

## 2023 Annual Community Report

### Mayor's Speaking Notes

Jan. 25, 2023

Good evening! As the Mayor of Canmore, I am happy to be here on behalf of Council to share with you some of the exciting things that are planned for 2023 as well as to look back at some of the more noteworthy initiatives from the past year.

While 2022 began in the grip of the pandemic, I'm going to focus on what we were able to get done in the past year, despite COVID hanging over us.

I'll start with the priority to proceed with a near carbon neutral construction of a new fire hall. I'm pleased to report that construction began last May and completion is anticipated later this summer. The project is currently ahead of schedule and on-budget.

Thanks to COVID, a priority was the safety of the community through increasing maintenance and accessibility of outdoor amenity space.

Last summer, Main Street was once again turned into a pedestrian and cyclist-only zone giving people more space to enjoy.

Infrastructure enhancements were completed at Quarry Lake, including improvements to the parking lot and the addition of two new vault washrooms.

Between August and October, law enforcement and emergency service personnel handed out approximately 350 positive tickets to people demonstrating personal safety, positive attitudes, community heroes, or for making smart choices – I even got one for using proper hand signals! Peace Officers had a visible presence on trails throughout the summer, educating all users on proper trail-sharing etiquette.

Another priority over the past year was to continue community involvement with a sustainable vision for tourism in Canmore.

Following the Regenerative Tourism Framework which was approved in 2021, administration and I worked with Tourism Canmore Kananaskis to create a Tourism Roundtable. In 2022, the focus has been to identify the community stakeholders who may be best positioned to move forward with the various action items identified by the Framework.

An important priority was to create intercept parking opportunities and implement paid parking to fund free local transit services and manage congestion.

Paid parking was implemented in the Town Centre last summer with a resident permit which allows for three hours of free parking, as well as a new monthly pass for residents parking downtown.

In addition, 175 stalls of all-day parking near Elevation Place were promoted for free intercept parking.

In 2022, Council approved an increase in frequency of local transit services, funded through parking revenues. As a result, fare-free local transit significantly exceeded peak ridership of 2019. Regional transit to Banff will also match 2019 levels. This bucks the trend of major cities across the country where ridership sits at as low as 60% of pre-pandemic levels.

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On-It regional transit to Calgary recorded record levels of ridership last year as well!

On the heels of a successful residential organics diversion program, another priority is to reduce our community impact on climate change by implementing a commercial organics diversion program

There are currently 40 businesses participating commercial organics program, but only representing 36% of relevant businesses. Recognizing that more must be done to achieve this goal, Council directed administration to prepare a mandatory commercial food waste program, including a Waste Control Bylaw amendment and implementation plan to start in 2023.

Through the residential and commercial food waste programs, Canmore residents and businesses are diverting a whopping 1,500 kg of food waste every day to composting, instead of the landfill, which avoids a whack of methane gas not being released into the atmosphere!

In addition to these five priority areas, there were also many other accomplishments in 2022 of note.

Speaking of the food waste programs, I'm so proud of how the community has embraced composting their kitchen waste, and we have installed nine more residential food waste containers in neighborhoods to make it even more convenient.

In June our Canmore Fire-Rescue and our mutual-aid partners conducted a mock-wildfire exercise to prepare local emergency response agencies to respond to a wildfire in the area. Town of Canmore teams delivered sample evacuation notices to some neighbourhoods, simulated road-blocks, and set-up structure protection sprinkler systems. We continue to enhance regional emergency response coordination with Banff, one of our partners in mutual aid.

In September, we unveiled our latest new mural on the west-facing wall of the old visitor information centre on 7th Avenue. This piece is the first addition to our public art collection created by Indigenous artists. The winning submission came from artists, Kayla Bellerose and Cheyenne Bears paw.

The mural is inspired by the Three Sisters mountain, and it highlights the resilience and power of Indigenous women from the Treaty 7 area, specifically from the Stoney Nakoda Nations.

This mural provides a great backdrop for this photo of me and CAO Sally Caudill taking a look at one of two new electric vehicles joining the Town of Canmore's administrative fleet in October. We are well on our way to reducing fuel and maintenance costs in our fleet, contributing to cleaner local air quality, and moving towards our greenhouse gas emission reduction goals.

