



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR NANAIMO

Prepared for:
The City of Nanaimo's
Social Planning Advisory Committee

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Executive Summary

Nanaimo's Social Development Strategy defines a social vision for Nanaimo, articulates goals to achieve that vision and identifies strategies to achieve those goals. It was developed in 2004 by the Social Development Strategy Steering Committee. The Committee and the Strategy arose in response to a number of significant social issues including high rates of income assistance, increasing homelessness, poverty and substance misuse. The 2013 Social Development Strategy acknowledges the many positive initiatives occurring in Nanaimo and sets forth specific strategies to address the identified social issues in the following six major areas of focus:

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Together, these strategies are designed to achieve the vision of **a community which nurtures a caring, healthy, inclusive and safe environment while empowering its citizens to realize their aspirations and hopes.**

In 2010 Nanaimo City Council adopted the Social Development Strategy (and the accompanying Social Status Report) as a companion document to Nanaimo's Official Community Plan. As part of the incorporation of the Strategy and the Report into the OCP the Social Planning Advisory Committee (SPAC), a Council committee, has taken ownership of the Strategy and Status Report, and has committed to regular updates of both documents.

The 2013 Social Development Strategy is an update of the original 2004 Strategy, and is reflective of changes that have occurred in the intervening 9 years. To prepare for the revision of this strategy a series of Health and Social forums were convened (June 4,5 & 6, 2013). Participants included many of the agencies, organizations and community groups who deliver health or social services in the Nanaimo region. Participants were asked to identify the key social and /or health issues facing the community in 2013. The 2013 Strategy thus builds on the work done in 2004, informed by the input gathered in 2013. As an outcome of these forums, a Nanaimo Health and Social Network has been formed, comprised of all the social and health agencies in the community. SPAC will check in with this group on an annual basis to ascertain community priorities and determine emerging issues of a social or health nature.

Introduction

About the Strategy

The Social Development Strategy for Nanaimo (hereafter referred to as the Strategy) was commissioned in response to a number of significant social issues that impact the quality of life for all residents, including high rates of income assistance, increasing homelessness and poverty, persistently high unemployment levels and substance misuse issues. As a first phase of the work, a Social Status Report (May 2003) was prepared, which tracked 50 indicators and answered the question: “Where are we now from a social perspective?” For more information about this report, refer to page 11.

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Social problems are present and persistent in all cities. Nanaimo is no longer a small rural town, and, increasingly, it will experience social problems that attend to urban development.

(Social Development Strategy Steering Committee, The Case for Change: A Social Development Strategy for Nanaimo, 2001)

Introduction (continued)

The focus of the Social Development Strategy is to answer two related questions: “Where do we want to go?” and “How do we get there?”

The purpose of the strategy is to:

- focus social planning work by building consensus and setting priorities;
- identify opportunities for collaboration and partnership in addressing social issues;
- identify new community development initiatives in order to improve livability and quality of life;
- serve as a guide and resource for government, community groups and service providers in both program planning and service delivery.

Context for the Strategy

Based on the community consultation and a review of the background documentation, the following major trends, opportunities and issues are highlighted in order to provide the reader with a better understanding of the context in which the strategy was developed:

• Aging Population:

Nanaimo has an aging population, as evidenced by the fact that the median age was 36.5 years in 1996, 40.4 years in 2001 and 47.4 in 2010. Additionally, between 2011 and 2030 the population 75+ is expected to grow 83% to almost 16,400 (Island Health Local Health Area Profile). This aging of the population will create many new opportunities for business and investment. It will also significantly impact facilities, programs and services, especially in the areas of health, housing, recreation and transportation.



We need to start planning for our aging population.

Currently, we cannot meet the housing and long term care needs of our seniors. This raises the question:

What happens when this population more than doubles? We need to do more to reassure seniors that their future is secure.

(Seniors Focus Group Participant)

Context for the Strategy (continued)

- **Increasing Diversity:**

Nanaimo is becoming increasingly diverse. It is experiencing growing immigration, with most recent immigrants originating from Asia. It is also home to a large and rapidly growing aboriginal population. In fact, aboriginal people comprise 6.3% of the population and their numbers increased by 29.3% between 1996 and 2001. Additionally, Nanaimo's family composition is changing, with more lone parent families; the number of lone parent families increased by 13.6% between 1996 and 2001 while the number of two parent families increased by 2.8% during the same period.

- **Shifting Economic Base:**

Nanaimo is shifting from a resource-based economy that traditionally relied on natural resources, towards an information, knowledge and service-based economy. While this shift has created new opportunities for residents, not everyone has benefited equally. During this transition, Nanaimo experienced lower levels of personal income and higher rates of income assistance, poverty and unemployment than the Province

- **Centre for Learning:**

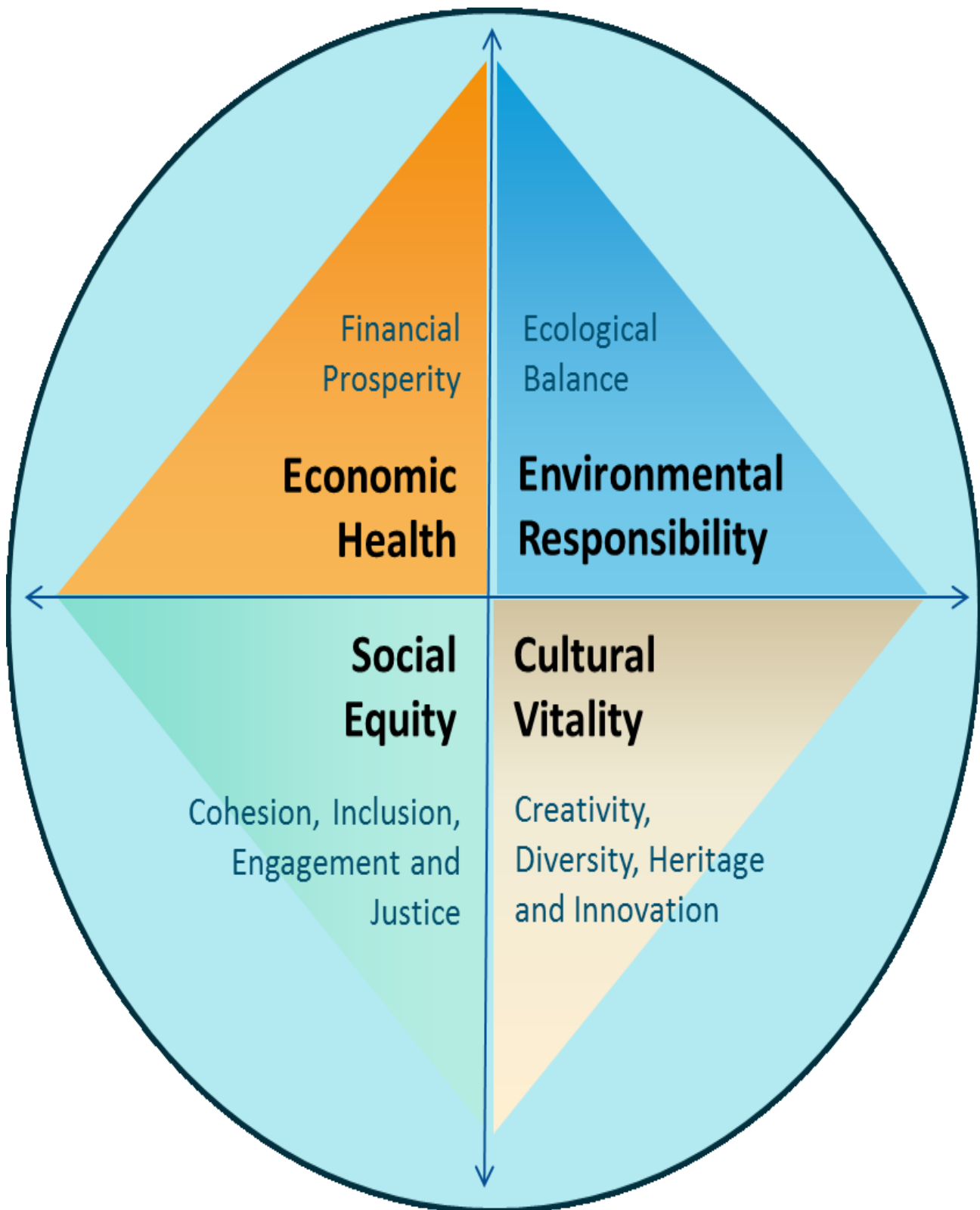
Nanaimo is becoming a major centre for learning with the former Malaspina College transitioning to full University status as Vancouver Island University. Additionally, Nanaimo has an active International Student Education Program which is attracting students from around the world.

