

ATTACHMENT A

History of City Support and Engagement with Neighbourhood Associations

1. Policy Background

The City has maintained a supportive relationship with local neighbourhood associations over the past three decades. The underpinning of this relationship was first expressed in policy through the adoption of a vision statement for community building in 1992 as part of the Imagine Nanaimo process. Within this vision, it was stated that the community should hold neighbourhoods as the vital building blocks of the city. The foundation of this idea was later made concrete through the adoption of Plan Nanaimo in 1994 and the subsequent development of various neighbourhood and area plans appended to the City's Official Community Plan (OCP) over the ensuing years (see summary list below). For organizational purposes, the city was divided into fifteen planning areas based on census tract boundaries established by Census Canada.

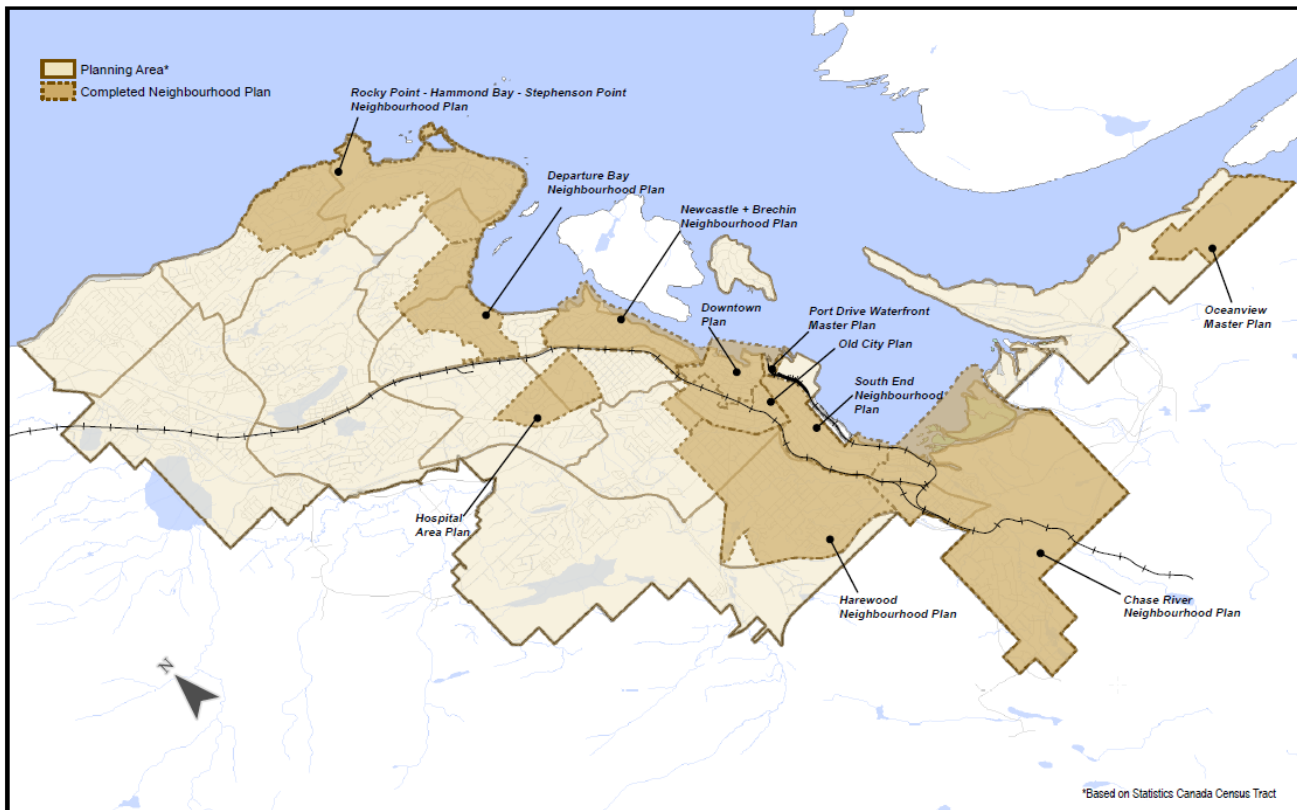
Intended to address the needs and desires of neighbourhoods within the city in the context of the OCP, "neighbourhood and area plans are designed to incorporate land use strategies (and other policies) that respond to the broader issues of the city in a way that contributes to creating more livable neighbourhoods." Underscoring this engagement commitment, the following policy can now be found in the OCP's Neighbourhood and Area Planning policy section:

"The City will promote the establishment of neighbourhood associations to support neighbourhood planning initiatives."