Did you know that we have 33 playgrounds and that they typically require replacement every 25 years or so? In October, we opened the new playground in the Peaks of Grassi. Stay tuned for an announcement for the replacement of the Lady McDonald Playground Structure which was built in 1999 and the construction of the new playground in Lions Park.

You may have noticed new inclusive signage on washrooms at Town of Canmore Facilities. In May of every year, we raise the pride flag to signal that our municipal buildings are safe spaces for everyone. Related to this, and as a sneak peak of what I'll be taking about that's new in 2023, we will conduct a

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study to assess and potentially convert men's and women's public washrooms to universal washrooms - and improve accessibility. This is another step in creating safe, welcoming spaces for everyone.

As you know, Three Sisters Mountain Village Properties Ltd. has filed a civil lawsuit against the Town of Canmore and all seven members of the previous Council. As well, proceedings continue around the Area Structure Plans. While we are not making any public comments about the case and we cannot speak on behalf of the individuals named in the claim, it is worth noting that significant effort and resources were dedicated to the issue this year. The next hearings are scheduled for April and June 2023. Stay tuned to the local newspapers as I'm sure they will have updates as they are announced. It is my sincere desire that we find resolution of these issues and move forward with appropriate development of these properties.

I've also been focusing on advocacy efforts and engaging with the public. I held three virtual Town Halls last year, and I'm hosting my first in-person one later this month at our open house on Jan. 25. Council continues to advocate for more safety efforts on the highway, keeping victim services local, and we're working with the towns of Jasper and Banff on getting special visitor-based community status. I'm also now part of a new mid-sized cities mayors caucus that is advocating to the province for improved funding for municipalities.

Lastly, I'm most excited about our new strategic plan that will guide us for the next four years which focuses on livability, environment, and relationships. It incorporates what we heard from the public during the last election, the 2021 citizen perspectives survey, as well as input from administration, and informed by our many master plans. Strategic planning influences the annual budget – and ultimately what we're focusing on in 2023 (more on that coming up soon).

Now that I've reviewed some of the highlights from 2022, I'll now touch on some of the things that might be fueling conversations over the coming year.

First, I'll start by reviewing some highlights from the 2023 Budget that was approved in December.

Every year, Council determines the amount of money needed to fund operation of the Town of Canmore. As caretakers of the community, through the budget Council funds everything from essential services and keeping the community clean and safe to services that provide recreation opportunities, business supports, special events to attend, social supports, neighbourhood connections, and affordability support services, along with all of the physical infrastructure and human resources required to deliver these benefits. In doing so we can't escape the rising cost of inflation, but we can work hard to ensure our citizens receive great value. According to the most recent Citizen Perspectives Survey in 2021, 84% of residents indicate that they get good value for their tax dollars, and we are working hard to keep it that way.

Nobody, including Council, likes taxes going up. We understand the past few years have been difficult on everyone and the prospect of a double-digit tax increase can cause additional stress. However, just like the hit to your family or business budget this past year, the Town of Canmore is subject to the same significant inflationary forces and interest rate increases that have raised the costs of living and doing business.

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Council approved a \$68M operating budget and \$37M capital budget for 2023. The result is a 12.5% municipal property tax increase for 2023. These numbers represent essentially a status quo level of service and programs being provided to the community, all of which were asked for by residents over the years. The budget also advances priorities such as transit service enhancements, increasing affordable services to retain and attract families, emergency notifications and response plans, reducing our impact on climate change, and productive public engagement.

To put this in context, a residential unit at the 2022 median assessed value of \$800,000 should expect a municipal property tax increase of approximately \$18.84 per month. Our monitoring of 19 similar communities in the region shows that Canmore's taxes per dwelling unit continue to be around average.

While administration found savings in the budget, the challenge we face is that the vast majority of the increases to the budget are out of our control. There are increases to insurance, bank fees, professional fees, transit costs, contracted services, supplies and energy costs, costs for the library, museum, and artsPlace. A big one is the RCMP contract (Canmore will now cover 90% of this cost instead of 70% due to our population exceeding 15,000 people). As well, there are cost of living adjustments for employees due to inflation and market rate adjustments, and higher interest rates on new debt especially related to the new fire hall.

