

Department of Finance Policies and Procedures	
Financial Sustainability Policy	
Authorized by: Council	Date of issue: January 20, 2009
	Date of amendment: November 7, 2024

Purpose

The purpose of the Financial Sustainability Policy is to guide the City’s financial planning to meet financial obligations while providing high quality services.

Primary Objective

The policies shall be designed and structured to develop principles that guide, support and respect the direction of the community so that tax payers can look forward to stable, equitable and affordable property taxation.

Policies

1. Growth in Property Tax Base

The City is surrounded by other municipalities and has no ability to expand. However, re-development is occurring that brings in new property tax revenue. This new revenue must be estimated using the best available data. The City recognizes that any new developments or re-developments increase demand on existing infrastructure and may result in the need to expand that existing infrastructure.

Policy 1.0

Conservative estimates of non-market change assessment revenue will be included in the budget based on information provided by BC Assessment, the Planning and Development Department and the Finance Department.

Policy 1.1

Recognizing the significant need for infrastructure funding, all new tax revenue from new development is used for infrastructure funding and allocated to the annual capital budget.

2. Property Tax Increase

Rising costs of existing services at existing service levels must be recognized. One-time revenues or non-renewable reserves should not be used to fund on-going operating expenses.

Policy 2.0

Each budget cycle, Council will consider the property tax increase required by first covering the projected cost increase for existing services at existing service levels and then considering other enhancements. (Also see Policy 3.)

3. New Services and Major Enhancements to Existing Services

The property tax increase established under Policy 2 allows the City to provide the same level of service to the existing tax base. It is not designed to provide for new services or major enhancements to existing services.

Policy 3.0

New services or enhancements to existing services will be funded by one or a combination of the following:

1. A reduction in the cost of existing services. This may include a reallocation of resources from one area to another.
2. An increase in non-tax revenues.
3. A further increase in property taxes.

4. Efficiencies, Demand Management and Service Level Changes

As a sound business practice, departments strive to find and explore efficiencies throughout the City's operations. The City does not have the resources to meet all of the demands that are made. Demand must be managed to make sure that expectations reflect our fiscal realities and the need to contain expenditures. Areas where service level changes may be possible must be identified and brought forward for Council's consideration.

Policy 4.0

Business Plans will identify demand management strategies and will include options for service level changes and alternative service delivery models.

5. Alternative Revenues and External Funding

To diversify its revenue base, the City continually looks for new revenue sources that are consistent with the City's Five-year Financial Plan and 20-year Capital Plan.

Policy 5.0

All departments will make every effort to access external funding from non-City sources including other levels of government. All departments will endeavour to develop partnerships, strategic alliances and shared project funding to assist in the reduction of expenditure to the City. Any additional funding can be used to reduce property tax increases, increase service levels and/or provide new services.

Policy 5.1

Grants should be sought for known infrastructure needs or identified priorities in the City's Strategic Plan even if they are not included in the financial plan due to limited funding or pending Council decision.

6. Infrastructure Maintenance and Replacement

Much of the City's infrastructure is at or nearing the end of its life. The City has an inventory and performs condition assessments of its assets on an ongoing basis. This allows the City to develop and update plans to keep the infrastructure in a proper state of repair to avoid costly failures.

Policy 6.0

The City will establish and maintain an inventory of its infrastructure. A maintenance/replacement plan will be developed utilizing best practices, to keep existing infrastructure in an acceptable condition. This program will be included in the Five-year Financial Plan and the 20-year Capital Plan.

Policy 6.1

The City will depreciate its infrastructure over the useful life of the assets and a sustainable funding strategy will be developed.

Policy 6.2

Each year, Council will consider a property tax increase dedicated to increasing capital infrastructure investment.

7. Self Financed Programs

The City has several self financed programs: Water Utility, Sewer Utility, Stormwater Utility and Solid Waste and Recycling Utility. The costs for self financed programs should be fully funded by user fees. The Water and Sewer Utilities have established reserves. Any surplus or deficit is transferred at the end of each year to or from each reserve.

Policy 7.0

The City's self financed programs are to be fully funded by user fees including corporate overhead, equipment replacement, debt financing, transfers to reserves and capital expenditures.

