

Councillor Blog

Welcome back, White City residents and neighbours from the surrounding area, to the April 2025 edition of the White City Councillor Blog! This month, we will be tackling municipal debt, growth and development incentives.

As a growing community, White City has made significant investments in infrastructure to support both our current residents and future development. These investments—especially in critical projects like the Wastewater Treatment Plant Expansion—have led to a municipal debt of \$18.5 million. In 2025, the Town will pay \$1.7 million in debt servicing which includes \$902 thousand in principal and \$797 thousand in interest. While these costs are mainly serviced through development levies, connection fees and the Wastewater Infrastructure Fee, it still represents a significant burden to residents and represents funds that could otherwise be invested in improving roads, recreation and other services.

Why Is Our Debt So High?

75% of the Town's debt is tied to the Wastewater Expansion Project, which was necessary to increase capacity for both existing and future residents. The existing wastewater system lacked sufficient capacity to fully support the current catchment area, making expansion necessary to maintain reliable service. Without this expansion, the Town could have faced significant service constraints, including the potential for system overloads, backups, and emergency discharge measures.

Additionally, limited capacity would have restricted property improvements for existing homeowners, such as adding secondary suites, installing additional bathrooms, or expanding their homes, as these changes increase wastewater usage. Without additional capacity, even minor increases in demand could have strained the system, leading to service disruptions and costly short-term fixes.

By investing in wastewater expansion, White City has ensured that both current and future residents have access to a stable, efficient wastewater system that supports growth while protecting public health and environmental standards.

The wastewater expansion was also required to lift the development freeze that was in place due to the system's limited capacity. While this investment enables new homes to be built, it also ensures that White City can add, or expand, current amenities within the community including much needed schools and commercial businesses to support our current and future residents.

How Growth Helps Reduce Debt and the Wastewater Infrastructure Fee

The best way to ease this financial burden on all residents is through new development. When new homes and businesses are built, they pay connection fees and development levies, which go directly toward repaying the debt, or internal borrowing, associated with infrastructure projects like the wastewater system. The more homes we build, the more new revenue is generated to help cover these costs, meaning fewer dollars need to come from existing taxpayers. With a wider tax base, the per-property impact of the debt and wastewater infrastructure fee will decrease over time. Simply put, more growth means lower costs for each resident.

Unlocking Development: The Town Centre and Beyond

Currently, White City has 77 available lots in the Town Centre. By quickly filling these lots, we can move into Phase 1B, unlocking 60 more lots for development. Every new home built means more revenue from connection fees and levies, which directly reduces our debt load and helps lower financial strain on residents.

While Royal Park is a key area of growth for White City, it's important to recognize that development is happening across the community. As we expand, we remain committed to preserving White City's small-town charm and unique character, ensuring that growth is thoughtfully planned to enhance—not change—the qualities that make our town special. By balancing progress in the Town Centre with responsible development in other areas, we can support long-term sustainability while maintaining the welcoming, connected community that residents value.

Why Tax Incentives for New Homes Benefit Everyone

Some residents have expressed concerns about offering tax incentives to encourage new home construction. It's important to understand that these incentives are a short-term investment with long-term financial benefits.

While tax incentives temporarily reduce property tax collection from newly built homes, they accelerate all types of growth, meaning:

- More connection fees and levies are collected sooner to help pay off existing debt.
- A larger tax base is created, meaning future municipal expenses (such as road maintenance, public services, and recreation facilities) can be shared across more households, reducing the burden on each individual taxpayer.
- New commercial and retail development follows residential growth, further strengthening the Town's financial position.
- Increased capacity to introduce new facilities such as schools and community centres.

Many municipalities have successfully used tax incentives to accelerate development, attract investment, and ease financial pressures on existing residents. Without incentives, development can slow down, meaning debt payments continue to be shouldered primarily by current taxpayers for longer than necessary.

Beyond just reducing debt, community growth provides several other long-term benefits:

Lower Property Tax Pressure:

More homes and businesses increase overall tax revenue, allowing the Town to keep tax rates competitive while maintaining or enhancing services. Instead of relying on existing taxpayers to fund rising costs, a larger tax base helps distribute expenses more evenly.

Better Amenities and Services:

With a growing population, there is greater demand and justification for enhanced community amenities, such as parks, recreational facilities, improved roads, and expanded public services. Growth allows White City to attract investment in these areas, improving the quality of life for all residents.

Attracting Businesses:

Residential growth often leads to increased commercial and retail investment, as businesses are drawn to communities with a strong and growing customer base. This means more local shops, restaurants, and service providers, reducing the need for residents to travel elsewhere for their daily needs.

Job Creation and Economic Opportunities:

New development not only brings more residents but also creates construction jobs, service industry employment, and business opportunities. A strong local economy benefits everyone, ensuring White City remains a desirable and sustainable place to live.

Stronger Property Values:

Communities that are growing and developing tend to see higher property values over time. A well-planned expansion strategy signals a thriving economy, making White City an attractive place to live and invest.

By encouraging responsible growth, we can ensure that White City continues to thrive while reducing financial strain on individual taxpayers. Investing in strategic development today will help us build a more financially stable, well-served, and vibrant community for the future.

A Sustainable Approach to Financial Health

White City's 2025 Annual Budget reflects our commitment to financial responsibility while ensuring the Town remains a great place to live, work, and invest. Strategic growth, supported by policies that encourage development, will help us reduce debt, strengthen our infrastructure, and keep property taxes competitive.

Your Council remains committed to balancing growth with fiscal prudence, and we appreciate your continued support as we build a sustainable future for White City.

- Mayor Mitch Simpson