



## ATTACHMENT A

CITY OF NANAIMO

# DOWNTOWN NANAIMO COMMUNITY SAFETY ACTION PLAN

MAY, 2022

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## INTRODUCTION

In recent years, Nanaimo has experienced a rise in levels of visible homelessness, open drug use, conflict, vandalism, filth and overall social disorder in the downtown core and surrounding neighbourhoods. Residents, business owners and workers have become increasingly frustrated with conditions in the core, as have those in community service organizations who work to improve the lives of people in need. The perception that Downtown Nanaimo has become an unsafe and unruly part of the community has become widespread.

The issues that are so apparent in Downtown Nanaimo are manifestations of social problems with deep roots in poverty, income inequality, racism and discrimination, colonialism, food insecurity, mental health challenges, abuse and trauma, addiction, and other causal factors. As a local government, the City of Nanaimo lacks the tools, resources and mandate to tackle these base causes. The City is not able, however, to stand by and simply accept the situation as it exists.

In an effort to make Downtown Nanaimo safer and healthier for all, Nanaimo City Council in late 2021 commissioned the development of a *Downtown Nanaimo Community Safety Action Plan* with specific measures for the City to take beginning 2022. The measures, Council noted, must be pragmatic and tangible, focused on addressing the highest-risk, most serious and most visible issues in the city centre. Neilson Strategies Inc., in collaboration with Bob Rich Consulting, was retained to prepare the *Plan*.

## ACTION PLAN

The *Downtown Nanaimo Community Safety Action Plan* consists of three sections:

- > *Section 1: Guiding Points and Desired Outcomes* — The *Action Plan* begins with guiding points to provide context for the measures. The specific outcomes that the *Plan* is designed to achieve are also presented.
- > *Section 2: Measures to Take* — The measures for the City to take — on its own and, in some cases, in collaboration with others — are presented in section two. Measures are divided into three groups: Tiered Response, Public Spaces and Assets, and *Action Plan* Governance.

## MEASURES TO TAKE

*The measures in the Downtown Nanaimo Community Safety Action Plan are intended to be pragmatic and tangible, focused on the highest-risk, most serious and most visible issues in the city centre.*

- > *Section 3: Action Plan Implementation* — An implementation chart for all of the *Plan's* measures is provided in section three to end the document.

In developing the *Action Plan*, the City's consultants interviewed several representatives of the Downtown business community, leaders of community service organizations active in the city centre, persons experiencing homelessness, faculty members from Vancouver Island University, senior officers at the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) Nanaimo Detachment, and a number of RCMP members. A facilitated workshop for all stakeholders was held. The consultants also met on several occasions with City management, and conducted a group discussion with Nanaimo's Bylaw Enforcement Officers.

Extensive comparative research on other municipalities in British Columbia and other parts of Canada was undertaken to examine efforts in place to address public safety concerns. Special attention was paid to the City of Maple Ridge and its Community Social Safety Initiative (CSSI). The CSSI positions Maple Ridge as a leader in the field — a fact that, combined with the City's many similarities to Nanaimo, made Maple Ridge ideal as a subject of comparative study.

### **Action Plan Funding**

Funding to implement the measures identified in the *Safety Action Plan* was secured in early May 2022, based on a presentation of the DRAFT *Plan* to Council's Finance and Audit Committee. Since funding is already in place, this document uses the future rather than conditional tense to outline the measures that the City will take.