Policy 7.1

To ensure that programs remain self funded, user fees for each will be adjusted annually to offset any changes in costs.

8. Debt Management

The maximum amount that the City can borrow from external sources is set by the Community Charter. Debt should only be incurred for one-time capital expenditures and not for on-going programs. Borrowing for one-time capital expenditures allows the cost of the project to be spread out over the useful life of the asset. This results in the costs being paid by future beneficiaries as well as current taxpayers.

Policy 8.0

Debt from external sources should only be incurred for one-time capital projects. These projects should be identified as debt-funded projects in the Five-year Financial Plan and 20-year Capital Plan. A separate report, including a business case, to Council is required seeking approval for proceeding with the borrowing process.

Policy 8.1

Every attempt should be made to keep the debt servicing charges at the current budget level of 7% of the property tax levy by adding new debt only in the years when other debt issues are retired. This will minimize the impact on property taxes as a result of new debt.

Policy 8.2

Debt for Self-financed entities (Water Utility, Sewer Utility, Stormwater Utility, Solid Waste and Recycling Utility and Parking Services) can be incurred if supported through a business case, without consideration of Policy 8.1 which only applies to projects that impact on property taxes.

Policy 8.3

As an alternative to external borrowing, funds in the City's Debt Reduction Reserve can be borrowed with a maximum repayment term of 15 years at an interest rate equal to the lost investment interest

9. Fees and Charges

Fees and charges are a significant portion of the City's revenues. They will be reviewed on a regular basis to avoid major changes and to provide users with adequate notice of those changes. Any review will include an analysis of the City's costs in providing the service as well as a comparison to other municipalities.

Policy 9.0

Fees and charges will be reviewed annually and adjusted where appropriate. Departments should consider a minimum increase equal to inflation (CPI.) The users will be provided with no less than 2 months notice of those changes. Fee bylaws should, when appropriate, include an annual increase equivalent to the Consumer Price Index for Victoria.

10. Surplus

Surplus represents non-renewable savings and should not be used for operating purposes or for on-going capital programs.

The Financial Stability Reserves (Operating Fund, Police Department, Water Utility, Sewer Utility, and Stormwater Utility) were established to ensure ongoing financial stability and fiscal health of all City Entities. They are funded from the year-end surplus in each respective fund.

Policy 10.0

Surplus will only be considered as a funding source for one-time expenditures. Any surplus not used for one-time expenditures will be transferred to infrastructure reserves, financial stability reserves and/or debt reduction reserves. (Also see Policy 11.)

11. Reserve Funds

The City has a number of reserve funds established for various purposes. The City strives to develop appropriate reserves to meet future financial obligations with respect to City equipment and infrastructure, fiscal needs and employee benefit obligation.

Policy 11.0

Each reserve fund is governed by the City's Reserve Fund Policy that outlines the purpose, the types of expenditures permitted and the desired levels of each reserve.

12. Capital Projects and Programs

Capital projects and programs are funded from a variety of sources including a capital property tax levy, grants and reserves. Once the project or program is completed, its on-going maintenance costs need to be included in the operating budget and future upgrade and/or replacement costs need to be included in the capital plan. These on-going and future costs must be clearly understood before a capital project is approved.

Policy 12.0

Each capital project or program submitted for consideration must clearly state the full initial cost as well as future costs, including operating and upgrade/replacement costs. In addition, the source of sustainable funding for such costs has to be demonstrated.

13. Re-budgeted Capital Projects and Programs

Every year, some capital projects and programs are not completed in the year they were budgeted for. In such instances, a request to re-budget the portion of the project or program that is yet to be completed is submitted to Finance.

Policy 13.0

Requests to re-budget capital projects underway are granted. However, other capital items may be scaled back or deferred to accommodate the re-budget request.

Policy 13.1

Requests to re-budget capital projects that have not been started are not granted. These projects will be considered and prioritized along with all other capital items being put forward.

Policy 13.2

Requests to re-budget capital programs are not normally granted. However, should such a request be granted, next year's program will be scaled back to accommodate the re-budget request.

