkway Pilot Project                      | 30,000  |         |         |         |         |
| Community Gardens   | 40,000  | 10,000  | 10,000  | 10,000  | 10,000  |
| Home Composter Program                                      | 15,000  | 15,000  | 15,000  | 15,000  | 15,000  |
| <b>Summary</b>  |         |         |         |         |         |
| Operating (Property tax impact in proposed financial plan)  | 425,000 | 365,000 | 290,000 | 290,000 | 290,000 |
| Capital (no property tax impact in proposed financial plan) | 175,000 | -       | -       | -       | -       |

As noted in the table above, the operating budget items are included within the proposed financial plan and have a property tax impact as they are funded through general revenue (thus impacting the

level of property taxes required to balance the budget). The two capital budget items in the proposed financial plan are funded by the General Amenity Reserve Fund (no property tax impact in 2024).

While staff recommend funding these items through general revenue (tax impact), Council may wish to fund items on the list that are not ongoing expenses by using surplus or general amenity funds, noting that the proposed financial plan includes the use of \$3.4 million from surplus and \$1.7 million from general amenity funds to cover operating costs in the 2024 budget.

It should also be noted that the above items / proposed initiatives do not include the cost of staff time needed to develop and implement each initiative. Further, they also do not include an analysis of what other City projects or initiatives would need to be deferred to accommodate each initiative.

**COMMENTARY:**

**Royal Roads Scholarship**

*Overview:* This has been contractually committed to by the City to support the ongoing success of students attending the campus.

*Financial Impact:* \$75,000 per year for five years, funded through taxation.

*Operational / Staffing Considerations and Impact:* Minimal.

*Other Considerations:* This initiative is part of a suite of incentives the City committed to in order to attract Provincial Funding for the post-secondary campus in downtown Langford.

*Strategic Plan Alignment:* 3b – Actively Support the Evolution of the Downtown Post Secondary Campus

*Options Available for Council:* Include \$75,000 per year for each of the next five years in the Financial Plan

**Royal Roads Innovation Studio**

*Overview:* Since 2019, the City has expressed its commitment to provide seed funding for an innovation studio that is being constructed in Phase 1 of the post-secondary campus in downtown Langford.

*Financial Impact:* \$150,000 per year for ten years, funded through taxation.

*Operational / Staffing Considerations and Impact:* Staff is working with Royal Roads University (as well as the University of Victoria and Camosun College) to develop the business plan and contractual

documents needed to make the innovation studio a reality. This work would come back to Council prior to any money being spent.

*Other Considerations:* This initiative is part of a suite of incentives the City committed to in order to attract Provincial Funding for the post-secondary campus in downtown Langford. Further, given the anticipated opening date of the post-secondary campus in downtown Langford, this money is likely not needed until January 2025.

*Strategic Plan Alignment:* 3b – Actively Support the Evolution of the Downtown Post Secondary Campus

*Options Available for Council:* Include \$150,000 per year for each of the next ten years in the Financial Plan as drafted or defer the first year of funding for the innovation studio to 2025.

#### Langford E-bike Rebate Program:

*Overview:* In recent years, E-Bike financing and rebate programs have been successful in communities across the province. For example:

- In 2023, the Ministry of Transportation announced \$6 million dollars towards the creation of an E-Bike subsidy program, which saw thousands of BC residents apply to receive an income-based rebate between \$350-\$1400.
- The City of Nelson offers up to \$8000 in low interest financing for their residents, with the loan repaid over time and applied monthly on the homeowner's hydro bill. After three years of success, the program's loan fund was increased from \$500,000 to \$1,000,000. <https://www.nelson.ca/824/E-Bike-Program>
- In 2023, Saanich reported the cost of their income-based rebate program as \$130,000, which granted 100 residents with rebates. [https://saanich.ca.granicus.com/MetaViewer.php?view\\_id=1&event\\_id=969&meta\\_id=53743](https://saanich.ca.granicus.com/MetaViewer.php?view_id=1&event_id=969&meta_id=53743).

Given that the City of Langford does not have a mechanism to ensure repayment from residents (City of Nelson provides and bills for electricity), the Langford E-bike program would need to be a rebate program similar to the provincial program and Saanich's program (i.e. an income-based rebate) to incentivize homeowners and renters towards transportation mode-shift.

*Financial Impact:* \$75,000 per year for two years, funded through taxation.

*Operational / Staffing Considerations and Impact:* It is anticipated that a significant amount of staff time would be required to develop and implement an e-bike rebate program. For example, developing an e-bike rebate program might include determining level(s) of rebates, who would qualify, which e-bikes would qualify, what information is required for an application, etc. Implementing an e-bike rebate program would require verifying information included on an application, reviewing receipts, processing rebates, etc.