This key policy and other neighbourhood engagement-oriented policy contained in the OCP has guided the City's engagement and relationship building efforts with neighbourhood associations to the present day.

Adopted Neighbourhood and Area Plans

1. Old City Neighbourhood Plan (1992)
2. Chase River Neighbourhood Plan (1999)
3. Rocky Point/Hammond Bay/Stephenson Point Neighbourhood Plan (2001)
4. Downtown Nanaimo Plan (2002)
5. Departure Bay Neighbourhood Plan (2006)
6. Sandstone Master Plan (2009)
7. Oceanview Master Plan (2009)
8. South End Neighbourhood Plan (2010)
9. Newcastle + Brechin Neighbourhood Plan (2011)
10. Harewood Neighbourhood Plan (2013)
11. Hospital Area Plan (2018)
12. Port Drive Waterfront Master Plan (2018)



2. Nanaimo's Neighbourhood Associations and their Organizational Structure

The City of Nanaimo currently recognizes 20 active neighbourhood associations (see listing of associations below). Some of these associations have been in existence for more than 20 years, while others have formed more recently. The associations are spread throughout the city, with the oldest and most organized tending to be located within the city's older, more established neighbourhoods in its central and southern areas. The boundaries of each neighbourhood association area are self-defined by the association, and for this reason, do not generally align with the City's Planning Area boundaries. Over the years, the City has collected and monitored these boundaries to produce a Neighbourhood Association Map which effectively acts as a radar for where associations are currently active or have historically existed (see map below).

The organizational capacity of each group varies widely on a spectrum. Some are registered non-profits, such as the South End Community Association, Protection Island Neighbourhood Association, and Departure Bay Neighbourhood Association, while others have more informal organizational structures such as the Western Neighbourhood Association, Bradley Street Neighbourhood Association, and Cilaire Community Association. The organizational status of each group based on the recently completed Neighbourhood Association Organizational Capacity Questionnaire Response Summary can be found in the chart entitled "Neighbourhood Association Organizational Status" below.