14. Large Scale Capital Projects

Some capital projects are very large in scale and have various phases.

Policy 14.0

Large scale capital projects will be budgeted in at least two phases. Phase one is for planning and design. Phase two and any subsequent phases are for implementation/build.

Department of Finance Policies and Procedures	
Reserve Funds	
Authorized by: City Council	Date of issue: September 30, 2004
	Revised: November 2023

Purpose

The purpose of the Reserve Fund Policy is to provide guidance with respect to the development, maintenance, and use of City Reserve Funds.

Guiding Principles

All Reserves Funds must be established, maintained and used for a specified purpose mandated by this policy, statute, or City by-law.

Annual operating surpluses are to be transferred to the Equipment and Infrastructure Reserve or the appropriate Financial Stability Reserve in each fund and used in accordance with the priorities outlined in this policy.

The City shall strive to develop appropriate reserves to meet future financial obligations with respect to City equipment and infrastructure, fiscal needs and employee benefit obligations.

Primary Objectives

Reserves shall be established and expended to:

1. Ensure Stable & Predictable Levies

The City recognizes that unstable and unpredictable tax levies can adversely affect residents and businesses in Victoria. In order to maintain stable and predictable levies, the City will maintain sufficient reserves to buffer the impact of unusual or unplanned cost increases and revenue reductions over multiple budget cycles.

2. Provide for Operating Emergencies

The City is exposed to unusual operating emergencies resulting from inclement weather, catastrophic events, law enforcement issues, environmental hazards and so on. It may not be feasible, or cost-effective, to absorb the costs of such emergencies during one budget cycle. The City will maintain adequate reserves to avoid such emergencies, extensive service interruptions, and prevent risks to infrastructure and public safety.

3. Finance New Capital Assets

Use of Reserves for financing new capital assets is an effective means of matching one-time funds to one-time capital projects. In addition, the City requires financial resources to quickly respond to opportunities that could provide capital infrastructure through private sector partnerships, and other alternative service delivery methods.

4. Safeguard and Maximize Existing Assets

The City has an inventory of specialized machinery, equipment and technology systems necessary for the efficient delivery of services to the public, which needs to be replaced on well-defined lifecycle standards. The City also has a need to provide insurance against unforeseen losses of these and other assets and claims against its assets where it is found legally liable.

General Criteria

Reserves shall be established, maintained and used in accordance with the following General Criteria.

1. Least Cost to Taxpayers

Reserves should support the least cost alternative in the long-term for delivering standards of service adopted by Council. This means they will be used to:

- Buffer the effects of large cost increases and revenue reductions and allow time to adjust City service costs or revenue generation to avoid unnecessary tax increases, and
- Provide internal capital financing which is more cost-effective than external borrowing or leasing.

2. Fairness & Equity to Taxpayers

Reserves should serve to balance the impact of the operating costs and capital costs, on both current and future taxpayers by:

- Applying Reserves derived from one-time revenue sources to one-time capital or operating projects.
- Applying Reserve Funds and current revenues in a ratio, which recognizes the appropriate sharing of savings from current taxpayers with contributions from future taxpayers (this will likely require repayment of all, or a portion of, Reserves from future rates or user fees).

3. Meets Statutory and Legal Requirements

Reserves must meet the requirements of the Community Charter, Federal statutes, City By-Laws or any other contract or judgment enforceable by law.

4. Meets Accounting Standards

Reserves must meet generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP) and accounting standards applicable to local governments (PSAB).

Policy Administration

The Director of Finance shall be responsible to:

- Ensure the Reserve Funds are established and maintained in compliance with this Policy.
- Conduct an annual review of the Reserve Funds and report the results to City Council.
- On an “as required basis”, recommend revisions or amendments to this Policy, due to changes in applicable statutes, accounting standards, or economy.

Administrative Criteria

1. Unique Corporate Purpose

Reserves must have a unique and specific corporate purpose. Every effort must be made to:

- Reduce complexity by combining amounts with similar purposes
- Eliminating those with redundant or outdated purposes, and
- Re-focus departmental reserves to corporate purposes and strategic plans.

