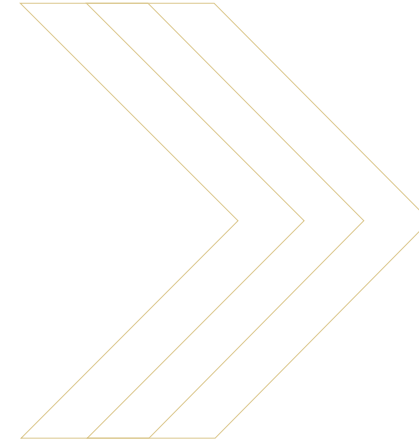




PROPOSED 2024 BUDGET

Message from the Mayor



On July 1, 2023 the Ontario government provided strong mayor powers to 26 municipalities, including Kitchener. While this legislation requires that the Mayor is responsible for proposing the municipal budget, I have endeavoured to do so in a manner consistent with the collaborative approach that exists between Kitchener Council and staff in our work. Based on direction that I provided earlier this year, City staff prepared a draft budget informed by Council and community priorities, and in alignment with the City's approved financial guidelines and policies. The Draft 2024 Budget was presented to Council for consideration and discussion at Budget Committee meetings held on November 20th and 27th. I want to thank Councillors Scott Davey and Bil Ioannidis, Chair and Vice-Chair respectively, for their leadership and support in these meetings and all of Council for their engagement throughout this process. In addition to these discussions, the public was also provided with opportunities to provide feedback on the Draft 2024 Budget.

In the Draft 2024 Budget, staff had provided \$2M in possible options to further advance strategic priorities that are important to the community. Originally there was only \$1M in additional funding available that could be put to these priorities however, after input from Council and the community and upon further discussions and review, staff have proposed ways that some of the initiatives can be funded from other sources. This will allow the City to move forward with allocating \$1.6M in additional funding to strategic priorities identified in the City's 2023-2026 Strategic Plan in 2024.

The City's new 20-year vision is "Building a city for everyone where, together, we take care of the world around us – and each other". I'm pleased with where we have landed with the 2024 Budget, for the progressive action that we continue to take as a City to move us closer to achieving that vision, while still balancing affordability and operational service delivery needs.

I support the Draft 2024 Budget that was prepared by staff and presented to Council, and propose, based on feedback received from Council and the community, that the City move forward with the following additional strategic options:

- **\$400k** for additional traffic calming and trail connections in neighbourhoods
- **\$200k** to develop an arena energy strategy as part of the City's Corporate Climate Action Plan 2.0
- **\$300k** to move forward with the two additional playground replacements in 2024
- **\$200k** to develop a Municipal Newcomers Strategy including community engagement
- **\$300k** to improve access & increase usage at Cameron Heights Pool
- **\$200k** for the implementation of a city-wide data strategy to build organization-wide data practices to deliver better services for residents



These options, originally identified in Issue Paper Op 02, are further described here, and included in the Proposed 2024 Budget Resolution that is attached as an appendix.

Traffic Calming & Trail Connections (\$400,000)

Additional seasonal council-directed traffic calming measures will include installation of one solar powered radar sign in each ward and an increase in the number of seasonal roadway narrowings from 4 to up to 8 (where feasible) in each ward. Improvements in the safety and connectivity of road, active transportation and trail networks will be data driven and community-guided through priorities identified in our Vision Zero road safety initiative and the City's Cycling and Trails Master Plan. These "spot fixes" will include trail access (curb cuts), pavement marking & signage/wayfinding upgrades, bike parking and improved (raised) pedestrian/trail crossings.

Arena Energy Strategy (\$200,000)

A greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions review and plan completed in 2022 offers key insights into the strategic paths forward to corporate GHG reduction. Arenas are the most energy intense, and contribute the highest GHG emissions, of all facility types. The level of reduction in GHG emissions is dependent on investment and occurs over the asset life. A Mayors' Megawatt Challenge pilot study with nine municipal arenas resulted in planned reductions of GHG emissions from 26%-99% with an average of 85%. FCM's Community Buildings Retrofit (CBR) initiative helps to optimize the energy performance and reduce GHG emissions of community buildings owned by municipalities. Proposed funding, paired with CBR grant funding, will support the development of GHG reduction pathway feasibility studies to ensure energy and GHG reductions are integrated into longer-term plans for managing arenas.

Playground Replacements (\$300,000)

Kitchener maintains an inventory of 154 playgrounds, 45% of which are nearing or have exceeded their useful life spans. The expected lifecycle of a playground varies based on location, level of use, ability to repair defects and the availability of replacement parts; however, the industry standard is 20 years. There is a significant operating and maintenance cost associated with keeping these playgrounds in a good state of repair to avoid having to remove a playground before it can be replaced. Approximately four playgrounds are replaced annually through the park rehabilitation program and two playgrounds are added to the inventory through new park development annually. This funding would enable the replacement of two 2 additional playgrounds with community engagement and design in 2024 and installation in 2025.



Municipal Newcomers Strategy (\$200,000)

This funding will be used to develop a Municipal Newcomer Strategy that will be built upon a foundation of collaboration with community partners, defining the specific role the municipality can play in welcoming newcomers into the community and supporting them where needed through municipal facilities, programs, services and initiatives. A significant element of developing this strategy will be targeted community engagement with a variety of newcomers to the city.

Cameron Heights Pool (\$300,000)

Traditionally, the City's access to the Cameron Heights pool has been limited to evenings and weekends outside of school hours because the entrance to the pool is within the school. This limited access has restricted the City's ability to provide aquatics programming (e.g. swim lessons, lanes swims) at this pool. This additional funding would be used to create a permanent, dedicated entrance for the pool that would allow the City to provide aquatics programming for residents throughout the day.

Data Strategy (\$200,000)

Building upon our work with the Bloomberg City Data Alliance, implement a city-wide data strategy to build organization-wide data practices to deliver better services for residents. This will include expanding on foundational data governance practices organization-wide; engaging with staff to develop skills in using data and routines to leverage data to enhance service delivery, support decision-making and improve visibility of city data to residents.