Of course, it is important to remember that almost half of the total tax collected is for the Alberta Education requisition, that the Town is obliged to collect for the province. We have no influence over the monies collected that go directly to Edmonton, and which effectively doubles most tax bills in Canmore.

Canmore remains an exceptional community in which to live and work - with a full spectrum of services provided to residents and visitors alike. However, we are growing, and we need to enhance our ability to serve our community effectively today, while at the same time prepare for the future and long-term sustainable growth. To this end, a service level review will be undertaken to identify the highest priority areas and the resources required to ensure our core programs and services are efficient and sustainable. The full budget can be viewed on our website at [canmore.ca/budgets](https://canmore.ca/budgets)

Now let's get into some of the projects of note in the 2023 budget.

Overall, there are more than 100 capital projects funded in 2023 and 2024. I'll give a quick overview of about a dozen of the ones I think you'll find interesting.

One of the biggest projects is replacing the 40-year-old Pumphouse 2 with a new Water Treatment Plant and decommissioning the current facility. The new water treatment plant will double the current capacity to support water demand to full community buildout.

Traffic is an ongoing issue and needs a multi-pronged approach to managing it. For example, this year, we will have the ability to pre-empt the signal lights for fire trucks exiting the new firehall location to allow for clearing of traffic at nearby Benchlands Trail signalized intersections.

As well, traffic calming initiatives will also happen throughout neighbourhoods, and stay tuned for more information on plans to implement the 30 km/h speed limit. The changes are primarily in residential areas and a presentation of planned changes will be made to Council before anything is implemented.

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Railway Avenue is a key transportation corridor. It is due for major underground utility work to increase the size of the wastewater main, and at the same time we will be making changes to the road design to match the recently completed southern part of the road where it intersects with Bow Valley Trail and becomes Benchlands trail. Currently, we're looking for public input on this next section of the project which encompasses street improvements to the portion of Railway Avenue between that intersection and just north of the 10th Street intersection. The scope includes new sidewalks, bicycle facilities, and reconstruction of the intersection at Main Street.

While construction won't begin until 2024, this project will provide a greater range of transportation options and opportunities for residents and visitors, facilitate movement of people into the Town Centre, and encourage through-traffic and transportation of goods around the Town Centre.

In 2023 we will be improving the west side of Bow Valley Trail from Williams Street to Hospital Place (highlighted in red as phase 2A on the image). The scope of work for 2023 includes replacement of underground utilities, drainage improvements, and construction of separated cycle and pedestrian pathways.

In 2024 we will be doing something similar on 2nd Ave from where Phase 2A ended and continuing to 17th Street (highlighted in yellow as phase 2B on the image). We'll be replacing underground utilities, constructing a separated cycle pathway adjacent to Bow Valley Trail from the Spice Hut crossing to 17<sup>th</sup> Street, raising intersections at 2<sup>nd</sup> avenue and 13th and 15th Streets and improving drainage adjacent to Bow Valley Trail.

Improving stormwater infrastructure from Williams Street to Hospital Place will help to improve an area which has historically experienced ponding of water or flooding.

We have a beloved and well-used trail system in Canmore, and the first phase of the Bow River West Pathway project will upgrade the current gravel pathway to match the hard surfaces between the Bow River Bridge and the existing asphalt pathway in Three Sisters.

This project will focus on improvements that will increase safety for all users on a year-round basis, allowing for the path to the Town Centre to be maintained throughout the winter.

The upgrades will improve slopes and add separate walking and cycling lanes in some areas. It includes the replacement of two existing wood pedestrian bridges at Prospect Heights with steel structures. Work has started this year and while several trees have been removed in the area for geotechnical work, of course, trees will be replaced with new ones as part of the landscaping part of the project. Work will continue this spring and summer to make the new section ready for winter maintenance later this year.

As well, we will be creating trail signs and maps to improve safety and wayfinding and communicate and educate the public on trail etiquette throughout town.