2. Interest and Calculation Method

All Reserves Funds will earn interest each year. Interest will be calculated based on the audited fund balance at the end of the prior year. The interest rate used will be the determined on an annual basis.

3. Minimum and Maximum Balances

A minimum and maximum balance shall be established for each Reserve Fund. A minimum balance will ensure that each fund is not depleted to the degree that it is no longer able to serve its intended purpose. A maximum balance ensures that it does not grow beyond its intended purpose.

4. Repayment Period

If funding is borrowed from a reserve, a time period shall be specified for the repayment or replenishment to its specified minimum or maximum balance.

5. Business Case Requirements

A business case shall be provided specifying the purpose, benefits and method of repayment for each proposed Departmental use of a reserve fund, except as provided by statute, City by-law or Council policy. A business case will be subject to the applicable budget, ranking or other prioritization process, and Council approval.

Reserve Funds

City of Victoria Reserve Funds are established under the authority of the Community Charter and are each supported by a bylaw that outlines the purpose and use of each fund.

A description of each of the different types of Reserve Funds covered by this policy is outlined below:

Financial Stability Reserves

Description

Financial Stability Reserves are required to ensure the ongoing financial stability and fiscal health, of all City Entities. Each reserve is funded from the year-end surplus from the appropriate entity (i.e. Operating Fund, Police Department). For the Water, Sewer and Stormwater Utilities, 50% of each utility's surplus are to be applied to the respective financial stability reserve until they reach target balances and the remainder to the respective equipment and infrastructure reserve.

- **Debt Reduction** – This reserve was established to provide a source of funds to finance internal borrowings, local improvements and paying down the City's outstanding debt. It is currently being funded from the City's share of surpluses identified in MFA Sinking Funds and payment holidays on debt issues.
- **Reserve for Insurance Claims** – This reserve was established to provide a source of funds for liability claims not covered under our Insurance Policies.

Guidelines for Using Funds

A Council Resolution or an Adopted Financial Plan Bylaw is required for all appropriations from the Financial Stability Reserve Funds.

All appropriations from Financial Stability Reserves are to be considered in accordance with the following priorities.

1. Operating and Environmental Emergencies

- These appropriations are the highest priority and are based on public safety and demand nature of the expenditure.

2. Revenue Stabilization and Operating Contingency

- These appropriations are intended to stabilize the impacts of cyclical revenue downturns and operating cost increases that are largely temporary and not within the City's ability to adjust in the short-term.

3. Innovation Fund

- As an incentive to encourage creativity and innovation, appropriations may be made to fund departments and/or workgroups that would like to explore innovative and creative solutions directed towards making the Corporation more efficient and effective.
- Business cases requesting use of these funds require that the replenishment methods be specified. These would include future departmental cost or service level adjustments or additional revenue generation necessary to "top up" the accounts over a three-year period.

Equipment and Infrastructure

Description

Equipment and Infrastructure Reserves are established to create a funding source for buildings and infrastructure capital projects, new equipment purchases and capital equipment replacement programs. Currently, the city has established equipment and infrastructure reserve funds for the following purposes:

- **Police Vehicles, Equipment and Infrastructure** – This reserve is to fund the replacement and purchase of Police vehicles and equipment. This reserve is funded by annual budget contributions included in the Police operating budget.
- **Police Emergency Response Team Vehicles and Equipment** – This reserve is to fund the replacement and purchase of equipment for the Regional Emergency Response Team. The reserve is funded by the annual surplus from the ERT Program.
- **Victoria Conference Centre Equipment and Infrastructure** – This reserve was established to provide a source of funds to properly maintain the Conference Centre building and furnishings. This reserve is also used to fund equipment replacements and new equipment purchases. The reserve is funded by the annual surplus from the Conference Centre.
- **City Equipment** – This reserve is to fund the replacement and purchase of City equipment. This includes equipment replacement programs, computer equipment and software, office furniture, etc. This reserve is funded by annual budget contributions included in the City operating budget.
- **City Vehicles and Heavy Equipment** – This reserve is to fund the purchase and replacement of City vehicles and heavy equipment. This reserve is funded by annual budget contributions included in the City operating budget.
- **City Buildings and Infrastructure** – This reserve was established to provide a source of funds to properly maintain City Buildings and Infrastructure. This reserve is funded by annual budget contributions that are increasing by \$500,000 per year until the reserve attains an adequate funding level. This increase is subject to annual Council approval.
- **Parking Services Equipment and Infrastructure** – This reserve was established to provide a source of funds to properly maintain the City parkades. The reserve is also used to fund Parking Services equipment replacement and new equipment purchases. This reserve is funded from annual budget contributions included in the City's operating budget.
- **Multipurpose Equipment and Infrastructure** – This reserve was established to provide funding for equipment replacement and maintaining the Multipurpose Facility. This reserve is funded by annual budget contributions from the City's operating budget and RG Properties.
- **Recreation Facilities Equipment and Infrastructure** – This reserve was established to provide a source of funds to properly maintain City Recreation Facilities. The reserve is also used to fund equipment replacement and new equipment purchases for City Recreation Facilities. This reserve is funded from user fees assessed on tickets to events and facility rentals.
- **Archives Equipment** – This reserve is to fund the purchase and replacement of Archives material and equipment. The funding for this reserve comes from grants and donations.
- **Artificial Turf Field** – This reserve was established to provide a source of funds for replacement of the Finlayson field carpet and amenities and for future development of artificial turf fields. This reserve is funded from the fees collected from the rental of the Finlayson field.

- **Canada Community-Building** – The tripartite Agreement between Canada, British Columbia and UBCM that took effect April 1, 2014, provides the administrative framework for the delivery of the Canada Community-Building Fund (formerly the federal Gas Tax fund) to local governments in British Columbia. The Agreement is focused on achieving stronger cities and communities, productivity and economic growth and a cleaner environment. The Community Works Fund provides annual contributions to this reserve.
- **Water Utility Equipment and Infrastructure** – This reserve was established to provide a source of funds to properly maintain the Water Utility Infrastructure. The reserve is also used to fund Water Utility equipment replacement and new equipment purchases. The reserve is funded by annual budget contributions from the Water Utility and 50% of the Water Utility's surplus until the target balance has been met within the Water Utility Financial Stability Reserve. Once the target balance is achieved, 100% of the surplus will be allocated to the Water Utility Equipment and Infrastructure Reserve.
- **Sewer Utility Equipment and Infrastructure** – This reserve was established to provide a source of funds to properly maintain the Sewer Utility Infrastructure. The reserve is also used to fund Sewer Utility equipment replacement and new equipment purchases. The reserve is funded by annual budget contributions from the Sewer Utility and 50% of the Sewer Utility's surplus until the target balance has been met within the Sewer Utility Financial Stability Reserve. Once the target balance is achieved, 100% of the surplus will be allocated to the Sewer Utility Equipment and Infrastructure Reserve.
- **Stormwater Utility Equipment and Infrastructure** – This reserve was established to provide a source of funds to properly maintain the Stormwater Utility Infrastructure. The reserve is also used to fund Stormwater Utility equipment replacement and new equipment purchases. The reserve is by annual budget contributions from the Stormwater Utility and 50% of the Stormwater Utility's surplus until the target balance has been met within the Stormwater Utility Financial Stability Reserve. Once the target balance is achieved, 100% of the surplus will be allocated to the Stormwater Utility Equipment and Infrastructure Reserve.

Guidelines for Using Funds

Use of equipment and infrastructure reserves is restricted to the following types of purchases:

- Major construction, acquisition, or renovation activities as defined in the Capital Asset Policy that add value to the municipal physical assets or significantly increase their useful life. Some examples include:
 - Renovation and construction projects pertaining to new or existing city buildings,
 - Renewal, replacement, enhancement or construction of city infrastructure, sewers, storm drains, water distribution systems, buildings, roads, sidewalks, traffic systems, parks, etc.
- Vehicles and heavy equipment, individual pieces of equipment and ongoing annual equipment replacement programs as defined in the Capital Asset Policy.

Note: A Council resolution or an adopted Financial Plan Bylaw is required for all appropriations from the Reserve Funds. Further, a Council Resolution is required to create additional reserve fund categories, delete categories or shift funds between categories.