Consultation participants emphasized the need to link social development with economic prosperity and environmental sustainability. Participants frequently referred to the Economic Development Strategy's "Circle of Prosperity." It was noted that this organizing framework attempts to link all three components (economic, environmental and social) under one unifying vision and sets forth a detailed strategy to generate wealth for businesses and residents. This wealth, in turn, is used to support community amenities and social services which contribute to livability and quality of life.

It was noted that a high quality of life is dependent on improvements to all three interconnected components. Reflecting this understanding is the City of Nanaimo's Strategic Plan 2012-2015, which identifies four pillars of sustainability, adding Cultural Vitality:

- Economic health
- Environmental Responsibility
- Cultural Vitality
- Social Equity

At the aboriginal focus group, participants spoke of the importance of spiritual health. It was noted that a host of government sanctioned policies, including residential schools, have severely "injured" aboriginal culture. One participant stated that "few youth today know our language or practice our traditions." As such, it was felt that healing needed to occur. To fill the spiritual void, one participant stated that "we must go back for the answers." Another participant stated that "we must build on our collective strengths and create hope and resiliency, especially among our youth."



Relationship to Other Initiatives

Consultation participants emphasized the need for the strategy to build upon and relate to other planning processes, both past and present, in Nanaimo. It was noted that what all these processes have in common is a desire to improve livability and quality of life for all residents.



The following summary lists some of the other initiatives and plans that address quality of life issues in Nanaimo:

- City of Nanaimo Strategic Plan 2012 – 2015
- Nanaimo's Response to Homelessness Action Plan
- Nanaimo's Official Community Plan
- Nanaimo's Community Plan to end homelessness
- Clemente adult learners program
- City of Nanaimo Food Strategy
- Welcome BC
- Nanaimo's Cultural Plan
- Island Health Five Year Strategic Plan 2008-2013

Drivers of Social Change

It is widely felt that social change is most effective when individuals take personal action to help others. Two iconic drivers of social change in Canada during the early 20th century personify this ideal:

- Nellie McClung, a political activist whose efforts for the women's equal rights movement in Manitoba were instrumental in changing the laws to allow women to vote , and,
- Joe Fortes, who devoted his life to patrolling beaches and teaching children and immigrants how to swim to help prevent drownings near his home on English Bay in Vancouver.



Nellie McClung

Change will not come if we wait for some other person, or if we wait for some other time. We are the ones we've been waiting for, we are the change that we seek.

-Barack Obama



Joe Fortes

Vision Statement and Goals

Vision Statement

Nanaimo will be known as a community which nurtures a caring, healthy, inclusive and safe environment and which empowers and enables its citizens to realize their aspirations and hopes. It will also be known as a leader in addressing social issues through its commitment to capacity building and partnering.

Based on the consultation undertaken for the 2004 strategy, the vision statement above was developed. This statement takes into consideration the many calls by participants for the need to create a more caring society – one which is based on acceptance, compassion and shared responsibility. It also takes into consideration the many calls by participants for the need to empower and enable citizens to improve their quality of life and for the community to become more proactive in addressing its social issues.

We can achieve great things if inspired by a vision and given an opportunity to act and to make a difference in our communities.

(Community Symposium Presenter)



Proposed Goals

Based on community consultation six goals for the Strategy were developed. These goals correspond to the six major areas of focus: Learning, Working, Health, Housing, Safety, Belonging.

- To encourage and support the development of a wide range of educational and learning opportunities which meet the diverse needs of all members of the community.
- To facilitate the development of a strong, diversified and sustainable economy which provides employment and upgrading opportunities for all members of the community.
- To create a healthy community, which optimizes community and family support systems and individual capacities, by way of health promotion and a combination of early intervention, prevention, supportive and treatment services.
- To ensure an adequate supply of housing types, tenure arrangements and affordability levels, including emergency shelter, supportive and transitional housing, which addresses the diverse needs of all members of the community.
- To maximize the safety and security of all members of the community by preventing and reducing the opportunities for, as well as addressing the root causes of, accidents, criminal activity and violence.
- To develop an inclusive community which provides opportunities for active involvement; which welcomes the contributions of all members; which facilitates social and intergenerational interaction; and which recognizes and fosters respect for diversity.

Major Themes

Based on consultation with the community, the following major themes emerged:

- **Early Intervention and Prevention:**

Recognize the importance of early intervention and prevention. It was emphasized that economic and social benefits can be realized by directing more resources to the early years, where developmental and educational gains are greatest, and by emphasizing prevention and remediation.

- **Root Causes:**

Recognize the importance of addressing the root causes and not just treating the symptoms. It was emphasized that there is a need to focus on the underlying factors behind the social issues facing Nanaimo, including alienation, discrimination, homelessness, illiteracy, poverty, substance misuse and unemployment.

- **Inclusiveness:**

Recognize the value of inclusion. It was emphasized that there is a need to recognize and address the diverse needs of all members of the community, including those people who are often overlooked such as the disabled, the homeless, lone parents, people with mental health or substance misuse issues and street involved youth.

- **Collaboration and Partnership:**

Recognize the importance of collaboration and partnership. Given the complexity and interconnectedness of many of the social issues facing Nanaimo, it was emphasized that success will only be achieved by everyone working together.

- **Harm Reduction:**

Recognize that users of health and social services come as they are, not as we would wish them to be. That means that reducing the harm to the community and the individual associated with illicit substance use or other problematic behaviors is a legitimate public policy objective.

While the challenges we face are many, they are not insurmountable. We need to emphasize early intervention and prevention, while addressing the root causes, including alienation, discrimination, homelessness, illiteracy, poverty and unemployment.

(Community and Service Provider Forum Participant)



No progress was ever made by focusing on deficits and needs. We need to build upon our many strengths, capitalize on our opportunities and collectively identify and address the challenges which threaten our livability and quality of life. **(Discussion Paper Respondent)**

Social Status Report

The possible benchmarks as outlined in each of the major areas of focus are intended to monitor and evaluate progress toward the achievement of the proposed vision and goals. They were derived primarily from the Social Status Report, which was prepared in support of the strategy. In some cases, consultation participants suggested additional or alternate benchmarks.

The Social Status Report highlighted 50 benchmarks or indicators in 10 areas, with 6 of the 10 areas corresponding to the 6 major areas of focus in the strategy. Benchmarks or indicators report on the status of larger systems; for example, the number and percentage of all renter households who paid 30% or more of their gross household income on rent provides valuable information about the housing situation in a community in particular and about the social wellbeing and economic health of that community in general. When a number of benchmarks or indicators are tracked over time, they can provide information on the direction a system is going – i.e., getting better or worse or staying the same. They can also provide evidential information as to the success of planned interventions to improve social conditions.

Indicators are like dials and gauges on an aircraft's instrument panel. By designing them carefully, watching them closely and interpreting them wisely, we know the status of our flight and can make good decisions about where we are going. Without them, we are just flying by the seat of our pants.