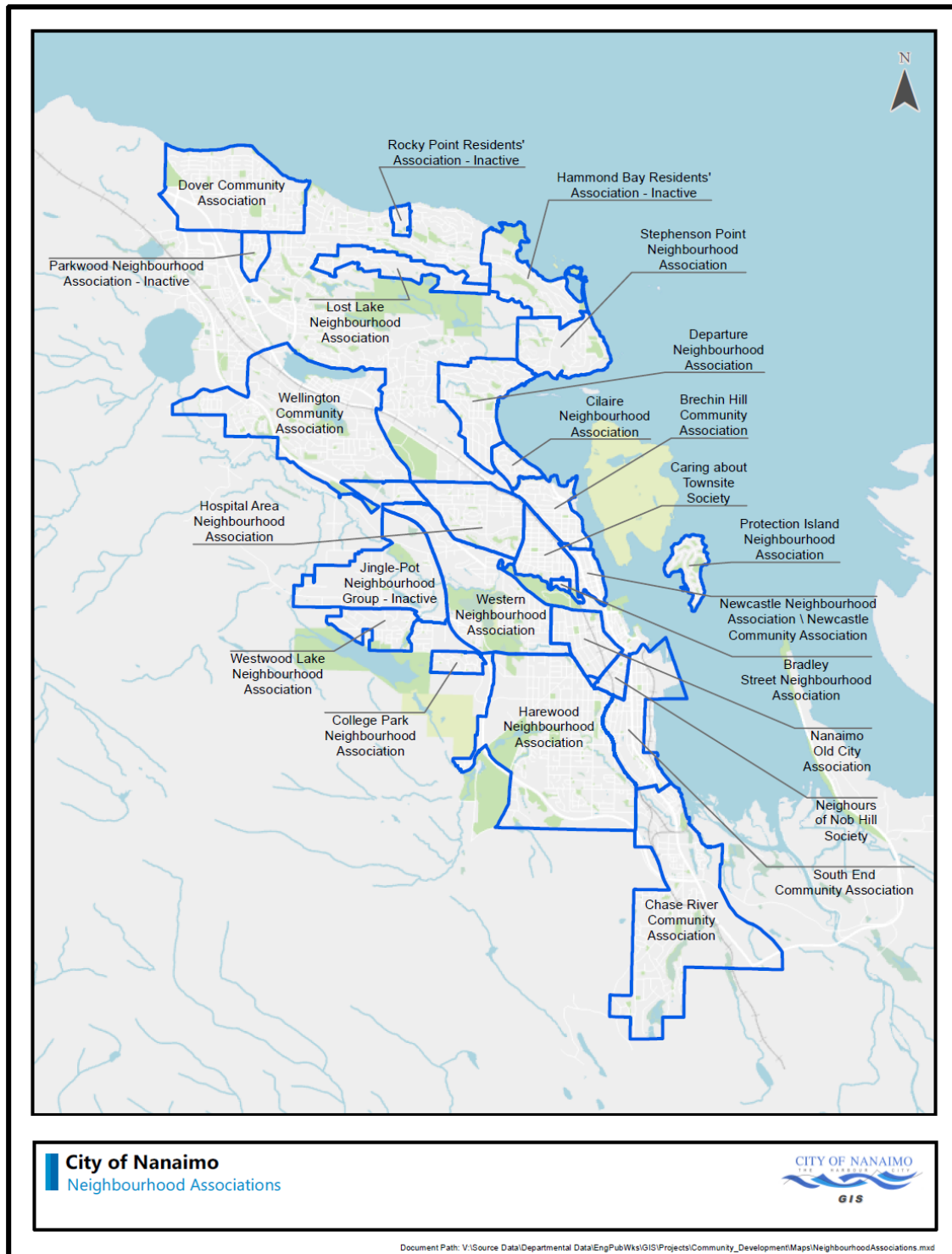
In the past, the City has encouraged capacity building amongst the various associations, and in particular, greater organization of the associations themselves. A specific discussion was held with the associations in this regard in the late 2000s; however, it was argued by the associations that decisions to formally organize (such as through registration as a non-profit society) should be at the discretion of the neighbourhood association and not imposed by the City through mandatory recognition criteria. A key concern expressed by the associations was the likelihood that about two-thirds of the existing associations would no longer be recognized by the City if such criteria were put in place. The strength of this response was recognized and the City did not press this matter further.

Historically speaking, the neighbourhood associations have maintained a collaborative relationship with each other under a common theme of community building. Occasionally, there have been issues that have occurred over boundaries or representation (e.g., who speaks for the neighbourhood), but in general, conflict within or between associations is a rarity. The most problematic issues that have occurred in recent years have been in the Nob Hill area, and more recently, in the Newcastle neighbourhood area. In both cases, the problems within an association stemmed from disagreements amongst neighbours around different values for proposed land uses causing divisions and the establishment of a competing second group.

Nanaimo's Neighbourhood Associations

1. Bradley Street Neighbourhood Association
2. Brechin Hill Community Association
3. Chase River Community Association
4. Cilaire Neighbourhood Association
5. College Park Neighbourhood Association
6. Dover Community Association
7. Departure Bay Neighbourhood Association
8. Harewood Neighbourhood Association
9. Hospital Area Neighbourhood Association
10. Lost Lake Neighbourhood Association
11. Nanaimo Old City Association
12. Neighbours of Nob Hill Society
13. Newcastle Community Association
14. Newcastle Neighbourhood Association
15. Protection Island Neighbourhood Association
16. South End Community Association
17. Stephenson Point Neighbourhood Association
18. Wellington Community Association
19. Western Neighbourhood Association
20. Westwood Lake Neighbourhood Association/
Friends of Westwood Lake