Employee Benefit Obligations

Description

Reserves for employee benefit obligations will be established where the City is incurring a retirement benefit liability or other employee related liability, which the City is obligated to pay at some future date. Current reserves established include:

- **Police Retirement Benefits** – This reserve is to fund retirement benefits (one months pay and vested sick leave) accrued to retiring Police officers. This reserve is funded by annual contributions included in the Police operating budget.
- **Police Pension Corporation Over Contributions** – This reserve was established to accumulate the City's share of Police pension over contributions. These amounts are payable to the employee upon retirement. This reserve is funded from pension contributions refunded to the City by the BC Pension Corporation.
- **City Retirement Benefits** – This reserve has been established to help fund retirement benefits (one months pay and vested sick leave) accrued to retiring City Employees. This reserve is funded by annual contributions included in the City's operating budget.
- **City Pension Corporation Over Contributions** – This reserve was established to accumulate the City's share of Firefighter pension over contributions. These amounts are payable to the employee upon retirement. This reserve is funded from pension contributions refunded to the City by the BC Pension Corporation.

Guidelines for Using Funds

Use of funds is restricted to the purpose for which each fund was established. Funds may only be accessed to supplement funding a retirement payout.

Note: A Council resolution or an adopted Financial Plan Bylaw is required for all appropriations from these Reserve Funds. Further, a Council resolution is required to create additional reserve fund categories, delete categories or shift funds between categories.

Development Cost Charges

Description

This reserve is required by the Community Charter to account for the proceeds from development cost charges levied against new developments. The reserve is funded from the proceeds of development cost charges levied.

Guidelines for Using Funds

Use of these funds is governed by the Development Cost Charge Bylaw and restricted to the funding approved projects as allowed by that bylaw.

Note: *An adopted Financial Plan Bylaw is required for all appropriations from this Reserve Fund. Further, an amendment to the Development Cost Charge Bylaw is required to create additional reserve fund categories, delete categories or shift funds between categories.*

Tax Sale Lands

Description

The Tax Sale Lands Reserve was established to account for proceeds from any sales of City land and buildings. This reserve is funded from all sales of City land and buildings.

Guidelines for Using Funds

These funds are available for building and land purchases and improvements, and capital expenditures required for preparing City properties to sell (i.e. remediation, servicing, etc.)

Note: *A Council resolution or an adopted Financial Plan Bylaw is required for all appropriations from this Reserve Fund. Further, a Council resolution is required to create additional reserve fund categories, delete categories or shift funds between categories.*

Parks and Greenways Acquisition

Description

This reserve was established to provide a source of funds for purchasing Park Lands. It is currently funded from 10% of the proceeds of any City land sale.

Guidelines for Using Funds

These funds are available for purchasing park lands or lands to be developed into a park.

Note: *A Council Resolution or an adopted Financial Plan Bylaw is required for all appropriations from this Reserve Fund. Further, a Council resolution is required to create additional reserve fund categories, delete categories or shift funds between categories.*

Local Amenities

Description

This reserve tracks and accounts for monies received from a developer, for public amenities related to specific developments (i.e. pathways, parks, docks, etc.). This reserve is funded from contributions by developers.

This reserve also tracks and accounts for monies received under the City's Tree Preservation Bylaw related to removal of trees due to development or through cash donations.

Guidelines for Using Funds

Use of these funds is restricted to the purpose for which each contribution was based on, including uses outlined in the Tree Preservation Bylaw for tree replacement.

Note: *A Council resolution or an adopted Financial Plan Bylaw is required for all appropriations from this Reserve Fund. Further, a Council resolution is required to create additional reserve fund categories, delete categories or shift funds between categories.*

Victoria Housing

Description

This reserve has been established to provide a source of funds to help fund housing projects including projects that fall under the Secondary Suite Incentive Program. The reserve is funded by annual contributions included in the City's Operating Budget.

Guidelines for Using Funds

Use of these funds is restricted to the funding of housing projects including those that fall under the Secondary Suite Incentive Program.