With the continued growth pressure and the limited land supply within the Town of Canmore, large scale development plans need to be strategic and deliberate. Land within the Palliser area provides opportunities for future development that could provide affordable housing as well as commercial and light industrial lands. An Area Structure Plan - or ASP - for the Palliser area will provide the direction needed to inform potential land use changes and the overall approach towards managing these

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environmentally important lands. This project would establish a revised vision for the lands within the Palliser Area that would replace the one that was developed in 2000 and reflects current needs.

Growth of the overall community and increases in visitation have reinforced Canmore's Town Centre as a vibrant destination and the heart of the community. A Downtown Area Redevelopment Plan will establish a revised vision and provide the direction necessary to inform land use changes, municipal investments, upgrades to the area, and opportunities for further enhancements by the local business community. This would include an investigation of seasonal or permanent pedestrianization of a portion of Main Street; identifying the impacts, as well as opportunities this would have on operations, the local business community, and the surrounding residential neighbourhoods.

In the meantime, Council has approved another temporary implementation of a pedestrian-only Main Street for this summer which will see enhancements to the space - until the Downtown Area Redevelopment Plan is completed.

We have a number of small but hopefully impactful initiatives that will support our community. For example, knowing how difficult it can be for local employers to recruit staff, this year, we plan to develop a labour market recruitment and retention strategy, identify best practices, and look for strategic ways to address labour market constraints within our community.

Watch for plans for a new downtown washroom facility that is larger and will better serve the public in the downtown core. This will tie into the universal washroom study.

As well, stay tuned for a new framework which will help council allocate paid parking revenues. So far, we're creating an annual Town Centre grant program for \$50K, and we are using some of the revenue to fund fare-free transit.

We will continue to focus on affordability and housing-related needs including increasing access to our Affordable Services Program, and subscribing to an online tool called Happipad to create more affordable housing by matching compatible people who have spare bedrooms with renters who have undergone background checks.

Stay tuned for another community art project to provide work for artists, encourage social cohesion, and foster neighbourhood and community connections.

Another priority is to address unacceptable risks to existing development and ensure safe future development through our Steep Creek Hazard Mitigation Program. Projects this year will significantly reduce community safety risk.

The first one is the design of the long-term debris-flood hazard mitigation of Three Sisters Creek. The preliminary design includes a long offset berm on the east side of the upper channel, and debris management at the golf course pond and at the Three Sisters Parkway. This will complement the project completed in 2018. It will also be compatible with potential future mitigation upgrades required for development of Three Sisters Village.

Next is the long-term debris-flood hazard mitigation of Stone Creek. The project will include detailed design, risk reduction re-assessment, and environmental permitting.

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We also plan to continue work on the Cougar Creek Debris Flood Mitigation Structure in 2023.

Thanks to a private donation, we can now plan to proceed with a jumping platform at the west side of Quarry Lake. This important project will make it safer for swimmers to access the lake and reduce the risk of hitting the shoreline or the lake bottom. As well, the environment will benefit. Currently swimmers scramble up the bank, eroding the shoreline, which is now getting closer each year to the trail.

Next is to identify why we've been smelling the wastewater treatment plant a lot more recently. In 2023, we'll be investigating methods to contain and control odours at the wastewater treatment plant and plan for the construction of the most appropriate solution in 2024.

We continue striving to be a recognized leader in managing the human impact on our environment as well as co-existing with wildlife, so 2023 will be a busy year from a sustainability perspective. Here are just a couple of the items we will be working on:

We'll deliver new and existing incentive programs, including the Clean Energy Improvement Program, the existing Solar Incentive Program, and the Fruit Tree rebate - which is being revised to cover more of the cost of tree removal to encourage greater participation.

We'll create a guiding document, called the Climate Emergency Action Plan, which will provide a clear set of actions for us over the next several years.

We will be completing a waste characterization study, specifically looking at our recycling and food waste programs. The purpose of the study is to find out how these initiatives have changed what is being thrown into the garbage by residents.

Lastly, changes are also coming to the Boulder Crescent Recycling Depot, to improve traffic flow and allow operations to service the site without driving into the public area.

Now, in keeping with a tradition that Mayor Borrowman started, I'm ending this presentation by shamelessly sharing adorable photos of my granddaughter!

Thank you everyone for your attention today!