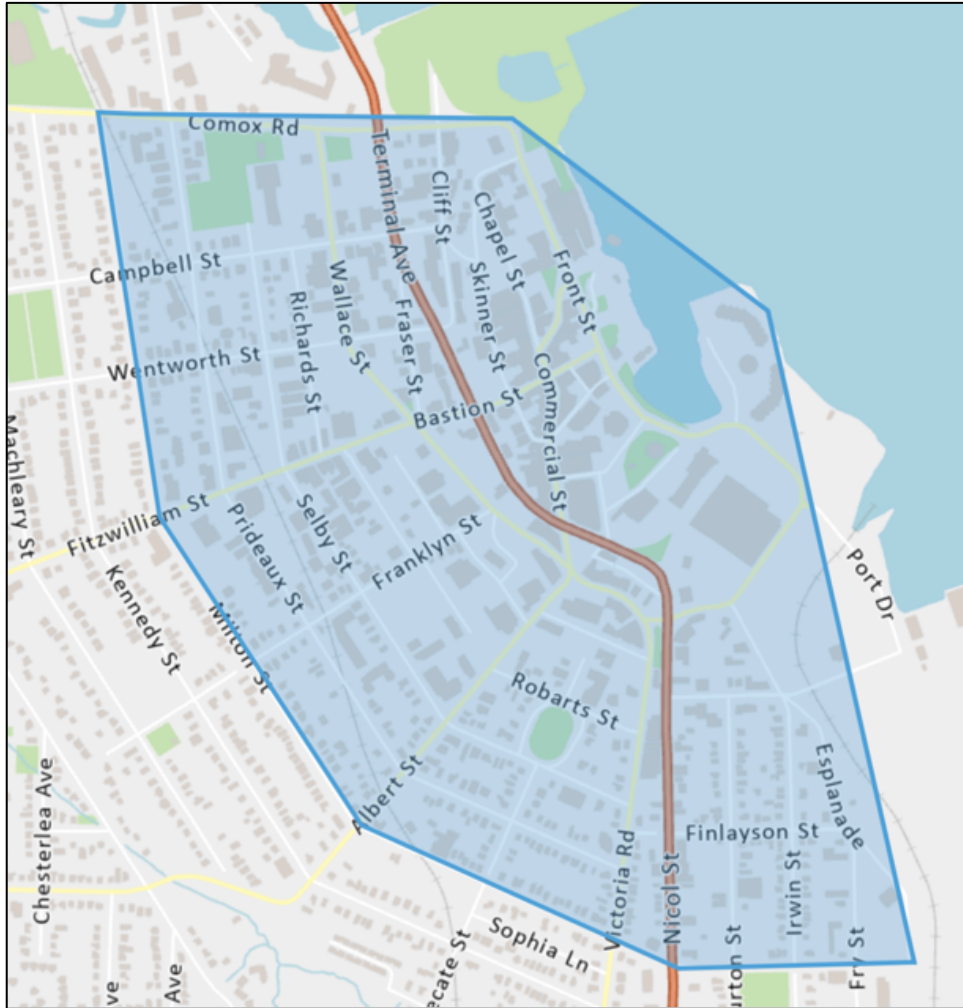
### **Downtown Nanaimo Defined**

Finally, as the name suggests, the focus of the *Downtown Nanaimo Community Safety Action Plan* is Downtown Nanaimo. The exact definition of this part of the city is somewhat subjective. For the purposes of the *Action Plan*, Downtown Nanaimo is defined as the area in Figure I.1. In the text, Downtown Nanaimo is referred to alternatively as "Downtown Nanaimo", the "downtown core", and the "city centre". The terms are considered synonymous and are used interchangeably.

### **FUNDING**

*Funding to implement the measures in the Safety Action Plan was secured in May 2022.*

Figure I.1  
Downtown Nanaimo



## SECTION 1

### GUIDING POINTS AND DESIRED OUTCOMES

Early in the process of preparing the *Safety Action Plan*, a series of guiding points was set out to provide context for and direction to the exercise. Desired outcomes for the *Action Plan* were also articulated to help focus the development of measures to consider. The guiding points and desired outcomes are presented in this section of the document.

#### GUIDING POINTS

Seven guiding points helped to set the stage for the development of the *Action Plan*:

- > *Acute Situation* — In commissioning the *Action Plan*, City Council was clear in calling for measures that the City could implement in the near term, beginning in late spring of 2022. Council's desire for quick action reflects the serious challenges facing Downtown Nanaimo, as well as the widespread and heightened sense of concern among residents, businesses and other stakeholders.
- > *Safety and Security* — The *Action Plan* is intended, first and foremost, to improve safety and security in Downtown Nanaimo. Safety and security are imperative for businesses and their employees in the downtown core, residents in the nearby neighbourhoods, and visitors to the city. Safety and security are also imperative to social agencies that provide services Downtown, and to the people who rely on the services.
- > *Downstream Focus* — The City acknowledges that the disorder in Downtown Nanaimo is a symptom of deeper social problems. The City also acknowledges that problems in the core today will not be drastically reduced, let alone eliminated, without significant, ongoing spending on the underlying social problems — that is, on the root causes. Such "upstream" investments are preventative in nature, designed to prevent examples of widespread disorder from arising.