(Sustainable Seattle, Indicators of Sustainable Community, 1993)

The ability to monitor social conditions and to provide evidential information as to the success of planned interventions is thus dependent on the selection and tracking of good benchmarks or indicators. This raises the question: “What constitutes good benchmarks or indicators?” According to The Toronto Community Indictor Project (1999), good benchmarks or indicators:

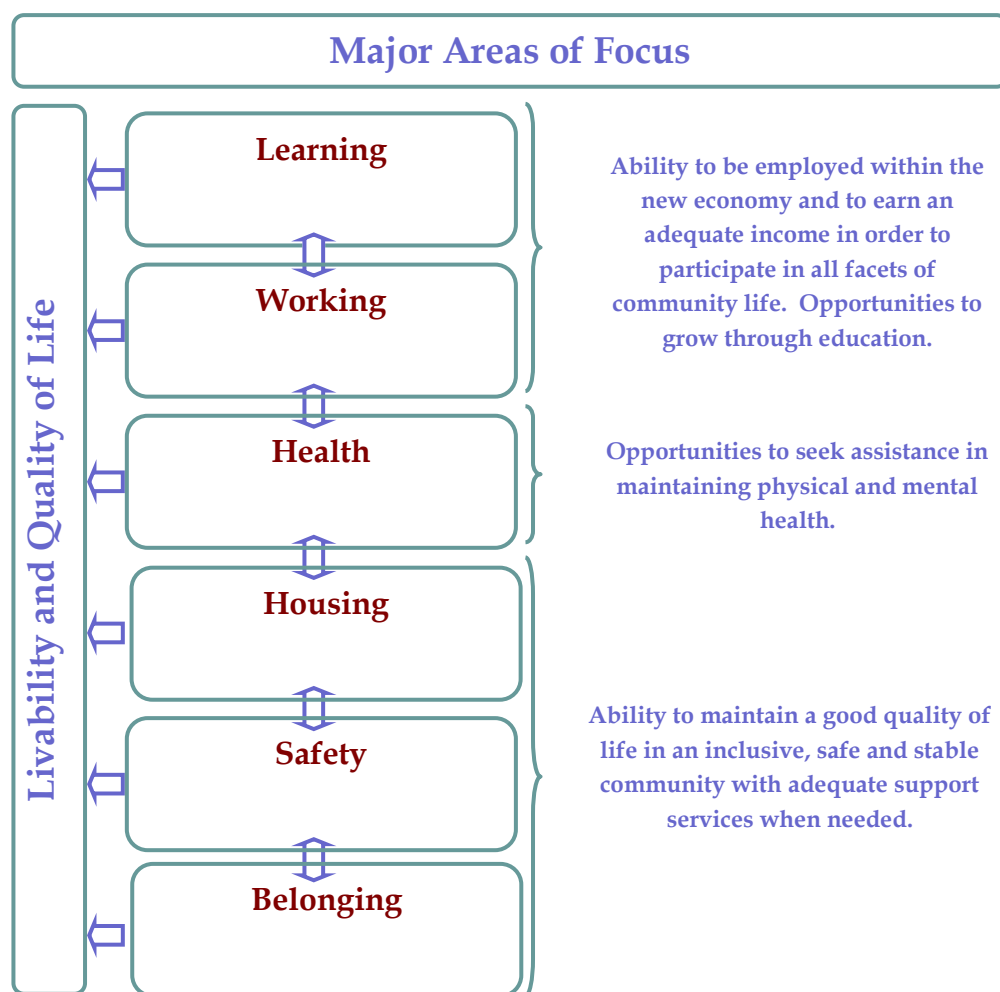
- are easily measurable;
- are easily understood by all;
- are readily available;
- answer questions about the community that residents agree are important;
- help identify challenges or issues that the community can actually do something about; and,
- provide information about the community-as-a-whole but may also point out opportunities or challenges specific to a particular geographic area, interest or sector.

The original Social Status Report was prepared in May 2003. Since that time the City of Nanaimo's Social Planning Advisory Committee (SPAC) has undertaken two updates to the Social Status Report (2007 & 2011), selecting a small number of indicators to update each time. In addition SPAC has adopted the Local Health Area Profile published yearly by Island Health, which provides measures of the social determinants of health for the Nanaimo region. SPAC uses this information to identify opportunities and challenges; to establish priorities; and to monitor and evaluate the success of planned interventions.

Six Major Areas of Focus

A number of possible areas of focus emerged from the consultation processes which have been grouped into six major domains. As such, some possible issue areas (e.g., childcare, literacy, public transit) are discussed under one or more of the six major areas of focus which organize the strategy.

It should be emphasized that the six major areas of focus deal with social aspects and considerations. For example, the area dealing with employment and income is primarily concerned with ensuring that all members of the community have the necessary education and skills and have an equal opportunity (based on those skills) to gain employment. It is not focused on generating employment and income per se. The latter area of focus falls under the mandate of the Economic Development Group and its Economic Development Strategy. As such, the strategy augments and complements existing initiatives and studies, while providing a social perspective.



Area #1: Learning

Introduction

Consultation participants referred to the importance of education and learning, especially given ongoing economic restructuring and technical innovation. It was noted that high school completion is now the minimum standard for entry into almost all areas of employment within the new economy and that post-secondary education and training has become increasingly important in ensuring steady employment. It was also noted that learning is not always just a path to employment. People exposed to new ideas and new ways of thinking can liberate themselves from self-imposed limitations and by doing so change the way the world responds to them.

Assets and Strengths

During the consultation, participants were asked to identify positive initiatives related to education and learning. Cited initiatives included but were not limited to:

- the introduction of several new provincial educational initiatives targeting the 0 to 6 population, including the Early Development Instrument and Success by Six;
- the inclusion of Clemente, the adult learning program oriented to non-traditional learners, as a permanent course offered at VIU;
- the implementation of the Aboriginal Education Program by School District #68, which is making education more relevant to aboriginal students, while improving graduation rates;
- the important role played by Vancouver Island University, which offers certificate, diploma and degree granting programs in a variety of areas, including academic, applied, career, professional and technical, as well as a wide range of community education programs;
- the establishment of an International Student Education Program, which is attracting students from around the world; and,
- the many literacy programs targeting the needs of children, youth and adult learners, including the literacy tutoring at the Nanaimo Correctional Centre.



Clemente

The Clemente course in the humanities provides tuition free university level instruction, for university credit, to economically and educationally disadvantaged individuals aged 17 and older. The course is based on the premise that the insights and skills offered by study of the traditional humanities disciplines can provide people with crucial tools for gaining control over their lives.

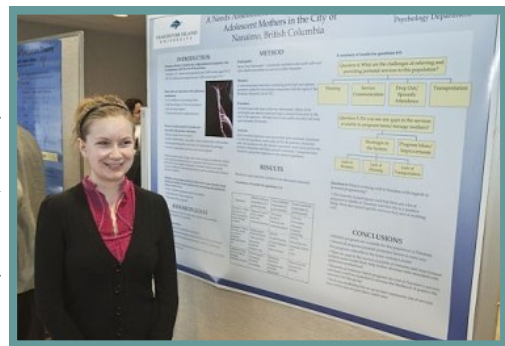


Area #1: Learning (continued)**Challenges**

As for challenges, according to BC Ministry of Education statistics, only 76% of first-time Grade 12 students graduate from high school in Nanaimo, compared to an average of 81% in BC. For these students it is possible that some will find themselves trapped in cycles of unstable work and dependency, a situation which often leads to low self-esteem and poverty.

Participants cited a number of possible contributing factors as to why some students do not graduate; difficult personal circumstances, cuts to special education programs and student support services, increasing reliance on performance-based testing, lack of child psychologists, larger class sizes, etc. Participants also cited a number of possible contributing factors outside the school system, including concerns about poor parenting, high rates of mobility, high rates of teen pregnancy, increasing numbers of youth being diagnosed with mental illnesses and increasing rates of substance misuse. It was felt that any strategy to address this issue needed to take a collaborative, integrated approach, involving education, criminal justice, health and social service agencies, as well as parents and students.

With regard to students who do graduate from high school, it was noted that many do not go on to post-secondary studies. In fact, only 19.2% of high school graduates from School District #68 in 2001 immediately went on to post-secondary studies at Vancouver Island University in 2001/02. For those not transitioning to post-secondary studies, many entered directly into the job market, while others temporarily postponed their post-secondary plans or attended a college or university outside of Nanaimo. It was also noted that increasing tuition fees, combined with the elimination of grants to first year students, may contribute to even fewer high school graduates transitioning to post-secondary studies. Given the importance of post-secondary education and training to employability within the new economy, it was felt that more needed to be done to improve access.



