

2026-2030 Operating Budget Overview

Recommendations:

THAT Council receive for information the report titled “2026-2030 Operating Budget Overview”, dated December 8, 2025.

That Council approve the One-Time Decision Packages recommended by staff as outlined in the report titled “2026-2030 Operating Budget Overview”, dated December 8, 2025.

Report Purpose and Summary Statement:

This report provides a preview of the draft Operating Budget that will be in the 2026–2030 Financial Plan update in early 2026. It identifies the costs being considered for those years and how they could affect the property tax increase. It also shows that the forecast for the 2026 operating budget, including non-discretionary changes, is currently at \$212 million. The report also provides a list of one-time decision packages that require early Council consideration, and do not impact the property tax increase.

Previous Council Action:

On April 8, 2025, Council adopted the 2025-2029 Financial Plan and adopted the *Maple Ridge 2025 Property Tax Rates Bylaw No. 8026-2025* that set the property tax increase for 2025 at 4.9%.

On July 29, 2025, Council approved the business planning guidelines for the 2026-2030 Financial Plan.

Funding Source:

The City’s Financial Plan accounts for all funding sources, including general revenue and reserves

Strategic Alignment:

Governance & Corporate Excellence

Communications:

A detailed budget communications plan is in place to ensure that residents receive transparent information on the budget and have opportunities to provide feedback that will inform the final budgets that will comprise the 2026-2030 Financial Plan. Council will receive an overview of the communications plan on December 15, 2025.

Applicable Legislation/ Bylaw/Policy:

Maple Ridge 2025-2029 Financial Plan Bylaw No. 8019-2025;
Maple Ridge 2025 Property Tax Rates Bylaw No. 8026-2025

To: Mayor and Council

File number:

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2026-2030 Operating Budget Overview

BACKGROUND:

On April 8, 2025, Council adopted the 2025–2029 Financial Plan, which includes a provisional forecast for the 2026 fiscal year. As part of the 2026 budget cycle, the City updates that forecast by reviewing revenues, operating and capital expenditures. Under provincial legislation, the 2026–2030 Financial Plan must be adopted before May 15, 2026.

Following adoption of the 2026–2030 Financial Plan, Council adopts the 2026 Property Tax Rate Bylaw, which sets the property tax rates.

ANALYSIS:

Discussion:

The initial budget estimates for 2026 included in the 2025-2029 Financial Plan estimated total operating expenditures of \$209.9M. Based on budget projections in the previous plan, the forecasted property tax increase for 2026 was 6.3%.

City staff have been working to identify one-time and ongoing savings and have identified a pathway for the City to absorb all non-discretionary expense increases for 2026 and still deliver services at a targeted property tax increase of not greater than 3.5%. Achieving this percentage property tax increase is partly possible through removal of the Parks & Recreation Improvements portion of the property tax increase. The 2025-2029 Financial Plan adopted by Council set aside 0.6% of taxation to support infrastructure improvements and operating costs for parks and recreation. Staff propose to remove this from the 2026-2030 Financial Plan and instead bring forward a separate package in 2026 regarding the mechanisms best positioned to raise the significant capital needed for new parks and recreation facilities. Therefore, this would be one of the tools used to achieve the property tax increase target of 3.5% in 2026.

It is possible for a lower property tax increase to be achieved through the temporary suspension of other reserve contributions such as the Infrastructure Sustainability Reserve. However, this is only a short-term measure as this reserve is a long-term strategy to fund infrastructure maintenance and renewal. Work continues by staff to explore further savings and service level adjustments that can support the 3.5% (or lower) property tax increase without having to reduce infrastructure renewal spending.

This report outlines the initial estimates of operating budgets for the City at a summary level to inform Council decision making and provide basic information on which to consult with residents and obtain feedback to refine the Financial Plan estimates in Q1 2026. The estimated property tax increase will be informed by BC Assessment data which should be forthcoming in

the New Year. As such, staff are working with a target rate of 3.5% for public engagement purposes.

Keeping the Budget Affordable:

The City has identified non-discretionary changes that amount to a net increase of \$2.26M in the 2026 budget, and similar amounts in future years of the 2026-2030 Financial Plan. This places the initial total budget estimate at \$212M for 2026. This estimate will continue to be refined as further savings are explored and updated figures will be brought to Council in Q1 2026.

The non-discretionary changes are a combination of:

- Anticipated Collective Agreement and benefit rate increases
- Position changes and reclassifications
- Department-level adjustments (e.g., dispatch costs, software licensing, found milestones)
- Increase to Chamber of Commerce funding
- Reductions in grant revenue
- Expenses such as election costs and bank charges

Some of these pressures were partially offset through updated revenue and earnings forecasts and by applying contingencies previously set aside to manage inflation and growth. Other impacts were absorbed by existing reserves. For example, substantial increases to RCMP contract costs and the City's contribution to Integrated Teams were funded through the Police Services Reserve, resulting in little impact on the 2026 tax rate. Establishing animal control services in-house will have no tax impact until 2029 thanks to contract and related savings.

The City recognizes that affordability continues to be a challenge for residents. To keep the property tax increase affordable, City staff have undertaken significant investigation into areas of the operating budget that could be adjusted to fund both the non-discretionary increase and achieve a target property tax increase of no greater than 3.5%.