Neighbourhood Associations Map



Neighbourhood Association Organizational Status

Groups which are formally organized as registered non-profits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Departure Bay Neighbourhood Association Harewood Neighbourhood Association Neighbours of Nob Hill Society Protection Island Neighbourhood Association South End Community Association Wellington Community Association/Wellington Action Committee
Groups which are not formally organized as registered non-profits but have an executive, regular meetings and a membership structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brechin Hill Community Association Chase River Community Association Hospital Area Neighbourhood Association Lost Lake Neighbourhood Association Nanaimo Old City Association Newcastle Community Association Newcastle Neighbourhood Association Stephenson Point Neighbourhood Association
Groups which are not formally organized as registered non-profits and are loosely organized with no executive, regular meetings or membership structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bradley Street Neighbourhood Association Cilaire Neighbourhood Association College Park Neighbourhood Association Dover Community Association Western Neighbourhood Association Westwood Lake Neighbourhood Association/Friends of Westwood Lake
Groups which are inactive but did exist in the past	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beaufort Commons Residents' Association Caring About Townsite Society East Wellington Concerned Citizens Hammond Bay Residents' Association Jinglepot Neighbourhood Group Parkwood Neighbourhood Association Rocky Point Residents Association

3. How the City Engages with Neighbourhood Associations

City staff currently maintain a responsive communication and liaison role with the various neighbourhood associations. In general, this engagement occurs directly through a number of City Departments (Parks, Recreation and Culture, Community Development, Engineering and Public Works being the most common). Within the Community Development Department, this role is shared between the four planners currently located within the Community Planning Section. The purpose of this liaison is to provide a point of contact for any issues or concerns the representatives of the associations may wish to discuss or need guidance on. An important part of the planner's role in this regard is to ensure that associations have accurate information or are directed to those persons that can be of service to them within the City organization. This includes periodically attending association meetings to provide information of interest to the group or to respond to any questions or concerns they may have. This role also helps to build trust and familiarity with the City as an organization.

City staff support the resolution of issues within and between neighbourhood associations but because of their independent status, generally avoid direct intervention in organizational issues and prefer to see the associations resolve these issues themselves.

As specified through policy in the OCP, neighbourhood associations are notified of any rezoning, OCP amendment, and development permit applications affecting lands in their neighbourhood area. Development applicants are also encouraged to engage directly with associations to share information on their projects and to address any concerns the neighbourhood may have before an application proceeds to Council.

4. Community Engagement Task Force

More recently, in 2018, Staff worked with the Community Engagement Task Force (initiated by community champions and supported by the City) to provide four community-focused engagement projects. In particular, Staff assisted the community team in holding an “Empowering Neighbourhoods Event” on 2018-NOV-21. The event was a good example of how to successfully engage and seek input from citizens (including many of the neighbourhood associations) interested in working to improve their neighbourhoods. A final report for the Public Engagement Pilot Program was received by Council for information on 2019-JAN-28. The Task Force report contained six key recommendations for strengthening community engagement including the following specifically related to neighbourhoods:

- Council should begin a process of strengthening and empowering neighbourhoods to better ensure that programs and projects are actually meeting community needs.
- City programs and projects function better when neighbourhood associations and other community and stakeholder groups (such as businesses, environmental groups, arts groups, etc.) are involved in engagement efforts.
- Neighbourhood associations can provide advice about neighbourhood priorities for engagement to City staff and Council and be engaged in developing systems for gathering public input on these engagement priorities.
- Neighbourhood associations need to be consulted about how to manage difficult land use issues such as the placement of supportive housing before projects are initiated, not when they are ready to be implemented.
- Councillors can represent their constituents by staying in touch and working with citizens to determine top priorities for engagement. Staying in touch could include at least two regular annual community engagement sessions similar to our micro town hall “meet your councillors” and the empowering neighbourhood sessions.
- Neighbourhood associations need to take responsibility for their credibility and ensure that they are representative of all interests. Council should require that associations have annual meetings and election of officers.
- Community engagement also only works when promises are honoured. Developing a neighbourhood plan becomes a contract between the city and its residents with the hope that some of it might be implemented – a promise that is not very often kept.]

5. What is the Nanaimo Neighbourhood Network (NNN) and How is it Supported by the City

The City encouraged and supported the creation of the Nanaimo Neighbourhood Network (NNN) in 2003 as an independent body. Due to its independent status, the NNN does not receive operational funding from the City and sets its own agenda. A previous version of the Network was active in the mid to late 1990s, but was discontinued due to member burnout.

The purpose of the NNN since 2003 has been to facilitate the ongoing development of effective neighbourhood associations through shared information, consultation and decision making between the associations, the City of Nanaimo and other organizations (see NNN Mandate below). For many years, until the onset of the pandemic, the NNN met three times a year in February, June, and October for a two-hour meeting to exchange information on issues, challenges, and successes in each respective neighbourhood.