*Other Considerations:* Given the popularity of the provincial e-bike rebate program, there is the possibility that the province may provide additional funding for further rebates in a subsequent budget.

*Strategic Plan Alignment:* 4d – Create Awareness and Opportunities for Transportation Mode Shift

*Options Available for Council:* Include \$75,000 per year for each of the next two years in the Financial Plan as drafted or defer funding this initiative for one year to allow staff time to research best practices in other communities.

### **Community Murals Fund:**

*Overview:* A community murals program would support the economic vibrancy and revitalization of downtown Langford, amplify the arts and culture district, and enhance the quality of life for all residents in neighbourhoods across Langford. It is proposed that an initial \$15,000 be allocated for at least one mural, with future funding levels contingent on council approval and potential grants from other partners.

*Financial Impact:* \$15,000 funded through taxation.

*Operational / Staffing Considerations and Impact:* A significant amount of time was required to coordinate and commission the Langford Station mural project. Should a Community Murals Program be created, it is anticipated that staff time would be required to determine mural criteria/guidelines, explore mural locations (on both public and private buildings), and determine potential partners (e.g. First Nations, local artists, the Westshore Arts Council, businesses, and commercial building owners).

*Other Considerations:* In the 2024 budget, Council is also considering funding for an Arts and Culture Strategic Plan, which will be developed with public input. Council may wish to defer consideration of a Community Murals Program until after this work is completed.

*Strategic Plan Alignment:* 3f – Create an Arts and Culture Strategic Plan, 6c – Continue to Take Action Towards Reconciliation, 3d – Implement the Five-Year Tourism Strategy, 6b – Parks, Recreation and Trails Master Plan

*Options Available for Council:* Include \$15,000 in the 2024 budget or defer consideration of the Community Murals Program until 2025.

### **City Centre Crosswalk Project:**

*Overview:* This project is for the installation of four custom painted crosswalks either at the fountain on Goldstream Avenue or at Peatt Road and Goldstream Avenue. It is proposed that four different designs would be used, one for each crossing at the intersection. For example, a similar project in Ladysmith

included a progressive pride design, a First Nations design, and a Remembrance Day design at an intersection with three crosswalks.

*Financial Impact:* \$140,000 in 2024 Capital budget funded through general amenity reserve fund.

*Operational / Staffing Considerations and Impact:* It is anticipated that staff time would be required to determine crosswalk themes, crosswalk locations, and potential partners (e.g. First Nations, local artists, the Legion, etc.). It is also anticipated that public engagement would be necessary when determining the themes.

*Other Considerations:* It may be advisable to defer consideration of this initiative until the summer of 2025. This will allow Royal Roads University to substantially complete their onsite and offsite works (which may affect crosswalk design/location).

*Strategic Plan Alignment:* 6c – Continue to Take Action Towards Reconciliation, 4c – Improve and Expand Active Transportation Infrastructure, 6d – Support the Efforts of Community Organizations to Expand Services to Youth, Seniors, and Other Marginalized Groups, 6f: Develop and Implement a Placemaking Strategy, 3f – Create an Arts and Culture Strategic Plan, 4d: Create Awareness and Opportunities for Transportation Mode Shift

*Options Available for Council:* Include \$140,000 in the 2024 capital budget, funded from general amenity reserve fund, or defer consideration of the City Centre Crosswalk Project until 2025.

#### Largest Little Free Library in the CRD (Pilot Project):

*Overview:* This project would use one of the non-operational trolleys as a seasonal little free library in Veterans Memorial Park. The trolley would have some/most of the seating removed and replaced with bookshelves and would be parked for the summer at the park. The proximity to the playground, the market, mature trees, and park benches make Veterans Memorial Park the ideal location for this project. Part time staffing would be required to manage the program.

*Financial Impact:* \$35,000 in 2024 capital budget funded through general amenity reserve fund, and \$25,000 in each of the next five years funded from taxation.

*Operational / Staffing Considerations and Impact:* It is anticipated that staff and contractor time would be required to retrofit the trolley, ensure the largest little free library is accessible for all users, source books, and hire staff to support the operation of the largest little free library.

*Other Considerations:* The forthcoming Parks, Recreation and Trails Master Plan and the forthcoming Arts and Culture Master Plan may help assess this project, relative to others, in the community. Further, the Greater Victoria Public Library should be consulted on this initiative.

*Strategic Plan Alignment:* 3f – Create an Arts and Culture Strategic Plan, 6b – Develop a Parks, Recreation and Trails Master Plan, 6m – Explore Current Library Capacity and Community Needs. 6f: Develop and Implement a Placemaking Strategy.

