

To: Mayor and Council
From: Paul Gipps, CAO

Meeting Date: July 15, 2025
Meeting Type: Regular Council Meeting

Prepared by: Lauren Sanbrooks, Grant Funding Specialist
Department: Finance & Administration

Title: Strategic Priorities Fund 2025
Description: Strategic Priorities Fund 2025 - Application

RECOMMENDATION

THAT an application to the Strategic Priorities Fund for up to \$1,288,793, for design, permitting and construction of a pedestrian bridge, a multi-use pathway connecting Lake Country's Town Centre across Middle Vernon Creek, and two pocket parks on Main Street, be supported;
AND THAT staff be authorized to apply for, receive and manage the grant funding on behalf of the District of Lake Country.
AND THAT if successful, the 2025-2029 Financial Plan be amended to include the receipt and expenditure of the grant funds.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Staff are seeking Council's support to submit a \$1,288,793 funding application to the Strategic Priorities Fund. The Strategic Priorities Fund is a provincial grant program delivered by UBCM under the federal-provincial Canada Community Building Fund (formerly the Gas Tax Fund). If successful, the funding will be used for design, permitting and construction of a pedestrian bridge, a multi-use pathway connecting Lake Country's Town Centre across Middle Vernon Creek, and two pocket parks on Main Street. This infrastructure will link commercial and residential areas on Main Street with key recreational amenities, institutional facilities and new housing developments along Bottom Wood Lake Road, enhancing community connectivity and active transportation options.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

The Strategic Priorities Fund (SPF) is a competitive, application-based funding stream delivered through the Canada Community-Building Fund (CCBF)—formerly known as the Gas Tax Fund. In British Columbia, the SPF is administered by the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM).

The program supports large-scale, regional, or innovative infrastructure and capacity-building projects that advance local priorities while contributing to broader goals such as productivity and economic growth, environmental sustainability, and strong, resilient communities. Funding is intended for projects that demonstrate clear community benefits, alignment with federal and provincial objectives, and readiness to proceed.

This intake will make up to \$125 million available for eligible projects. Applicants may receive up to 100% of net eligible costs, to a maximum of \$7 million per project. Eligibility is limited to local governments and other prescribed recipients outside the Metro Vancouver Regional District. Projects need to start no later than two years after grant approval and must be completed no later than five years after grant approval.

The Senior Leadership Team reviewed all potential projects eligible under the Strategic Priorities Fund. Priority was given to initiatives that have a completed design report, cost estimate, strong community benefits, and the ability to be implemented within the required timelines—in alignment with SPF program criteria. Given the program's funding cap and the population size of Lake Country, staff identified an appropriate funding request to maximize competitiveness and submit the strongest possible application.

Staff recommend applying for the grant to fund the design, permitting, and construction of a pedestrian bridge, a multi-use pathway connecting Lake Country's Town Centre across Middle Vernon Creek, and two pocket parks on Main Street. The grant request is for \$1,288,793, representing 73.3% of the total project cost. This infrastructure will link commercial and residential areas on Main Street with key recreational amenities, institutional facilities and new housing developments along Bottom Wood Lake Road, enhancing community connectivity and active transportation options. While many District projects and capital purchases would be eligible, staff ultimately recommend applying for this project based on the following:

- This project has strong alignment to the goals and objectives of the Strategic Priorities Fund which increases the likelihood of a successful grant application. The project guiding principles which provide this alignment are as follows:
 - Preserve and protect natural features
 - Encourage activities for all ages and abilities to support an active community
 - Celebrate unique culture, heritage, and arts
 - Support a safe network of paths, trails and connections for all abilities
 - Preserve public spaces
- The community was strongly in support of creating a looped trail network through the Town Centre by creating more creek crossing and connections between Creekside, Swalwell and McCarthy Park to Main Street. This is supported by the Mobility Master Plan, OCP and Parks and Recreation Master Plan.
- Successful receipt of this grant would have a positive impact on the District's overall reserves if received which would free up capital for other District priority projects.

