



Mayor Greg Wheeler

October 18, 2023

To the Citizens and the Honorable Council of the City of Bremerton:

I am pleased to present to you the 2024 Proposed Annual Budget for our city. This budget reflects the priorities of our City Council, maintains strong financial management, continues responsible financial stewardship and focuses on the City's resilience and sustainability for today and the future. It further preserves project momentum and maintains ongoing investment for residents in affordable housing assistance, public safety, parks, streets and sidewalks, business support, among other programs.

This year's budget focuses on the following key objectives:

- **Safeguard and Sustain Progress:** Over the past six years, our city has made major strides to maintain, strengthen and improve City services and infrastructure. We have bolstered staffing for our police force, expanded our fire department with more firefighters and paramedics to meet growing service needs, and invested in streets and infrastructure improvements after meeting the goal to bring the City's streets and sidewalks program back in-house.

We also remain focused on reinforcing a positive business environment, including the redevelopment of the Wheaton Way corridor and Charleston, Manette, and downtown business districts, among others.

In addition, this budget includes \$2.2 million in dedicated funding to establish a safe, hygienic and supportive shelter to help the unhoused and vulnerable populations in the City. We are also continuing investments in a mobile response unit for opioid and mental health incidents, the behavioral health program for crisis intervention, the Stand by Me program, and funding for health and hygiene clean-up efforts and removal of debris in areas with illegal dumping.

These efforts, combined with our continued investments in other essential services, will help to safeguard and sustain progress in our City.

- **Maintain Fiscal Responsibility and Resilience:** The 2024 budget continues to place a high premium on fiscal responsibility, especially due to economic uncertainty and the possibility of an economic recession. Thanks to thorough financial planning and diversified revenue sources, our city's financial health remains strong. We have taken proactive measures to ensure this budget remains resilient while prioritizing essential citizen services, protecting the progress we have made, and keeping projects moving forward. We have also incorporated contingencies and risk assessments to navigate uncertainty and possible economic headwinds in 2024.

Our strategic priorities for this budget will continue to support and strengthen our community.

2023 Accomplishments

During the year, we administered the 2023 budget to meet the City's goals and priorities and to maintain the delivery of programs and services to residents. In 2023, the City:

- Maintain public safety needs at current levels, including hiring 9 and promoting 5 police officers and hiring 6 fire department personnel
- Continued support for creation of new affordable housing units in partnership with local agencies
- Continued Bremerton rental assistance program and weatherization and minor home repair programs
- Identified funding and selected a site for a shelter for vulnerable and unhoused community
- Worked in partnership with Salvation Army to open its winter shelter early for those at risk in our community
- Maintained streets and sidewalks program, including updates, repair and infrastructure improvements
- Continued updates and investments in parks, including Kitsap Lake Park, Lions Park courts, Kiwanis Park, Pendergast Regional Park Field, and Haddon Park
- Continued work on the City's workforce diversity, equity and inclusion efforts
- Continued support for the Marvin Williams Center STEM program
- Completed design for Quincy Square
- Planned work on Phase Two of Gold Mountain Cascade Course Redesign, including preliminary permitting and management of project
- Continued with Kitsap Lake vegetation management and toxic algae control efforts
- Started work on the update to City's Comprehensive Plan, including its housing policies to help guide future housing growth and the creation of affordable housing
- Continued roll out of asset management program to reduce costs and maximize efficiencies for City assets
- Continued expansion of fiber and broadband across the City as part of continued efforts to improve internet speed, capacity, service options, and access for residents
- Continued art initiatives, including Poet Laureate program and the City's application for state Creative Arts District designation

- Continued efforts to restore Kitsap Transit Sunday service (restored in fall 2023)
- Initiated efforts to upgrade and transition Port of Bremerton's sewer infrastructure to City of Bremerton to support economic development and expansion
- Led development of Energy Summit conference to discuss future energy needs for our community
- Continued finalizing traffic and parking study in partnership with U.S. Navy
- Continued support for funding of Kitsap Transit temporary fast ferry sailings until full restoration of Washington State Ferries schedule on Bremerton-Seattle ferry route
- Co-led efforts in collaboration with Kitsap Public Health to declare urgent need for more healthcare capacity and access in our region
- Worked with Kitsap Public Health to finalize Kitsap County healthcare assessment study (with development of action plan anticipated for 2024)
- Continued working in partnership with St. Michael/Virginia Mason on freestanding emergency department in Bremerton and support for expansion of healthcare capacity in Silverdale
- Worked on completing heating, cooling and ventilation improvements to maintain MLK Jr. Library
- Continued to work with Washington State Dept. of Transportation on Warren Avenue Bridge pedestrian improvements design
- Completed safety lighting upgrades in downtown core
- Completed City wayfinding evaluation and design
- Began first local historic preservation efforts in the City
- Identified and began planning for a 2-year improvement project on Dr. ML King Way between Warren and Park Avenues
- Continued working with partners to secure funding for fix to Gorst traffic and infrastructure issues
- Pursued and secured legislative funding for additional \$1.75 million for Quincy Square on 4th Street to free up City funding previously directed to the project; and to maintain and protect historic Admiral Theatre building owned by the City and City-owned Glenn Jarstad swimming pool facility

As stewards of the city's finances, my administration is committed to making informed decisions that help support the well-being of our residents. Collaborative and forward-thinking budgeting is vital to maintaining the resilience and sustainability of our City, especially as we face economic uncertainty. The proposed 2024 budget helps ensure that our progress stays on course and continues to move our City forward. In the weeks ahead, I look forward to discussing the budget with the City Council and the citizens of Bremerton.

Sincerely,



Greg Wheeler
Mayor