



THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF VERNON

3400 – 30th STREET VERNON, BRITISH COLUMBIA V1T 5E6
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OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

December 27, 2022

A year in review from Mayor Victor Cumming

As Mayor, I am extremely proud of the work accomplished by both Council, the City's Administration and contractors over the last year. As we prepare to close out 2022, I'd like to share some of the milestones we reached as a community.

Vernon, like the rest of southern British Columbia, finds itself in a significant affordable housing shortage, which is recognized by our Council in its recently adopted Housing Action Plan. The tight housing market, particularly for rental accommodation saw little change in 2022, even with the record setting total building permits value in 2021 (\$173 million). Building permit value in 2022 has surpassed 2021 numbers, totaling \$201 million to date, with 469 residential units approved for construction.

Many provincially-financed, assisted housing units were completed, including some with support services, all operated by our strong not-for-profit agencies. Other assisted housing units got under construction with completions expected in 2023. Still there is a significant gap between community housing needs and available housing at prices that the majority of residents can afford.

Much of the City's responsibilities, and therefore expenditures and activities, were in building, maintaining, and replacing community infrastructure like municipal roads, sidewalks, and storm and wastewater management systems. The additional wastewater treatment capacity was in full construction mode in 2022, with about 20 per cent more capacity expected to come on stream in 2023. New sewer lines were horizontally drilled along Okanagan Landing Road and Tronson Road, minimizing interruptions while adding capacity. The 1.9% annual infrastructure levy on City taxes, in its 9th of a 10-year program, provided much needed financial resources for capital replacement projects.

There were also new projects completed in the City, including Phase 1 of the Silver Star Road multi-use path connecting BX School to the Foothills neighbourhood, Civic Memorial Park, BX Creek sediment pond, Girouard Park expansion and the start of construction on the Lakeview "Peanut" Pool. The City, with provincial funding, built two new day care facilities, providing almost 200 new spaces, opening in January 2023, complimenting the new facilities under design/construction in Coldstream. The Canadian Tire Jump Start Inclusive Playground, co-funded with the City, opened at Marshall Fields along with upgraded washrooms. This year, more than \$18 million was allocated to Vernon's capital program.

Detailed planning is underway for the Regional District of the North Okanagan led Greater Vernon Cultural Centre with the hiring of an architect. Detailed engineering is also under way for



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the new drinking water filtration plant on Mission Hill. The Active Living Centre (new recreation facility) referendum was passed in October and the planning for the procurement process is already underway. These three projects alone total approximately \$200 million in design and construction over the next 4 years.

Implementation of the award-winning Climate Action Plan continued in 2022. The City added to its fleet of electric vehicles, started the curbside organics collection diverting 2,300 tonnes of organics from the local landfill in its first 7 months, 142,000 rides were taken on electric kick scooters, and planning for infrastructure upgrades to manage spring creek flood waters got underway, plus many other Actions were initiated.

The tourism sector rebounded to exceed pre-pandemic levels. Vernon welcomed over 1 million visitors in 2022 and had a banner year for hotel room revenue. The return of the downtown 2900 Plaza was well attended, up considerably from its initial pilot in 2021. However, for many businesses, staff recruitment was, and is, the major challenge in 2022, based on general business growth, retirements and tight skilled labour supply. The labour shortage has also hampered those who provide social services in our growing community.

I'd like to recognize Scott Anderson for serving two terms on Council and welcome Councillor Brian Guy to this new term. Our new Council, with full support, appointed Ms. Patti Bridal as Chief Administrative Officer, taking over from Mr. Will Pearce who retired in early December.

I believe, Vernon is well-positioned – financially, socially, and structurally – for what we expect to see in the coming years.

On behalf of myself, my family, City Council and all the staff at the City of Vernon, I wish you the very best for this holiday season, and health and happiness for 2023.

Victor Cumming
Mayor, City of Vernon