Consultation participants raised concerns about low levels of literacy, especially among adults, and access to Adult Basic Education and English-as-a-Second Language training. It was noted that people with low levels of education or literacy, or a poor command of the English language, are less likely to be employed and to have stable incomes. It was also noted that such people are often reluctant to seek assistance, given the stigma associated with being a high school drop-out or being illiterate. In fact, the Adult Education and Training Survey (1998) found that the lower a person's educational level in British Columbia, the less likely he or she is to enroll in an adult education program. For non-English speaking immigrants, especially those who try to learn English on their own or with the assistance of family and friends, many will experience difficulties accessing community services, achieving employment, enhancing education or skills and expanding support networks.

Area #1: Learning (continued)**Proposed Goal**

To encourage and support the development of a wide range of educational and learning opportunities which meet the diverse needs of all members of the community.

Suggested Strategies

The suggested strategies are supportive of the above goal and the larger social vision for Nanaimo. They are based on the input received during the community consultation process and from a review of previous research and studies. As such, they represent what participants felt were important at the time of consultation. Given the number of strategies it is recognized that an implementing body would need to establish priorities, identify resource requirements and work with its partners in assigning responsibility.

Life long learning is becoming increasingly important, given the changes in the workplace and the emphasis being placed on personal development.

(Seniors Focus Group Participant)

Elementary and Secondary Education:

- Establish more community schools and explore new financial partnerships to make them viable in the long term. Of note, such schools encourage and facilitate parental involvement in their child's learning and social development.
- Place greater emphasis on early diagnosis and treatment for students with emotional disorders or mental illnesses.
- Place greater emphasis on early diagnosis and intervention for students considered at-risk, both academically and behaviorally.
- Ensure adequate funding for special education programs and student support services, especially in light of increasing need.
- Ensure better continuity of programming for students who move from one school to another within School District #68.
- Review existing and consider new initiatives designed to address school bullying and harassment (in light of the fact that about a quarter of all students do not feel safe while at school).
- Work with the aboriginal community to continue to refine the Aboriginal Education Program and to increase graduation rates for aboriginal students.

Area #1: Learning (continued)

Suggested Strategies (continued):

Post Secondary Education:

- Enhance bridging opportunities between high schools and post-secondary institutions by way of joint programming, mentoring, orientation sessions, site visits, etc.
- Improve information services regarding post-secondary education, including career or program options, eligibility criteria, financing, etc.
- Work with the business community and charitable and philanthropic organizations, as well as the various levels of government, to develop strategies to reduce post-secondary fees and to increase the number of bursaries and grants which are available.

Adult Basic Education and Continuing Studies:

- Ensure access to Adult Basic Education, by making sure that any fees are affordable and that financing is available to those in need, as well as by addressing other potential barriers to access, including child care, scheduling, transportation, etc.
- Improve access to English-as-Second Language training for adults and work with ethnic communities and multicultural agencies to increase participation in such programs.
- Increase support for early and adult literacy programs and promote volunteer opportunities related to mentoring and tutoring.



Education is the key to developing a strong economy and a healthy and inclusive community. As such, we need to ensure that the educational system is adequately funded; that it is relevant; that it teaches compassion and understanding; and that it supports all learners to meet their educational and learning needs.

(Discussion Paper Respondent)

Possible Benchmarks:

Benchmarks, as applied here, will be used to monitor progress toward the identified goal. In themselves, they do not change the social conditions that they profile; that requires planned interventions. However, when a number of benchmarks are tracked over time, they can provide directional information regarding social conditions - i.e., getting better or worse or staying the same. This information can be used to identify needs and to develop new or reevaluate existing interventions.

Area #1: Learning (continued)

Possible benchmarks:

Post Secondary Enrolment FTEs	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	Growth 11/12-12/13	Average Growth 08/09-12/13
<u>Nanaimo</u>							
AVED FTEs	5,900	6,443	6,208	6,091	6,009	-1.4%	1.7%
ITA funded FTEs	1,282	1,252	1,159	1,018	1,157	13.6%	1.4%
International Students	909	1,011	1,143	1,200	1,039	-13.4%	5.4%
Total Enrolment	8,091	8,705	8,510	8,310	8,205	-1.3%	1.9%
BC AVED FTE Enrolments	172,250	180,669	184,422	187,196	Not yet available	TBD	3.2%
Nanaimo Share of BC AVED FTEs	3.4%	3.6%	3.4%	3.3%	Not yet available	TBD	3.4%

Source: BC Ministry of Advanced Education, Innovation and Technology, Vancouver Island University Enrolment Reports

Credentials Awarded Vancouver Island University	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	Change 10/11 - 11/12
Undergraduate Degrees	705	773	717	760	690	825	-6.7%
Graduate Degrees	-	-	-	90	250	260	3.8%
Certificates and Diplomas	2,100	1,928	1,823	1,060	1,375	1,325	2.6%
Developmental (ESL, GED etc)	Not available			650	900	675	20.7%
Total	2,805	2,701	2,540	1,910	3,215	3,085	4.2%

Source: BC Ministry of Advanced Education, Post Secondary Data Warehouse

Credentials Awarded Vancouver Island University	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
<u>BC</u>						
Graduates	44,927	42,768	46,647	47,026	48,389	48,255
6-Year Completion Rate	80.2%	80.1%	78.8%	79.2%	79.7%	81.0%
5-Year Transition to PSE Rate	71.7%	Not yet available	Not yet available	Not yet available	Not yet available	Not yet available
<u>Nanaimo*</u>						
Graduates	1,117	981	998	1,023	1,033	1,026
6-Year Completion Rate	75.1%	75.4%	72.2%	71.1%	68.2%	69.6%
5-Year Transition to PSE Rate	72.1%	Not yet available	Not yet available	Not yet available	Not yet available	Not yet available

Source: Ministry of Education * School District 68 - Nanaimo Ladysmith

Learning needs to be accessible to everyone. As such, we need to develop welcoming places where learning can take place. Community schools, with their emphasis on community education and programming and their use of community involvement, provide such a model. In order to address our future educational needs, we need to establish more community schools in Nanaimo. -- (Discussion Paper Respondent)

Area #2: Working

Introduction

Consultation participants made frequent references to the new economy in Nanaimo and to the shift from resource based industries to information, knowledge and service based industries. It was noted that while many initiatives have been undertaken in support of the new economy and to ease the period of adjustment; some people find themselves on the “outside looking in” – i.e., they are ill-prepared or their skills are no longer required.



Assets and Strengths

During the consultation, participants were asked to identify positive initiatives related to employment and income.

Based on the input received, participants cited the work of the Economic Development Corporation, which comprises a coalition of businesses, institutions and organizations working together to facilitate economic development.

Participants also cited the important role played by Vancouver Island University. It was noted that this institution offers certificate, diploma and degree granting programs in a variety of areas, including academic, applied, career, professional and technical, as well as a wide range of community education programs. Participants felt that this institution is playing and will continue to play an important role in educating and training the workforce for the skill requirements of the new economy.

The Economic Development Strategy

1. *Establish an effective and sustainable economic development program*
2. *Expand and diversify employment opportunities*
3. *Increase Nanaimo's image as a destination for opportunities*
4. *Establish Nanaimo as a leading investment destination*

Challenges

Participants referred to the high levels of income assistance and unemployment, especially among youth and older workers; the high rates of poverty, including child poverty; and the lower than provincial average personal income levels. (In fact, BC Stats ranked the Nanaimo Local Health Area eighteenth out of 78 Local Health Areas in 2012 (improved from 10th in 2003) on its Composite Index of Human Economic Hardship, which takes into account the percentage of the population 0-64 who are receiving income assistance continuously for less than and over one year and the percentage of the population 65+ receiving the maximum Guaranteed Income Supplement, among other factors). For aboriginal and immigrant members of society, it was noted that many experience these hardships while facing others, including discrimination. It was also noted that long term dependency on income assistance and persistent unemployment, especially among youth, leads to despair and hopelessness, which contribute to crime, substance misuse, suicide, violence and other social issues.