Note: *A Council resolution or an adopted Financial Plan Bylaw is required for all appropriations from this Reserve Fund. Further, a Council resolution is required to create additional reserve fund categories, delete categories or shift funds between categories.*

Dockside Affordable Housing

Description

This is a reserve that has been established to provide a source of funds to help fund affordable housing projects in Dockside. The Dockside Master Development Agreement outlines certain requirements around affordable housing that the developer has to meet. There is an option to provide cash instead of the affordable housing requirements. Those funds would be put into this reserve. In addition, the reserve is funded by 20% of the building permit fees applicable to the Dockside development.

Guidelines for Using Funds

Use of these funds is restricted to the funding of affordable housing projects in Dockside.

Note: *A Council resolution or an adopted Financial Plan Bylaw is required for all appropriations from this Reserve Fund. Further, a Council Resolution is required to create additional reserve fund categories, delete categories or shift funds between categories.*

Climate Action

Description

This reserve has been established to provide a source of funds for funding climate mitigation and adaptation strategies that target energy and GHG reductions associated with facilities or transportation of either City-owned assets or community public lands and services. This reserve is funded by the Climate Action Revenue Incentive Program (CARIP) grants.

Guidelines for Using Funds

Use of these funds is restricted to the funding of climate change initiatives.

Note: *A Council resolution or an adopted Financial Plan Bylaw is required for all appropriations from this Reserve Fund. Further, a Council resolution is required to create additional reserve fund categories, delete categories or shift funds between categories.*

Art in Public Places

Description

This reserve has been established to provide a source of funds for art in public spaces and expand opportunities for artists and members of the public to participate in the process. The Arts in Public Places policy outlines the funding formula for this reserve.

Guidelines for Using Funds

Use of these funds is restricted to the funding of art in public places initiatives.

Note: *A Council resolution or an adopted Financial Plan Bylaw is required for all appropriations from this Reserve Fund. Further, a Council resolution is required to create additional reserve fund categories, delete categories or shift funds between categories.*

Downtown Core Area Public Realm Improvements

Description

This reserve has been established to assist in funding improvements that tangibly and visibly improve the physical condition, appearance and function of the public realm within the Downtown Core Area and provide a public benefit to the overall surrounding area.

This reserve is funded by monetary contributions provided to the City of Victoria as part of the Density Bonus System described in the *Downtown Core Area Plan*. The *Downtown Core Area Plan* outlines the funding formula for this reserve.

Guidelines for Using Funds

Use of these funds is restricted to the funding of public realm improvements that support the objectives and policies of the *Downtown Core Area Plan*.

Note: *A Council resolution or an adopted Financial Plan Bylaw is required for all appropriations from this Reserve Fund. Further, a Council resolution is required to create additional reserve fund categories, delete categories or shift funds between categories.*

Park Fixture Dedication Program

Description

This reserve has been established to assist in funding the maintenance costs of the capital assets acquired through the Park Fixture Dedication Program.

This reserve is funded by monetary contributions provided to the City of Victoria as part of the total cost of the dedication. The maintenance contingency is a percentage of the amenity capital cost.

Guidelines for Using Funds

Use of these funds is restricted to funding the maintenance of the dedicated park fixture over the estimated useful life.

Note: A Council resolution or an adopted Financial Plan Bylaw is required for all appropriations from this Reserve Fund. Further, a Council resolution is required to create additional reserve fund categories, delete categories or shift funds between categories.

**Department of Finance
Policies and Procedures**

Revenue and Tax

Authorized by: Council

Date of issue: February 16, 2009

Date of revision: April 3, 2025

Purpose

The purpose of the Revenue and Tax Policy is to outline the proportions of revenue sources, the distribution of property taxes among property classes and the use of permissive property tax exemptions.

Objectives

- To provide tax payers with stable, equitable and affordable property taxation while at the same time providing high quality services.
- To support the OCP and other City plans as well as complement the Regional Context Statement.

Policies

1. Revenue Proportions by Funding Sources

Property taxes are the main source of revenue for the City and pay for services such as police and fire protection, bylaw enforcement, and infrastructure maintenance. Property taxes provide a stable and consistent source of revenue for services that are difficult or undesirable to fund on a user pay basis. Therefore, property taxes will continue to be the City's major source of revenue.