Continuing Support for Community-Led Organizations:

The 2026 operating budget allocates \$576,987 in funding to community organizations. The following organizations (among others) receive these funds each year:

- Alouette River Management Society (ARMS)
- Golden Ears Winter Club
- Kanaka Education and Environmental Partnership Society (KEEPS)
- Heritage Society operation of the Maple Ridge Museum
- Ridge Meadows Seniors Society
- Seniors Network
- Ridge Meadows Home Show
- Maple Ridge Pitt Meadows Agricultural Association

No change is proposed to these grants in 2026, as the City continues its commitment to support community-led organizations that deliver important services for residents on issues that matter (e.g., climate and ecosystem management, heritage and culture, and support for seniors'

programs). The City will undertake a review of all outbound grants in 2026 to create a renewed process for these to be awarded in future years.

One-time Decision Packages:

To date, one-time savings for 2025 have been identified that will return approximately \$1.5M to operating surplus. These are in areas of Planning and Building, Recreation Services, Economic Development, Engineering, Fire, Finance and Human Resources operating expenses. While these represent one-time rather than ongoing savings in operating expenses, they do make available some additional surplus to address one-time decision packages in 2026 that would otherwise place additional pressure on the property tax increase.

The list of one-time decision packages is included as Attachment A for Council's consideration. Attachment A includes 14 separate decision packages that collectively total \$1.56M. Proposed one-time items include enhancements to Canada Day and Rock the Block events, and potential for new 2026 FIFA World Cup Outdoor Family Viewing events. Early decision on these items would enable staff to undertake the procurement and preparatory work needed in early 2026 to ensure that this work can be delivered.

Ongoing Decision Packages:

Staff are continuing to identify ongoing savings that have a more direct impact on the property tax increase in 2026 and for all years of the 2026-2030 Financial Plan. To date ongoing savings have been found totaling approximately \$1.2M. These ongoing savings came in the following areas of operational expenses:

- Miscellaneous costs such as conferences, supplies, memberships
- Savings in software and software maintenance
- Reductions in consulting budgets for research and studies
- Operational savings for facilities and other maintenance costs (e.g., gravel roads, pavement management, ditching etc.)
- Recreation services savings in outdoor pool programs
- Police services reductions in direct administrative costs and radio dispatch

For the most part, the savings identified to date will require minor service level reductions for residents across City services. However, to find deeper reductions, staff would require direction from Council on additional areas of operating savings that would have larger service level impacts.

It is anticipated that finding sufficient savings to reduce the property tax increase below 3.5% will have more significant service level implications. Through the serviced based budgeting analysis other areas of City services that are less aligned to strategic priorities have been identified, but many of these have long standing practices in place which leads to established expectations by service users of the continuation of services. More work is needed to assess additional areas for long term savings to reduce the property tax increase. Staff will continue this through December-January and will bring forward revised operating budget estimates in Q1 2026.

Staff have identified a series of ongoing decision package requests for the 2026-2030 Financial Plan. However, these will only be brought forward in Q1 2026 if further savings can be found to fund the proposed operating budget increases that would be required without impact to the property tax increase. It would not be possible to achieve a 3.5% (or lower) property tax increase and include additional ongoing decision packages without identifying further service level adjustments or other ongoing savings in departments.

Public Engagement:

In December, the City will be launching the Budget Talks video series to help residents better understand the business planning process and what investments are funded by taxpayer contributions. A recent resident survey was also completed and the initial findings from this work have informed the preparation of the draft budget included in this report. Further engagement will take place through multiple channels (print, online and in person) starting in January 2026 in line with the budget communications plan.

Strategic Alignment:

The operating budget within the 2026-2030 Financial Plan supports the delivery of each of the five strategic priorities within Council’s Strategic Plan 2023-2026: Liveable Community; Engaged, Healthy Community; Diversified, Thriving Economy; Governance and Corporate Excellence; and Climate Leadership and Environmental Stewardship.

Applicable Legislation/Bylaw/Policy:

Under Provincial legislation the City is required to put forward a budget no later than May 15 each year. In April 2025 Council adopted the 2025-2029 Financial Plan which forms the initial basis for the preparation of the 2026 budget.

CONCLUSION:

This initial estimate of the operating budget elements for the 2026-2030 Financial Plan is provided to inform Council and to provide a basis on which staff can engage with the public as part of the budget engagements for 2026. Based on Council direction the budget will continue to be refined until final budgets are brought forward for Council consideration in Q2 2026 as required in Provincial legislation. One-time decision packages have been prepared that require early approval to enable optimal delivery in 2026. Council consideration is being sought for those one-time items that do not impact the property tax increase.

Prepared by: CK Lee, Manager of Financial Planning and Phil Sanderson Manager of Corporate Strategy & Business Transformation

Attachments: (A) 2026 Operating Budget – One-Time Decision Packages

Report Approval Details

Document Title:	2026-2030 Operating Budget Overview Final.docx
Attachments:	- Attachment A - 2026 Operating Budget - One Time Decision Packages.pdf
Final Approval Date:	Dec 4, 2025

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

No Signature - Task assigned to Trevor Thompson, Chief Financial Officer was completed by workflow administrator Claudia Bevacqua, Clerk 3

Trevor Thompson, Chief Financial Officer

No Signature - Task assigned to James Stiver, Director of Planning and Building was completed by workflow administrator Claudia Bevacqua, Clerk 3

James Stiver, Director of Planning and Building

Stephane Labonne, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer

Scott Hartman, Chief Administrative Officer