Area #2: Working (continued)

With regard to some of the underlying factors contributing to the vulnerabilities identified in the Composite Index of Human Economic Harship, it was noted that the higher rates of teen pregnancy and the higher percentage of lone parent families in Nanaimo compared to the Province have implications for both employment and income. For teen mothers, many forego their education and have difficulty finding and retaining a job due to limited education and work experience, as well as childcare requirements. For lone parent families, especially female headed, many live in poverty, partially due to childcare barriers which limit their employability.

Other cited underlying factors included but were not limited to:

- the lack of opportunities for high school students to gain relevant work experience;
- the limited number of career and employment counsellors in the high school system;
- the lack of flexible scheduling and job sharing opportunities for parents of young children;
- the lack of supportive employment opportunities for people with a disability; and,
- the lack of early morning and late night transit service which makes it difficult for those people reliant on transit to work at jobs requiring such hours.

Proposed Goal

To facilitate the development of a strong, diversified and sustainable economy which provides employment and upgrading opportunities for all members of the community.

Suggested Strategies

The suggested strategies are supportive of the above goal and the larger social vision for Nanaimo. They are based on the input received during the community consultation process and from a review of previous research and studies. As such, they represent what participants felt were important at the time of consultation. Given their number, it is recognized that an implementing body will need to establish priorities. It is also recognized that this body would need to identify resource requirements and work with its partners in assigning responsibility.

In general, these strategies primarily target those people who are ill prepared or whose skills are no longer required under the new economy. They are categorized under the following three headings: employment readiness, employment entry, and employment retention.

The BladeRunners program helps "youth at greater risk than others of not making a successful transition to the workplace and establishing themselves within the labour market."

Life skills curriculum, health and nutrition awareness, alcohol and drug education, employment readiness skills certification training, resume writing, interviewing skills, job development, job coaching, and wage subsidy program. Work experience and training and operates in a variety of industry sectors through work experience in a variety of work settings.



Area #2: Working (continued)**Employment Readiness:**

- Improve access to career and employment counselling for high school students and ensure that counsellors are aware of the growth areas within the new economy and the skill requirements needed to work within them.
- Promote technical and trades occupations within the high school system and ensure that the curriculum is supportive of such occupations.
- Expand apprenticeship and work experience opportunities within the high school system to prepare students (not going on to post-secondary studies) for immediate employment.
- Promote volunteerism within the high school system to enable students to gain practical work experience and to learn good work habits and interpersonal skills.
- Expand education, training and work experience opportunities for out-of-school and street involved youth.
- Improve the employability of teen mothers by providing programs that meet their educational and training needs, as well as their childcare requirements.

Employment Entry:

- Establish a process involving employers, educators and trainers to increase labour force participation by and employment opportunities for aboriginal peoples, people with a disability, recent immigrants, street involved youth, etc.
- Expand supportive employment opportunities for people with a disability and publicly recognize employers who hire and train people with a disability.

**Employment Retention:**

- Expand education and training opportunities for displaced, older and returning workers and combine with coaching, counselling and mentoring.
- Develop a childcare strategy which supports a range of affordable, flexible and high quality childcare options, including casual, evening and weekend care.
- Work with employers around flexible scheduling and job sharing opportunities for parents of young children and caregivers to disabled, elderly and ill family members.
- Work with employers and transit providers around scheduling to enable those people reliant on transit to work at jobs requiring early morning or late night hours.

Discrimination directed toward aboriginal workers is a concern that needs to be addressed. Many employers are reluctant to hire aboriginal workers, as they believe that they have poor work habits. This stereotyping has to change or all the gains made in the areas of education and training will be for naught.

(Key Informant Interviewee)

Area #2 Working (continued)

Possible Benchmarks

Benchmarks, as applied here, will be used to monitor progress toward the identified goal. In themselves, they do not change the social conditions that they profile: that requires planned interventions. However, when a number of benchmarks are tracked over time, they can provide directional information regarding social conditions - i.e., getting better or worse or staying the same. This information can be used to identify needs and to develop new or reevaluate existing interventions.

The following benchmarks can be used to track conditions related to employment and income:

While we have made tremendous progress in positioning our community to take advantage of the many opportunities provided by the new economy, we must be equally vigilant in reaching out to and assisting those community members who find themselves on the outside looking in.

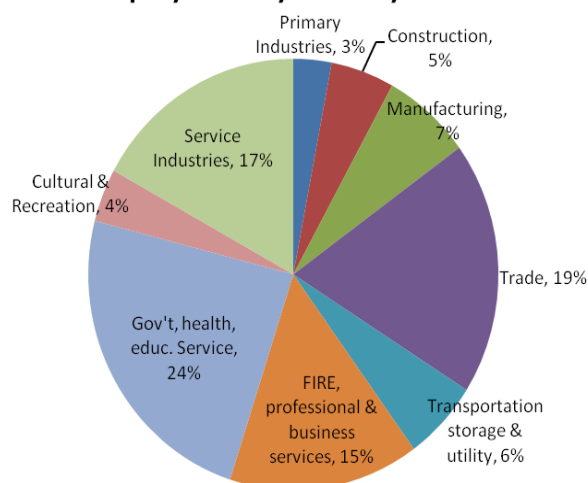
(Discussion Paper Respondent)

- Meridian individual (pre-tax) income in Nanaimo:

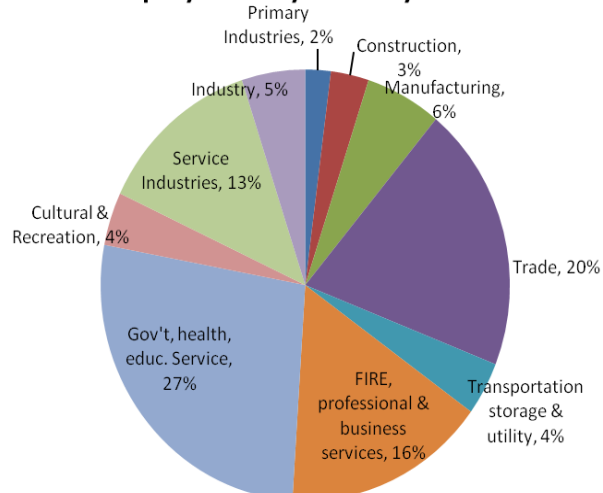
Area	2006	2010
Nanaimo	\$23,599	\$27,620
British Columbia	\$24,879	\$28,765
Canada	\$25,688	\$29,878

- Number employed by industry in Nanaimo:

Employment by Industry 2001



Employment by Industry 2006



*FIRE = Finance, Insurance, Real Estate

Area #3: Health

Introduction

Consultation participants emphasized the important role played by community and health services in promoting healthy lifestyles; supporting people with debilitating illnesses and disabilities; and addressing health and social issues (such as inadequate nutrition, mental illness and substance misuse). It was noted that these services contribute to a high quality of life for all residents.

Assets and Strengths

During the consultation, participants were asked to identify positive initiatives related to community and health services. Based on the input received, participants cited the following initiatives:

- the establishment of a Fetal Alcohol Group, which is working to reduce the incidence of fetal alcohol syndrome in Nanaimo;
- the improvement in mental health services, including the recent addition of a psychiatric ward at NRGH;
- the increased collaboration between Island Health, the Ministry of Children and Family Development, School District #68 and the City of Nanaimo; and
- the introduction of several new provincial initiatives targeting the 0 to 6 population, including the Early Development Instrument and Success by Six (see area entitled “Education and Learning”).



Nanaimo Division of Family Practice represents family physicians, hospitalists, emergency physicians, and family medicine residents in Nanaimo. A member-identified priority is physician recruitment and retention; physicians in family practice lead this work to ensure residents of their community have access to the benefits of primary care.

Challenges

Participants felt that too little attention was being focused on early diagnosis, intervention and prevention services. It was noted that it is far more cost effective to prevent potentially harmful behaviours than it is to treat them. It was also noted that current funding for community and health services is biased toward treatment and that the push toward greater accountability reinforces this bias. As one participant stated: “It is difficult to quantify early diagnosis, intervention and prevention services, since the benefits may not be realized for many years.” While progress has been made in this area, as evidenced by the Building Better Babies and CAPP Programs, it was felt that more needed to be done.