However, it is the City's desire to charge user fees where feasible. Some programs, such as recreation, are partially funded by user fees. The City also has several self-financed programs that are fully funded by user fees. These include Water Utility, Sewer Utility, Stormwater Utility, and Garbage Utility.

Policy 1.0

User pay funding will be used for such services that are practical and desirable to fund on a user pay basis.

Services that are undesirable or impractical to fund on a user pay basis will be funded by property taxes.

Policy 1.1

The City will continue to explore alternative revenue sources to diversity its revenue base.

2. Distribution of Property Taxes Among Property Classes

Market value changes that result in uneven assessment changes between property classes result in a tax burden shift to the class experiencing greater market value increases unless tax ratios are modified to mitigate the shift.

Until 2007, it was Council's practice to adjust tax ratios to prevent such shifts. This equalization practice provided an effective tax increase that was equal for all classes. It is important to note that this practice only avoids shifts between property classes. There is still a possibility for shifts *within* a property class where one property has experienced a market value change that is greater than the average for that class.

However, starting in 2007, business and industrial tax ratios have been held constant in recognition of the larger tax burden that has been placed on those classes. This resulted in higher tax increases being passed on to the residential class compared to business and industrial.

The pressure continues across the country to reduce the tax burden on the business and industrial classes. In recognition of this, and the desire to support a healthy business environment, Council's goal is to have a business class tax burden that is equitable.

In 2012, a comprehensive review of the Revenue and Tax Policy was conducted to determine if Council's objective of reducing the tax burden on the business class was appropriate and if so, that the mechanism of achieving the objective (reduction of tax ratio) was the most effective mechanism to achieve the goal. The review concluded that additional relief for the business tax class was warranted. However, the tax ratio was not the best mechanism of achieving that goal. As a result, Council approved the following policy objective: To reduce the business property tax class share of the total property tax levy to 48% over three years (2012-2014). The redistribution excludes impact of new assessment revenue. The total redistribution of the tax levy was \$1.51 million.

In 2015, an update review was completed, and based on the findings, Policy 2.0 was amended to allocate tax increases equally by maintaining the current share of distribution of taxes among tax classes. In 2025, this policy was further revised to reduce the business to residential property tax ratio to 3.0 to 1 over the period from 2025 to 2030.

In 2024, to support the retention of industrial properties, Council amended Policy 2.1 to allow the industrial tax rates to be lower than the business rate, therefore reducing the tax burden on industrial properties. While the tax increase was distributed equally across all property classes, the lower industrial tax rate resulted in the lowest overall tax increase to industrial properties due to the tax rates for these classes being lower than business.

Policy 2.0

To reduce the business to residential tax ratio to no more than:

- 3.5 to 1 in 2025
- 3.4 to 1 in 2026
- 3.3 to 1 in 2027
- 3.2 to 1 in 2028
- 3.1 to 1 in 2029
- 3.0 to 1 in 2030

Policy 2.1

Tax rates for the light and major industrial tax classes will not exceed the business tax rate to support the City's desire to retain industrial businesses.

Policy 2.2

Farm Tax Rates will be set at a rate so taxes paid by properties achieving farm status will be comparable to what the property would have paid if it were assessed as residential.

3. Use of Permissive Property Tax Exemptions

The City continues to support local non-profit organizations through permissive tax exemptions. Each year, a list of these exemptions is included in the City's Annual Report.

In addition, the City offers a Tax Incentive Program to eligible owners of downtown heritage designated buildings to offset seismic upgrading costs for the purposes of residential conversion of existing upper storeys. The exemptions are for a period up to ten years.

The City encourages redevelopment of lands within the City and the use of environmentally sustainable energy systems for those developments through revitalization property tax exemptions.

Policy 3.0

Permissive property tax exemptions are governed by the City's Permissive Property Tax Exemption Policy, which outlines the criteria for which property tax exemptions may be granted.

Policy 3.1

Heritage property tax exemptions are governed by the City's Heritage Tax Incentive Program.

Policy 3.2

Revitalization property tax exemptions are governed by revitalization property tax exemption program bylaws adopted for specific purposes.