The City has neither the resources nor the mandate to make the kinds of upstream investments required to address the underlying social problems in Nanaimo. Spending

#### ROOT CAUSES

*Problems in the downtown core will not be drastically reduced, let alone eliminated without significant, ongoing spending by other orders of government aimed at addressing the underlying root causes of social disorder.*

commitments by ministries, departments and agencies at the provincial and federal levels are needed to make lasting change. The City can, however, design and implement measures to help mitigate the most significant symptoms of disorder. These "downstream" investments, it is acknowledged, will not solve the underlying problems. The investments will, however, help in the immediate term to improve the levels and perceptions of safety and security in the city centre.

- > *Distinct from Community Safety & Well-being Plans* — In early 2019, the Ontario government introduced amendments to Ontario's *Police Services Act* to require municipalities to develop community safety and well-being plans. The plans are designed to "achieve sustainable communities where everyone is safe, has a sense of belonging, opportunities to participate, and where individuals and families are able to meet their needs for education, health care, food, housing, income and social and cultural expression."<sup>1</sup> The plans are developed using a multi-sectoral inclusive process that is led by local government, but that includes police, health agencies, First Nations, social agencies, provincial ministries, housing authorities, school districts and others. The plans lay out a series of recommendations, most of which call for upstream investments and actions to "address the root causes of crime and complex social issues".

Community safety and well-being plans are required in Ontario municipalities; they have been developed, as well, by municipalities in some other urban centres, including the City of Regina and — most recently — the City of Kelowna. The City of Nanaimo and other British Columbia municipalities may benefit from the creation of a similar, upstream safety and well-being strategies. For the time being, however, Nanaimo has chosen to act quickly and design actions that can be implemented in short order for immediate effect. The *Downtown Nanaimo Community Safety Action Plan*, with its focus on downstream measures, is the City's chosen path forward.

- > *Supportive of Systems Planning Organization* — At the time of writing, the City of Nanaimo is in the final stages of establishing a new, arm's-length Health and Housing Systems Planning Organization (SPO). The SPO is designed to bring together and coordinate the homelessness

## SYSTEMS PLANNING ORGANIZATION

*The efforts taken through the Downtown Nanaimo Community Safety Action Plan will support and complement those of the SPO and its participating group.*

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<sup>1</sup> *Community safety and well-being planning framework: Booklet 3 – A shared commitment in Ontario*, 2019.



prevention and response efforts of residents, governments, service providers, funders, community organizations and others. It is designed to identify priorities, set out both upstream and downstream actions to address homelessness, and align resources.

The efforts taken through the *Downtown Nanaimo Community Safety Action Plan* will support and complement those of the SPO and its participating groups. The efficacy of both initiatives — the *Action Plan* and the SPO — will be enhanced if the efforts taken under each complement those of the other. The overall impact on the community will also be enhanced.

- > *Best Practices* — Wherever possible, the measures put forward in the *Action Plan* are designed to reflect and incorporate best practices from urban centres in other parts of British Columbia, Canada and — in a few instances — the United States.<sup>2</sup> Considerable research on efforts and approaches in other centres was undertaken to identify successful initiatives that can be tailored and adapted to circumstances in Nanaimo.
- > *City Resources* — Finally, in its call for an *Action Plan* the City was clear in seeking measures that can be implemented in the immediate term using City resources. The City recognizes that there is little value in putting forward actions that require decisions and resources of other orders of government or of agencies over which the City has no control.