Area #3: Health (continued)

Participants expressed concern about the high incidence of mental illness and substance misuse and their impact on other social issues, including crime, domestic violence, homelessness, poverty and unemployment.

Participants also expressed concern about a number of other health related issues, including:

- inadequate nutrition, especially among children and youth;
- high rates of depression and suicide;
- high rates of teen pregnancy; and,
- sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS among others.

While it was noted that progress is being made in these and other areas, a number of participants felt that a more comprehensive approach is needed—one which targets the social determinants of health, including alienation, discrimination, homelessness, illiteracy, poverty, and unemployment.

There was support for community and health service providers to take a more holistic, integrated approach to health care. As one participant stated: “Treatment is only part of the solution and often fails if not combined with coping mechanisms, self-esteem counselling and support services.”

Many participants made specific reference to Nanaimo’s aging population and its potential impacts on community and health services. In fact, the percentage of the population 65+ and 80+ will more than double in the next 25 years. As such, it was noted that housing which enables the elderly to age in place and home support and other services to assist them to live independently will become increasingly important. For those seniors who can no longer live independently, it was noted that assisted living arrangements and caregiver supports such as respite will also become increasingly important. Some participants expressed concern that this shift in population will divert attention and dollars away from other segments of the population, including children, youth and adults. As such, it was felt that additional funding will be needed or efficiencies found to maintain current health care levels, given that demand will increase as the population ages.

1. Regarding funding, it was noted that there is increasing demand for services and that those accessing services have increasingly complex needs.

Many aboriginal people feel uncomfortable in clinical, structured environments. As such, we created a non-judgmental, welcoming environment in which to access health services. In fact, about 27,000 people a year access the health centre at Tillicum Haus.

(Key informant Interviewee)

Area #3: Health (continued)

Proposed Goal

To create a healthy community by way of health promotion and a combination of early intervention, prevention, supportive and treatment services.

Suggested Strategies

The suggested strategies are supportive of the above goal and the larger social vision for Nanaimo. They are based on the input received during the community consultation process and from a review of previous research and studies. They represent what participants felt were important at the time of consultation. Given their number, it is recognized that an implementing body would need to establish priorities. It is also recognized this body will need to identify resource requirements and work with its partners in assigning responsibility.

General:

- Address the root causes underlying many of the health issues facing Nanaimo, including alienation, discrimination, homelessness, illiteracy, inadequate nutrition, poverty, and unemployment.
- Lobby the provincial government for an adequately funded community and health services sector.
- Frame substance misuse as a public health (not a criminal justice) issue and emphasize prevention, early diagnosis and intervention.
- Improve access to general practitioners.
- Provide more respite care options and supports to caregivers to maintain their health, thus enabling them to continue to care for disabled, elderly or sick family members.
- In partnership with aboriginal, cultural and ethnic service providers, provide culturally sensitive health information, programs and services.

For those without an insurance plan, access to dental care can be prohibitively expensive. To assist those experiencing dental distress, a non-profit, low cost dental clinic was established in Nanaimo. The Code Clinic, at 455 Wallace Street downtown Nanaimo, provides basic dental services in exchange for a donation. The clinic relies on volunteer staff, community donations and grants from government.



Area #3: Health (continued)

Children and Youth:

- Enhance early diagnosis, intervention and prevention programs and promote healthy lifestyles.
- Continue to address the nutritional needs of children and youth through such means as the School Meals Program and neighbourhood based “satellite” food banks.
- Enhance community and family capacity to promote mental wellness and manage mental illnesses.
- Encourage and support fathers to take a more active role in their child’s health and social development.
- Enhance school and home-based clinical health outreach services.
- Improve the coordination and integration of acute, community and medical care services.
- Place greater emphasis on transition services between childhood and adolescence and between adolescence and adulthood in order to ensure continuity of programming and services.



Adults:

- Establish homeless outreach teams to connect with, diagnose and refer people not currently accessing the health care system.
- Provide more residential treatment and supportive recovery beds for those struggling with addictions.
- Provide special detox and rehabilitation services for those who are dually diagnosed.
- Enhance access to primary care and physician services.

Seniors:

- Enhance diagnosis, education, counselling and treatment services for seniors, especially with regard to the use of alcohol and prescription drugs.
- Improve access to adult day care programs and long term care beds (thus freeing up acute care beds while awaiting placement).
- Increase support for community care nursing and home support services to enable seniors to live independently in their own homes and neighbourhoods.

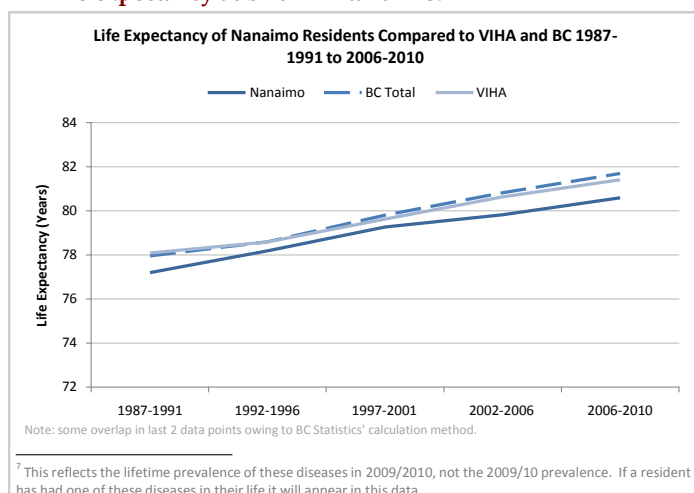
Area #3: Health (continued)

Possible Benchmarks

Benchmarks, as applied here, will be used to monitor progress toward the identified goal. In themselves, they do not change the social conditions that they profile; that requires planned interventions. However, when a number of benchmarks are tracked over time, they can provide directional information regarding social conditions - i.e., getting better or worse or staying the same. This information can be used to identify needs and to develop new or reevaluate existing interventions.

As part of the Social Status Report, the following five benchmarks were used to track conditions related to community and health services:

- Life expectancy at birth in Nanaimo:**



Psychiatric Emergency Services (PES) is a specialized unit within the NRGH Emergency Department. PES provides mental health and addictions services to those members of our community that require assessment, crisis stabilization and treatment.

- Number of alcohol-related deaths per 10,000 population in the Nanaimo LHA:**

1998	2000	2002	2007
3.47	5.07	6.81	5.9

- Number of illicit drug deaths per 100,000 population for the Central Vancouver Island Health Region:**

1998	2000	2002	2011
8.31	4.36	8.93	4.8

- Number of suicides per 10,000 population in the Nanaimo LHA:**

1998	2000	2002	2009
1.24	1.60	1.57	1.28

Area #4: Housing

Introduction

Consultation participants referred to the important role that housing plays in the health of the community. It was noted that housing is essential to survival and that affordable, safe and sustainable housing is the basis for building stable lives and neighbourhoods. One participant stated that obtaining non-profit, subsidized housing provided her with the stability needed to forge friendships and the discretionary income necessary for her and her family to participate in all facets of community life.

Assets and Strengths

During the consultation, participants were asked to identify positive initiatives related to housing and shelter. Based on the input received, participants frequently referenced the following studies:

- Nanaimo's Response to Homelessness Action Plan;
- Reducing Homelessness: A Community Plan for Nanaimo (October 2003).

It was felt that the provision of supported housing for the homeless has, and will have, an impact on the housing stability of individuals with persistent mental health and/or concurrent substance misuse issues. It was also felt that more needed to be done around facilitating affordable housing.

Participants were complementary of non-profit housing societies who provide subsidized housing to low-income families, people with a disability and seniors in Nanaimo. It was felt that this housing had a positive influence on reducing poverty and associated hardships for those accessing it while helping to address the homelessness situation in Nanaimo.

My child has Down Syndrome and I am concerned about the lack of housing targeting people with a disability. I want her to live independently but this will only be possible if affordable, supportive housing is available.

(Young Parents Focus Group Participant)



437 Wesley Street is a 36-unit supported housing project jointly funded by the Province and the Municipality. Operated by CMHA Mid Island, it provides a permanent home with on-site tenancy support for homeless individuals.