Pre-COVID-19, City staff supported the NNN through the booking of the SARC Board Room for meetings and by having one staff member from the Community Planning Section attend to act as an information resource should the network members need it. On occasion, select City staff attended the NNN meetings to provide information on specific initiatives of relevance to the neighbourhood associations, or at the request of the NNN. In all cases, the key focus was on the sharing of information between the associations, and between the associations and City representatives.

Nanaimo Neighbourhood Network (NNN) Mandate



The purpose of the Network is to facilitate the ongoing development of effective neighbourhood associations through shared information, consultation and decision-making between neighbourhood associations, municipal government and other organizations.

The Network has the following three objectives:

1) Developing Strong Neighbourhoods

- to encourage the establishment of identifiable neighbourhood associations throughout Nanaimo and support them through leadership training and development programs;
- to provide guidance and assistance to the community in the formation and development of neighbourhood associations that operate beyond the crisis issue of the moment;
- to encourage neighbourhoods to engage in activities that develop a spirit of pride and cooperation among residents;
- to encourage citizens to participate in their association; to be involved in citywide issues directly as well as via participation in the Network.

2) Catalyst/Co-ordination

- to encourage co-operation and to promote the development of neighbourhood plans;
- to ensure that neighbourhood-based meeting space, such as schools, is available for use by the local community;
- to establish and encourage dialogue and interaction between neighbourhood associations, municipal government and other organizations.

3) Advice, Information and Education

- to act as a clearinghouse for information and to facilitate communication among and between neighbourhoods;
- to facilitate educational opportunities for neighbourhood associations/leaders.

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6. How Do Other Communities Support and Engage Neighbourhood Associations

Many cities across Canada recognize the value of neighbourhood associations and choose to support and collaborate with these groups.

While no funding is directly provided to the NNN or its member neighbourhood associations, there has been an interest shown in the past by some of the associations for the City to create a small, dedicated “Neighbourhood Grant Program”. The hope is this program would focus on providing operational grants to increase association organizational capacity and provide a source of money for small scale, neighbourhood-based, capital improvement projects.

Such programs have been in place for years in a number of communities across Canada and the USA. Regional examples include the District of Saanich, City of Victoria, City of Vancouver, City of Surrey, and City of Seattle (Department of Neighbourhoods). Some of these programs include stricter eligibility and organizational criteria (e.g., City of Victoria), while others are fairly flexible with respect to which community-based groups they provide grant funding to (e.g., City of Seattle).

There are many approaches that municipalities use to support and engage with neighbourhood associations and other community-based groups within their boundaries. The key objective of most approaches is to promote the flow of information between the municipality and the associations, and build a participatory framework and dialogue for citizen involvement in the creation of complete, livable neighbourhoods.

For reference purposes, the following chart “Comparison of Neighbourhood Support and Engagement in Other Municipalities” briefly summarizes how a few select local municipalities engage with and support neighbourhood associations within their communities.

Comparison of Neighbourhood Support and Engagement in Other Municipalities

SUPPORT/ ENGAGEMENT	District of Saanich	City of Victoria	City of Surrey
Does a Funding Program Exist?	Yes ○ Saanich Community Grants Program	Yes ○ Great Neighbourhood Grant Program	Yes ○ Neighbourhood Enhancement Grant Program
City Staff Liaison Provided?	Yes	Yes ○ A Councillor is assigned to each recognized association as well. ○ Also provide “Neighbourhood Walkshops” as opportunity for residents to share ideas about needed community improvements with City staff. ○ Each association has a Community Association Land Use Committee (CALUC) which facilitates dialogue between development applications and the neighbourhood.	No
Registered Non-Profit Status Required or Encouraged?	Yes ○ For recognition and grant funding	Yes ○ For recognition and grant funding	Yes ○ For recognition and grant funding
Has an Independent Neighbourhood Network?	Yes	No	No
Meeting Room Provided for Network?	Yes ○ Saanich Police Department	No	No
Capacity Building Training?	No	Is looking to introduce training opportunities	No
Maintains a Map of Neighbourhood Association Areas?	Yes	Yes	Yes