## DESIRED OUTCOMES

The City commissioned the *Downtown Nanaimo Community Safety Action Plan* to create measurable change in the downtown core. Seven desired outcomes were set out:

- > *Improved Perception of Downtown* — One desired outcome of the *Action Plan* is a significantly improved perception of Downtown Nanaimo as an appealing and welcoming place to visit, shop, work and live.
- > *Tangible Decrease in Social Disorder* — A tangible decrease in incidents of problematic behaviour, conflict, property damage, litter and filth, and other examples of social disorder is

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<sup>2</sup> The City of Maple Ridge emerged through the research as a strong centre of best practice in the field.

## CITY RESOURCES

*The measures in the Action Plan can be implemented in the immediate term using City resources. The measures do not rely on resources or action by other orders of government over which the City has no control.*

an expected and desired outcome of the *Plan*.

- > *Support for Businesses and Neighbourhoods* — When the *Action Plan* is implemented, businesses and neighbourhoods will have new connection points to City Hall, and will feel supported in their efforts to prosper in Downtown Nanaimo.
- > *Support for Service Providers* — The non-profit service agencies that are active in the city centre provide essential services to persons in need. The staff and governing bodies of these agencies will, similar to businesses and residents, have new connection points to the City, and will feel supported in the critical work they do.
- > *Connection to Services* — Persons in need in the downtown core will be assisted in connecting to available social services and supports. The addition of Community Safety Officers, assigned to interact with people Downtown Nanaimo, will help to achieve this outcome.
- > *Compassion-based Approach* — All persons in need in Downtown Nanaimo will be approached and treated with compassion, respect and dignity, even in difficult circumstances.
- > *Expectations and Responsibilities Understood* — As a result of measures in the *Action Plan*, all persons in Downtown Nanaimo accept that rights are balanced by responsibilities — in particular, responsibilities related to social order and behaviour. All persons understand, strive to meet, and are supported in their efforts to meet the community's expectations on conduct.

## *SOCIAL DISORDER*

*A tangible decrease in incidents of problematic behaviour, property damage, filth, and other examples of social disorder is an expected outcome of the Action Plan.*

## SECTION 2 MEASURES TO TAKE

The *Downtown Nanaimo Community Safety Action Plan* consists of three groups of measures, all of which are designed for implementation in the short term, some as early as late spring 2022. The groups, which are shown in Figure 2.1, are as follows:

- > *Tiered Response* — Effective, timely and flexible response to behavioural issues and their impacts in the downtown core and surrounding neighbourhoods, using resources that are best suited to the specific types of incidents.
- > *Public Spaces and Assets* — City of Nanaimo programs aimed at keeping public spaces and infrastructure clean, safe and accessible.
- > *Action Plan Governance* — Coordination of the City's implementation efforts, development of new additional measures, and support for and alignment with measures taken by other agencies.

Figure 2.1 includes a separate listing of initiatives and agencies under a heading of "Community Well-being". These initiatives and agencies, which are not included in the *Downtown Nanaimo Community Safety Action Plan*, are included to emphasize their importance to the community's longer-term efforts aimed at addressing serious social problems and their root causes. The *Safety Action Plan*, as noted, features downstream measures designed, in the immediate term, to improve the levels of safety and security in the downtown core. In pursuing these measures, the City and the broader community cannot lose sight of the need for longer-term, upstream strategies.

### TIERED RESPONSE

The tiered response features three separate levels, or tiers, of public safety personnel. Individuals at each tier are trained and mobilized to play specific roles and deal with particular types of issues. Issues that fall outside the prescribed scope of one group are dealt by a different group at a different tier. The groups communicate with one another to ensure that individual issues are handled by the people who are best equipped to handle them, and that no issues are left unaddressed.