*Options Available for Council:* Include \$35,000 in 2024 Capital budget funded through general amenity reserve fund, and \$25,000 in each of the next five years funded from taxation, or defer consideration of this project until after the Parks, Recreation and Trails Master Plan and the Arts and Culture Master Plan are complete.

Pedestrian Plaza/Walkway Project (Pilot):

*Overview:* This pilot project would explore the possibility of closing a portion of the road, likely in the downtown core (i.e. Station Ave) to vehicle traffic and making it pedestrian only for a temporary time in the summer. To successfully achieve this project, the budget would include the rental or purchase of the following: road closure signs and barricades, seating, picnic benches, shade structures, planters with trees.

*Financial Impact:* \$30,000 in 2024 funded through taxation.

*Operational / Staffing Considerations and Impact:* It is anticipated that staff time to acquire the necessary road closure signs and barricades, seating, picnic benches, shade structures, planters with trees would be minimal. Staff time would also be required to consult with businesses fronting the area to be closed and to work with the businesses to determine alternative parking options, if required.

*Other Considerations:* Pilot projects, such as this, are an excellent opportunity to test the viability of an initiative.

*Strategic Plan Alignment:* 3f – Create an Arts and Culture Strategic Plan, 6b – Develop a Parks, Recreation and Trails Master Plan

*Options Available for Council:* Include \$30,000 in 2024 funded through taxation for the Pedestrian Plaza / Walkway Pilot Project or defer this initiative to a future point in time.

Community Gardens:

*Overview:* The intent of this project is to support the establishment of a Community Garden Society, with the City providing an appropriate location and supporting interested citizens in establishing the necessary governance and operating framework for the society to be a success.

*Financial Impact:* \$40,000 in 2024 funded through taxation.

*Operational / Staffing Considerations and Impact:* It is anticipated that staff time will be required to determine potential locations and infrastructure needs. It is also anticipated that staff time will be required to solicit interest from citizens, organize the initial meetings of the potential society, support the society in the creation of their governance documents, etc.

*Other Considerations:* Governments supports, such as those proposed through this initiative, are sometimes necessary to ensure the viability and success of an initiative led by others.

*Strategic Plan Alignment:* 6a – Undertake a Parks Needs Assessment, 6b – Develop a Parks, Recreation and Trails Master Plan, 2c – Review and Action the Food Security Policy as Detailed in the OCP

*Options Available for Council:* Include \$40,000 in 2024 funded through taxation for community gardens or defer this initiative to a future point in time.

#### Home Composter Program:

*Overview:* It is proposed that the City would sell at a reduced price (or initial introduction to the program with a giveaway) composters (i.e. <https://www.compostec.ca/find-the-green-cone.html>). Providing composting units to residents can help engage the community in sustainable waste management practices. It would encourage residents to take an active role in reducing waste and improving the environment, fostering a sense of community and shared responsibility.

*Financial Impact:* \$15,000 in 2024 funded through taxation.

*Operational / Staffing Considerations and Impact:* It is anticipated that staff time would be required to determine the best composter options, determine a storage location for purchased composters, develop a pricing plan to maximize both purchase and uptake (e.g. if subsidized at 50%, an estimate 100+ composters could be provided if purchased via Compostec), and arrange for pick-up/delivery to buyers.

*Other Considerations:* The City would need to ensure that selected composters were sufficiently sealed so to protect from rat infestations.

*Strategic Plan Alignment:* 2a – Develop a Climate Action Master Plan Including Targets for Emission Reductions

*Options Available for Council:* Include \$15,000 in 2024 funded through taxation for a home composter program or differ consideration of this item recognizing the significant cost of the home composters and operational constraints of such a program.

#### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

As outlined in the presentation to the Committee of the Whole on Monday February 12, 2024, staff have done an initial projection of the costs associated with these initiatives and these have been factored into

the proposed 2024-2028 Financial Plan for Council deliberation and for public input. That said, as noted above, costs associated with staff time to develop and implement these initiatives have not been calculated. Also as noted above, the costs for each item are as follows:

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**OPTIONS:**

**Option 1**

THAT Committee of the Whole receive this report for information.

**SUBMITTED BY: Braden Hutchins, Director of Corporate Services**

**Concurrence:** Donna Petrie, Senior Manager of Communications & Economic Development

**Concurrence:** Yari Nielsen, Director of Parks, Recreation and Facilities

**Concurrence:** Matthew Baldwin, MCIP, RPP, Director of Planning and Subdivision

**Concurrence:** Katelyn Balzer, P.Eng., Director of Engineering and Public Works

**Concurrence:** Marie Watmough, Deputy Director of Corporate Services

**Concurrence:** Michael Dillabaugh, CPA, CA, Director of Finance

**Concurrence:** Darren Kiedyk, Chief Administrative Officer