Based on the SPF grant guide, scoring is based on several key factors. The table below outlines how this project aligns with each one:

Scoring Criteria	Project Alignment
Support for CCBF National Objectives (<i>productivity & economic growth, clean environment, strong cities & communities</i>)	Connects the Arena, MAC, and new residential developments with Main Street businesses and future mixed-use buildings—supporting economic growth and strong communities. The project also preserves and protects natural features and encourages non-vehicle modes of travel by providing direct pedestrian connectivity.
Project timing & outcomes	Project design and permitting could start in 2027, construction anticipated to start in 2028.
Community capacity to deliver, evaluate, operate & maintain	Concept design complete and aligned with the Parks & Recreation Master Plan. Operations team ready to maintain once built.
Strategic infrastructure investment or alignment with capital/sustainability plans	Strategically connects residential areas with the Main Street business core. Included in long-term capital planning.
Consideration of asset management practices	Aligned with asset management plans. A successful grant reduces reserve funding pressure, supporting other priority assets.
Sustainability outcomes	Encourages walking and cycling between key community destinations. Preserves natural features and supports environmental protection.
Climate resilience	Promotes low-carbon transportation options and safeguards natural features. Pedestrian bridge and multi-use pathway are designed to stay outside of Middle Vernon Creek flood plain.
Regional benefit	Benefits both sides of the creek—residents and businesses. Project connects from Okanagan Rail Trail to Main Street and supports regional users from OKIB and the City of Kelowna.
Scale relative to community size	Part of a larger District-wide project that improves connectivity across the community.

Innovation	Project uses industry best practices and improves safety and access with active transportation options.
Enables, supports or preserves housing	The project improves active transportation connections, making it more practical for residents to live in nearby housing without relying on a personal vehicle. This supports affordability, particularly for new developments east of the creek, by providing direct access to essential services. The project strengthens the viability of mixed-use developments along Main Street by improving access to community amenities (arena, food bank, and MAC).

Applicable legislation, bylaws and policies

Official Community Plan (2018-2023) Bylaw-1065

Policy 15.3.2b. Undertake a Trails Master Plan which builds upon the work undertaken in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, but further develops a connected trail network throughout the District, complete with trail standards, cost estimates and timing.

Policy 8.5.2b. Expand the pedestrian network by enhancing and building connecting sidewalks. The Town Centre, schools, and transit routes, community parks, and recreation facilities should be prioritized, i.e. neighbourhoods should connect to schools, parks and so on.

Strategic Priorities 2024

Infrastructure – *Well maintained infrastructure and facilities that meet community needs and allow growth and development for prosperity.*

Governance – *Fiscally sustainable government focused on strategic decision-making, transparency and inclusiveness.*

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

☐ None ☐ Budget Previously Approved ☒ Other (see below)

The grant request is for \$1,288,793, representing 73.3% of the total project cost (\$1,758,244). If the District is successful in securing this grant, the project could be delivered with less reliance on reserves—freeing up funding for other capital priorities such as mobility improvements, fire vehicles, and equipment.

COMMUNICATION

This report was referred to internal departments.

ALTERNATE RECOMMENDATION(S)

1. THAT the District not make an application to the Strategic Priorities Fund.

Respectfully Submitted.

Lauren Sanbrooks, Grant Funding Specialist

Report Approval Details

Document Title:	Strategic Priorities Fund.docx
Attachments:	
Final Approval Date:	Jul 8, 2025

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

Matt Vader, Director Parks, Recreation and Culture - Jul 4, 2025 - 1:46 PM

Trevor James, CFO, Director of Finance & Administration - Jul 4, 2025 - 2:23 PM

Reyna Seabrook, Director of Corporate Services - Jul 8, 2025 - 2:59 PM

Paul Gipps, Chief Administrative Officer - Jul 8, 2025 - 3:06 PM

Makayla Ablitt, Legislative & FOI Coordinator - Jul 8, 2025 - 4:10 PM