### DOWNSTREAM MEASURES

*The Safety Action Plan features downstream measures designed, in the immediate term, to improve the levels of safety and security in the downtown core. The community cannot lose sight of the need for longer-term, upstream strategies.*

Figure 2.1  
Grouping of *Action Plan* Measures

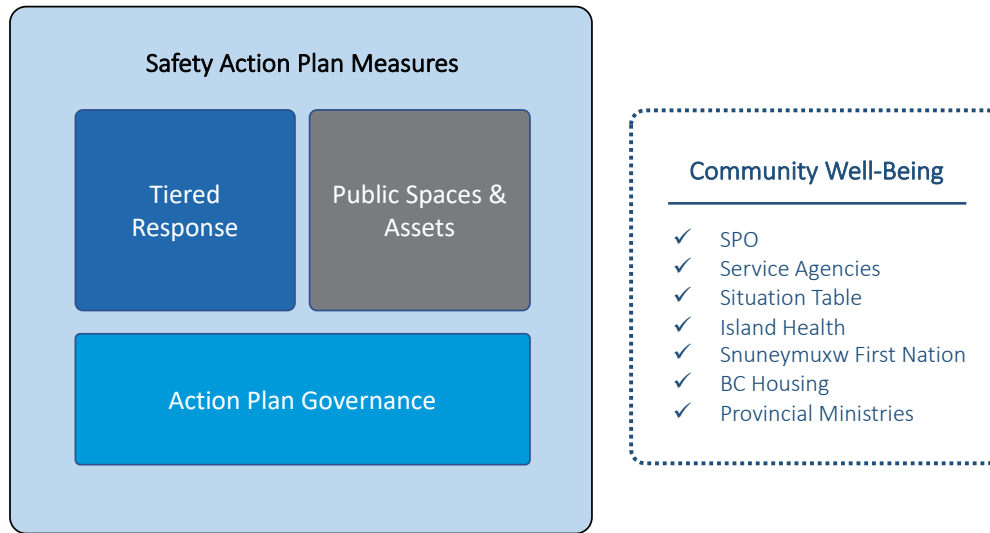


Figure 2.2 presents the three tiers and identifies the groups of staff and officers responsible for action at each level. The text that follows describes each tier in detail:

### Tier One

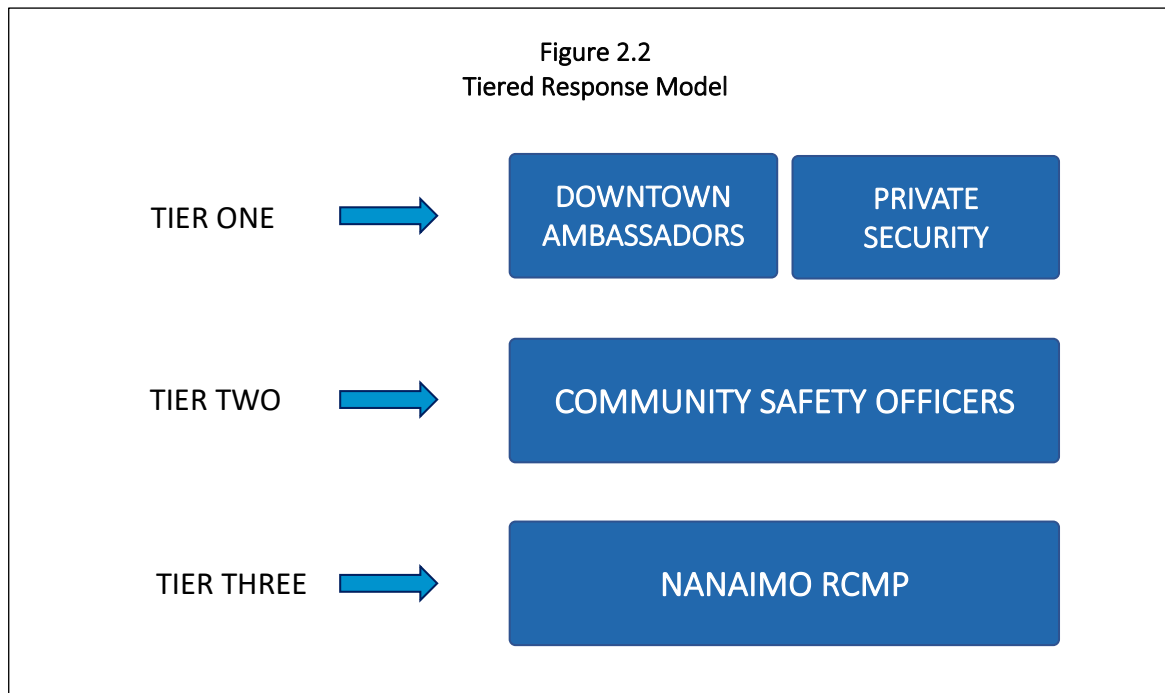
The first tier features Downtown Ambassadors and Private Security.