Area #4: Housing (continued)

Challenges

Participants referred to the lack of a national housing strategy in Canada. Participants also referred to the significant reduction in new apartments built specifically for rental purposes and the aging of the existing rental housing stock and its replacement by condominiums and other forms of development. Additionally, participants expressed concern about cuts in shelter and support payments under income assistance, which would make it more difficult for recipients to secure adequate housing.



Opened in 2012, the Salish Lelum Youth and Elders Aboriginal Housing project provides 18 single occupancy apartments.

This innovative complex, with its shared amenity spaces, allows aboriginal youth to connect with elders and elders to mentor young people.

Given the above challenges, participants stated that it is not surprising that many renter households are experiencing housing affordability problems in Nanaimo (i.e., they pay over 30% or more of their gross annual income on rent). Participants also expressed concern about long waitlists for non-profit housing and increasing reliance on less stable forms of housing such as rooming houses.

Participants made frequent references to the homelessness situation in Nanaimo. It was noted that emergency shelter bed take-up is consistently high. As for relative homelessness, it was noted that “many individuals and families are only one paycheque or support payment away from being homeless and that economic shifts and government policy changes could result in increasing numbers of people who are homeless.” Participants also expressed concern about youth homelessness, noting that many couch surf and some live with unrelated adults who may be taking advantage of them.

Besides affordability and homelessness, participants raised concerns that the current housing stock does not address the needs of specific groups. It was noted that there is a shortage of bachelor and one-bedroom rental units in close proximity to transit and other amenities. As a result, it was felt that this shortage results in many youth and young adults sharing accommodation (often in overcrowded conditions) or living in substandard housing. It was also noted that Nanaimo has an aging population, and that there is a lack of housing suitable for ‘empty nesters’ (i.e., older couples whose children have left home) and the frail elderly. Regarding the latter, it was stated that this group requires adaptable housing with supports that enable them to age in place and remain in their neighbourhoods. This type of housing was also seen as being important to people with a disability.

Area #4: Housing (continued)

Proposed Goal

To ensure an adequate supply of different housing types, tenure arrangements and affordability levels, as well as emergency shelter, supportive and transitional housing, which addresses the diverse needs of all members of the community.

Suggested Strategies

The suggested strategies are supportive of the above goal and the larger social vision for Nanaimo. They are based on the input received during the community consultation process and from a review of previous research and studies. As such, they represent what participants felt were important at the time of consultation. Given their number, it is recognized that an implementing body would need to establish priorities. It is also recognized this body will need to identify resource requirements and work with its partners in assigning responsibility.



- Lobby the provincial government to review its income assistance program to ensure that the shelter portion of this program reflects the actual market rent range of rental housing.
- Lobby the senior levels of government to restore funding for new non-profit housing targeting low-income families, people with a disability, seniors and single adults.
- Assist non-profit housing societies to access funding and resources in order to adequately manage and maintain their current housing projects.
- Monitor and report on the affordable rental housing stock and take steps to both preserve and enhance it.
- Examine and consider providing incentives which result in the provision of affordable housing.
- Inform disabled, low-income and senior homeowners about and assist them to access the different housing programs available to them to adapt, modify and/or rehabilitate their homes.
- Encourage the development of affordable, supportive seniors housing that provides for care, nutrition, safety, socialization and transition.

Area #4: Housing (continued)

Possible Benchmarks:

Benchmarks, as applied here, will be used to monitor progress toward the identified goal. In themselves, they do not change the social conditions that they profile; that requires planned interventions. However, when a number of benchmarks are tracked over time, they can provide directional information regarding social conditions - i.e., getting better or worse or staying the same. This information can be used to identify needs and to develop new or reevaluate existing interventions.

As part of the Social Status Report, the following benchmarks were used to track conditions related to housing and shelter:

- Percentage of renter households who paid 30% or more of their gross household income on rent in Nanaimo:¹

1991	1996	2001	2006	2011
N/A	55.6%	52.5%	49.0%	52.7%

- Market rental apartment and row house vacancy rate in Nanaimo:

1998	2000	2002	2008	2009	2011
15.6%	9.2%	3.4%	0.6%	3.3%	6.3%



Opened in 2013, the Rowe House provides 16 bedrooms for youth in a rooming house format, with shared kitchen and bathroom facilities. Operated by Nanaimo Youth Services Association, the Rowe House is an affordable housing option made available to employed young people who have overcome barriers to participation in the labour market.

Area #5: Safety

Introduction

Consultation participants made frequent references to safety and security. It was noted that if residents feel safe and secure, they are more likely to participate in all facets of community life. It was also noted that if a community has a reputation as being a safe and secure place, then tourists are more likely to visit and to stay for longer periods of time, thus contributing to economic growth and prosperity.

Assets and Strengths

During the consultation, participants were asked to identify positive initiatives related to safety and security. Cited initiatives included but were not limited to the following:

- the establishment of community policing stations and community crime prevention programs such as Block Parents, Citizens on Patrol, Crime Free Multi-Housing and Neighbourhood Watch;
- the establishment of the School Liaison Officer Program;
- the establishment of the SAFER Nanaimo Committee and implementation of its recommendations; and,
- the participation in the Safer City Initiative, sponsored by ICBC, which will make recommendations to improve safety for all modes of transport.



Challenges

Participants stated that not all community members feel equally safe or secure. It was noted that women and seniors are two groups which frequently express concerns about their safety, especially at night. With regard to seniors, reference was made to studies which show that victimization rates decrease significantly with age, while levels of fear of crime increase significantly with age.¹ It was emphasized that this fear, whether real or perceived, needs to be acknowledged and addressed.

1. Ministry of Attorney General - Public Safety and Regulatory Branch, Police Services Division. [Crime in British Columbia: A Summary, 2000.](#)

Area #5: Safety (continued)

Participants stated that while most people fear crime perpetrated by strangers, most victims, especially of violent crime, know the perpetrator. It was felt that child abuse, date rape and domestic violence have become all too common. In fact, research indicates that one in three women is assaulted by her husband or partner in British Columbia. For children and youth who experience abuse or who witness violence, the long term costs are significant; in its report entitled Family Violence in Canada (1999), Statistics Canada reports that children who witness violence are far more likely to develop aggressive behaviours, experience emotional difficulties, drop-out of school and engage in criminal activity.¹ Participants emphasized that more needed to be done to protect women and children and to support families, while addressing the root causes contributing to family dysfunction and violence, including mental illness, poverty, substance misuse and unemployment.



The drug and sex trade, and its association with organized crime, was also cited. It was noted that drug dealers are actively targeting youth, both in and out of school; and that crystal meth and other illegal drugs are readily available in most neighbourhoods. Regarding the sex trade, it was noted that more women and youth are working the streets. In fact, the RCMP estimate that there are over 150 women in the sex trade in Nanaimo. Given these two activities, concern was expressed about crime and fear of crime, homelessness, sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV/AIDS, violence and revitalization efforts in the downtown. Some participants also stated that the community is in denial with regard to the presence of organized crime, mistakenly believing that if they do not acknowledge it, "it may simply go away or stay in the shadows."

Participants expressed concern about safety and security issues in the downtown, especially at night and in areas with high concentrations of liquor establishments. Again, women and seniors felt most at-risk, with some avoiding the downtown altogether. Participants were complimentary of the many initiatives to improve safety and security in the downtown, as well as to revitalize it. However, some felt that more could be done to address the needs of exploited women and youth and to encourage residential development downtown, thus increasing the "number of eyes on the street."

Area #5: Safety (continued)

Participants expressed concern about the lack of proactive safety planning, especially as it relates to the frail elderly and people with a disability. It was noted that traffic calming measures (e.g., curb extensions, street narrowing, traffic islands, etc.) needed to be a key component in all neighbourhood planning. Additionally, it was noted that all public and private buildings and spaces needed to be accessible. One participant stated that while decorative pavers are ornate, they are particularly hazardous to elderly members of society with limited vision (as they are more prone to fall on uneven surfaces). Another participant stated that design professionals seldom consult with or involve less mobile members of society in their design planning.

