Issue Paper Summary

Issue Paper	Op 02 - Strategic Plan Spending Options
Department	GENERAL EXPENSE
Division	GENERAL EXPENSE
Preparer	Ryan Hagey, Director of Financial Planning & Asset Management

Background

The City's strategic plan is the community's shared vision for the future of Kitchener. After significant public consultation, in August 2023, Council approved the 2023-2026 strategic goals, goal statements, and actions that we will be taken in the first two years of this strategic plan.

Rationale/ Analysis

Significant funding has already been allocated to strategic plan items, but as part of the 2024 draft budget additional options have been developed under each of the strategic goals included the 2023-2026 Strategic Plan. One-time funding of $1M is available to be allocated to any of these priorities and further advance work towards achieving the goals of the City's 2023-2026 Strategic Plan. Council will have an opportunity to discuss the options prior to the Mayor proposing the budget in early December. Options which are not advanced as part of the 2024 budget will have an opportunity to be approved in a future budget year.

BUILDING A CONNECTED CITY TOGETHER
1) Housing for All Strategy ($200,000)
This additional money would enable City staff to continue with the implementation of various Housing for All initiatives to further supplement those identified as part of the City's Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF) application. The City is already contributing the full $1.2M balance from the City's Housing Reserves which is addition to the $42M being provided by the Federal Government under HAF.

2) Active Transportation ($300,000)
Implement targeted, strategic infrastructure changes to make improvements in the safety and connectivity of the active transportation network. This work will be data driven and community-guided through priorities identified in the Cycling and Trails Master Plan and Vision Zero. These "spot fixes" will include trail accesses (curb cuts), pavement marking & sign upgrades, bike parking, and improved pedestrian/trail crossings.

CULTIVATING A GREEN CITY TOGETHER
3) 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 greenhouse gas (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.

4) 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 request would enable to the replacement of two 2 additional playgrounds with community engagement and design in 2024 and installation in 2025.

CREATING AN ECONOMICALLY-THRIVING CITY TOGETHER
5) Accelerated Commercial Business Approvals ($100,000)
City staff are undertaking a review of all services and approvals required to open a commercial business. This review is following a similar process to the development services review, which is aimed at simplifying and streamlining commercial approvals. The review is expected to conclude in early 2024 and will require implementation funding. Early findings indicate that there are quick wins that can be implemented, which will require new funding. As an example, several stakeholders have requested the creation of a visual step by step guide to help navigate the program.

6) Arts & Culture Masterplan ($100,000)
City staff will be developing a new Arts & Culture Master Plan in consultation with community stakeholders. The Arts & Culture Master Plan will be a comprehensive plan to support a variety of exciting, engaging and meaningful experiences for residents and visitors to enjoy as well as the resources needed for artists, creators, and organizations to deliver these experiences. There is currently no implementation funding allocated to this plan.

FOSTERING A CARING CITY TOGETHER
7) Municipal Newcomers Strategy ($200,000)
This funding will be used to develop a Municipal Newcomer Strategy that will define 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.

8) 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 programing (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 programing for residents during the day.

Issue Paper Summary

STEWARDING A BETTER CITY TOGETHER

9) Digital Kitchener Strategy ($100,000)

Review and refresh the City's Digital Kitchener strategy to continue to improve the lives of people through better use of data and connectivity. This will include citizen engagement to understand how Kitchener can be more inclusive in its digital services; how to better use data to enhance citizen services and engagement, and how emerging technologies like artificial intelligence (AI) can be leveraged to predict and respond to the needs of citizens.

10) Data Strategy ($200,000)

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.

Financial Implications

Funding of $1M is available from the Capital Pool to be allocated to Strategic Plan priorities.

Recommendation

For discussion.