- > *Downtown Ambassadors* — Downtown Ambassadors are members of the community, trained to engage with and provide assistance to businesses, residents, visitors and persons in need. Ambassadors work in pairs and as part of a larger team to:
  - build ties with local businesses and residents

- provide information on crime prevention
- welcome visitors to Downtown Nanaimo
- help visitors learn about the area and its services and attractions
- help persons in need with information on services available

Ambassadors contribute to the City's efforts to provide a greater visible presence in Downtown Nanaimo. They wear distinctive, colourful uniforms to help them stand out. They move through the city centre on foot or by bicycle, taking time to speak to persons they encounter. They are equipped with cell phones and radios to report health and safety incidents, and they carry iPads to report on the location of graffiti, property damage and garbage. They are trained in the use of naloxone to provide assistance where it is urgently required.

*DOWNTOWN AMBASSADORS*  
*Ambassadors contribute to the City's efforts to provide a greater visible presence in Downtown Nanaimo.*



For five years beginning in 2007, the Nanaimo Community Policing Office ran an Ambassador program in Downtown Nanaimo. In 2012, funding and support for the program ended and the function dissolved. In some other cities — Kamloops, Kelowna, Calgary, Vancouver, Bellingham are five of many examples — Downtown Ambassador programs exist as functions of downtown business improvement associations (BIAs). In Maple Ridge, the Integrated Safety Ambassador Team (ISAT) is a joint initiative of the Ridge Meadows RCMP and the City of Maple Ridge. ISAT, which was launched in 2021, is based within the RCMP's Community Policing Office and makes use of RCMP volunteers, but is delivered as part the City's Community Social Safety Initiative (CSSI) with the involvement of the City's Community Safety Officers.

In Nanaimo, the two BIAs in the city centre may not at present have the capacity to develop, manage and deliver a Downtown Ambassadors program without the involvement of others. Nanaimo RCMP is able to support an initiative by performing the necessary background checks of prospective Ambassadors; the RCMP is not able itself, however, to develop and deliver the program as part of Detachment's Community Policing Office.

To create and deliver a program for Nanaimo, the City will seek to build a coalition of interested organizations — organizations that could include Tourism Nanaimo, the BIAs, social agencies and Vancouver Island University (VIU). Preliminary discussions have been held with faculty from VIU on the possibility of creating an Ambassador program that could be delivered, in part, using practicum students in Criminology, Social Work and other schools. Social agencies (e.g., John Howard Society and Canadian Mental Health Association) could be involved to provide staffing opportunities for persons with lived experience.

It is not anticipated that the City will control, direct or staff such a program. The City will, however, provide financial and other support to help ensure the program's success and longevity.

**Measure** — *The City will develop, in collaboration with other interested organizations, a Downtown Ambassadors program.*

#### COALITION OF PARTIES

*To create and deliver a Downtown Ambassadors program for Nanaimo, the City will seek to build a coalition of interested organizations.*

- > *Private Security* — Private Security guards play an important role, as part of the first tier, in helping to improve the safety and cleanliness of private buildings and lands, as well as public facilities they are contracted to monitor, in the downtown core. Private guards' physical (and visible) onsite presence allows them to:
  - engage with and re-direct persons in need who are using, or attempting to use, private properties, to services where available
  - limit graffiti and other damage to buildings (and their sites) and facilities
  - interact with businesses they are contracted to help protect
  - monitor, observe and report health, safety, cleanliness and other incidents

As one party in the tiered response model, Private Security guards comprise part of the broader team focused on safety and security in Downtown Nanaimo. To be most effective, Private guards liaise and interact regularly with Downtown Ambassadors, Community Safety Officers, staff in other City departments, and RCMP members assigned to the core. Connection to the broader team is facilitated by cell phones, but also by radios that are able to access the City's network.