Seniors read the newspaper and watch the television news far more than younger members of society. As a result of the constant media attention on crime, often elsewhere, some seniors are fearful to venture outside, which contributes to social isolation.

(Seniors Focus Group Participant)



Proposed Goal

To maximize the safety and security of all community members by preventing and reducing the opportunities for, as well as addressing the root causes of, accidents, criminal activity and violence.



Suggested Strategies

The suggested strategies are supportive of the above goal and the larger social vision for Nanaimo. They are based on the input received during the community consultation process and from a review of previous research and studies. As such, they represent what participants felt were important at the time of consultation. Given their number, it is recognized that an implementing body would need to establish priorities. It is also recognized this body will need to identify resource requirements and work with its partners in assigning responsibility.

- Continue to support the implementation of the Downtown Plan, which will increase the number of people living and working in the downtown and increase activity in the downtown by positioning it as a centre for arts and cultural activities.
- Implement the recommendations to improve safety in the downtown as outlined in the SAFER Nanaimo report;
- Participate in the Safer City Initiative, sponsored by ICBC, and consider implementing any recommendations related to pedestrian and vehicular safety.
- Restore (and increase) funding for programs which address violence against women and children and which support families in crisis.
- Designate a police officer or officers to address issues related to the sex trade, especially with regard to youth and young adults.
- Review existing and consider new initiatives designed to address school bullying and harassment (in light of the fact that about a quarter of all students do not feel safe while at school).

Area #5: Safety (continued)

- Hold consultations involving women and seniors around crime and fear of crime and develop specific strategies to address their concerns and alleviate their fears.
- Improve pedestrian safety through the use of audible signals and traffic calming techniques such as curb extensions, street narrowing and traffic islands.
- Work with design professionals to ensure full accessibility in the built environment. Initiatives could include walkabouts with the frail elderly and people with a disability to learn from their experiences and perspectives.



Possible Benchmarks

Benchmarks, as applied here, will be used to monitor progress toward the identified goal. In themselves, they do not change the social conditions that they profile; that requires planned interventions. However, when a number of benchmarks are tracked over time, they can provide directional information regarding social conditions - i.e., getting better or worse or staying the same. This information can be used to identify needs and to develop new or reevaluate existing interventions.

As part of the Social Status Report, the following three benchmarks were used to track conditions related to safety and security:

- **Total Criminal Code offences reported:**

2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
19,173	18,701	17,357	14,757	14,923	13,591	11,816

- **Serious juvenile crime rate per 1,000 population (2011):**

Nanaimo	6.7%
BC	4.2%
Vancouver Island	2.9%

- **Serious violent and property crime per 1,000 population (2011)**

Nanaimo	14.0%
BC	13.5%
Vancouver Island	6.5%

Area #6: Belonging

Introduction

Consultation participants raised a number of attributes related to community life, including the need to facilitate civic and community involvement; the need to foster a sense of belonging and neighbourliness; and the need to promote inclusiveness. They also cited the need to support intergenerational linkages, relationships and respect. As one participant stated, these attributes “are the glue that hold a community together.” These attributes, referred to as social capital by Robert Putnam in his ‘Social Capital Theory,’ are also catalysts for economic growth and prosperity.

Assets and Strengths

During the consultation, participants were asked to identify positive examples related to community life. Cited examples included but were not limited to:

- the long history of volunteerism and the many community service agencies operating in Nanaimo;
- the City of Nanaimo’s Leisure Economic Access Program, which provides discounted course fees and free access to recreational programs for eligible children and youth under 19, and subsidized access for eligible adults;
- the Harewood Family of Community Schools, which facilitates community access to school facilities outside of regular school hours and provides a variety of community-based programs;
- the public’s use of the central waterfront, the design of which facilitates active participation and social interaction; and,
- the many initiatives undertaken by the Immigrant Welcome Centre and its partners to enhance the integration of newcomers into the community.

The Safe Harbour Program designation informs the community of the commitment by a business, institution or organization in the downtown to treat the many members of Nanaimo’s diverse community with fairness and respect.



Challenges

Design and transportation challenges were frequently cited. Participants stated that newer single family residential neighbourhoods, especially in the north, are not designed to facilitate a sense of belonging and neighbourliness. As evidence, it was noted that residents often access their homes via their carports; drive their children to school; mingle in their backyards; and recreate, shop and work outside their immediate neighbourhood. It was also noted that most schools sit idle during evenings and on weekends, as well as during summers, meaning that residents cannot make use of these facilities and their considerable resources.

Area #6: Belonging (continued)

Proposed Goal

To develop an inclusive community which provides opportunities for active involvement; which welcomes the contributions of all members; which facilitates social and intergenerational interaction; and which recognizes and fosters respect for diversity.

Suggested Strategies

The suggested strategies are supportive of the above goal and the larger social vision for Nanaimo. They are based on the input received during the community consultation process and from a review of previous research and studies. As such, they represent what participants felt were important at the time of consultation. Given their number, it is recognized that the implementing body will need to establish priorities. It is also recognized this body will need to identify resource requirements and work with its partners in assigning responsibility.

- Develop new ways to involve youth in municipal decision-making processes (e.g., advisory councils, forums, etc.).
- Promote the development of non-profit and private multi-family housing which facilitates social interaction and intergenerational living and incorporates residential options for a wide range of socio-economic profiles.
- Improve access to and availability of information regarding community services and volunteer opportunities. This information should be available in different languages, target different audiences and use a variety of media.
- Increase community access to public and school facilities and ensure that they are available at affordable rates.
- Locate new child care centres, public schools and senior serving facilities in close proximity to each other and promote joint programming and volunteer opportunities.
- Improve outreach to isolated, disadvantaged and/or marginalized members of the community, including people who are homeless, people with a disability, people with mental health and substance misuse issues, recent immigrants, seniors, street involved youth, etc.
- Conduct a research project into the factors which may inhibit participation in community, leisure and recreational programs (e.g., availability and cost of childcare, program fees, public transit scheduling, etc.) and seek solutions to them.



Many children have limited or no access to their grandparents, while many seniors lack interaction and meaning in their lives. Both would benefit if connected with each other and supported to form relationships.

(Discussion Paper Respondent)



Area #6: Belonging (continued)

Possible Benchmarks

Benchmarks, as applied here, will be used to monitor progress toward the identified goal. In themselves, they do not change the social conditions that they profile; that requires planned interventions. However, when a number of benchmarks are tracked over time, they can provide directional information regarding social conditions - i.e., getting better or worse or staying the same. This information can be used to identify needs and to develop new or reevaluate existing interventions.

As part of the Social Status Report, the following benchmarks were used to track conditions related to community life:

- Number of volunteers referred by Volunteer Nanaimo:

2010	2012
2,206	2,113

- Percentage of all eligible voters who voted in municipal elections in Nanaimo:

1996	1999	2002	2011
32.1%	37.1%	39.0%	26.9%



Strategy Monitoring and Evaluations

As part of the terms of reference for this study, it stated that ongoing monitoring and periodic evaluation will be key elements of the strategy.

Nanaimo City Council has adopted the Social Development Strategy as a component of the Official Community Plan. As such, they committed to updating the Strategy and the Social Status Report on a regular basis. In addition, data from the Island Health local health area report will be incorporated into the Status Report as a further set of benchmarks. Island Health has committed to incorporating into the LHA data reflective of the social determinants of health. Regarding monitoring, the possible benchmarks as outlined in each of the six major areas of focus will be used to monitor progress toward the achievement of the proposed vision and goals. They will also be used to provide evidential information as to the success of the planned interventions.

In response to Council's Strategic Plan 2012-2015, a health and social network has been formed. SPAC will convene the forum annually to solicit feedback on the social issues facing the community.



Too little attention is paid to monitoring the social environment. While there are many economic and environmental indicators, there are few social indicators. For example, how do we measure community pride, neighbourliness, sense of community, etc.

(Discussion Paper Respondent)

Contact Information

For more information about the strategy, contact either:

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Signy Madden, The United Way of Nanaimo and District, (250) 729-7400.