The City relies on Private Security to monitor and protect City parkades and other municipal facilities in the city centre. During implementation of *Safety Action Plan*, Private Security will continue to play an important role in safeguarding these properties and helping to elevate the level of cleanliness and sense of safety associated with them. As implementation of the *Action Plan* proceeds, the City's use of private security may be reduced, but will not be ended altogether. Private Security, as part of the first tier, will continue to play an important role in helping to make Downtown Nanaimo safer and healthier for all.

**Measure** — *The City will continue to rely on Private Security for City parkades and facilities.*

## **Tier Two**

The second tier in the model features a team of twelve Community Safety Officers (CSOs). CSOs are City of Nanaimo employees. They are similar to Bylaw Enforcement Officers in legal authority and status, both of which are outlined in the *Community Charter*; in role, training and work hours,

however, they are quite distinct from Bylaw Enforcement Officers. Specifics on the CSO service model are as follows:

- > *Engagement* — CSOs engage with persons in need to explain rules and expectations, de-escalate difficult situations, listen to concerns, and provide assistance where possible. The model of engagement is based on compassionate intervention to ensure that all persons are treated with — and *feel* treated with — dignity, kindness and respect.  
  
The CSOs replace the RCMP and the City's Bylaw Enforcement Officers as the preferred team to engage with persons in need and assist them in connecting to services.
- > *Business Liaison* — CSOs interact with downtown businesses to build relationships, help address incidents of social disorder, and provide advice on crime prevention (including principles and practices of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design, or CPTED). CSOs undertake to respond to calls for assistance from business within 30 minutes.
- > *Social Agencies* — CSOs build relationships with service providers in Downtown Nanaimo, providing support and assistance, as well as a presence where possible. Close ties with service agencies are critical in helping to connect persons in need with available services.
- > *Enforcement of Camping Rules* — The City respects the rights of individuals to sleep in parks, when other alternatives are not available. CSOs ensure, however, that the rules established by the City to manage camping in parks are understood and followed by all persons.
- > *Proactive* — CSOs spend the bulk of their shifts in downtown community. They respond to safety and security incidents and complaints that come to the City; however, the team does not work under a complaints-based service model. The team is proactive in its approach to identifying issues, de-escalating situations and providing assistance where possible.
- > *Patrols* — CSOs patrol by foot or on bicycle whenever possible in order to eliminate barriers to interaction. The team has a vehicle at its disposal, but only uses it in cases of severe weather

#### COMMUNITY SAFETY OFFICERS

*CSOs are similar to Bylaw Enforcement Officers in legal authority and status, both of which are outlined in the Community Charter; in role, training and work hours, however, they are quite distinct from Bylaw Enforcement Officers.*



or to attend incidents outside of the core. Where possible, CSOs patrol alongside RCMP members or Downtown Ambassadors.

- > *Extended Hours* — The CSO team provides a minimum of 16 hours of coverage per day, seven days per week. All shifts, including those that extend late into the night, are covered by a three-member CSO unit. Absences are managed to ensure that the number of Safety Officers between 7:00 am and 11:00 pm (or later) every day of the week is at least two.
- > *Downtown Focus* — The CSO team exists primarily to help improve the health and safety of Downtown Nanaimo. The City understands, however, that issues of social disorder in the downtown core exist in other parts of the community as well. CSOs are available to respond to calls from other parts of the City. The team's focus, however, is the downtown core.
- > *Equipment* — CSOs wear uniforms that are distinct from those of Bylaw Enforcement Officers, and that are clearly marked with "CSO" and "Community Safety Officer". They carry protective tools (e.g., handcuffs, sprays) and wear protective (ballistic) vests. They are equipped with cell phones and radios, both of which are used to communicate with personnel at other tiers in the model, and with the City. All CSOs are able to use their cell phones to contact on-duty RCMP members directly for immediate assistance. Direct contact between individuals at different tiers is a key feature of the tiered model.
- > *Training* — Specialized training is a critical feature of the CSO program. To be effective in engaging and helping persons in need, the CSOs receive training in:
  - first aid, including CPR and AED
  - "3D" — developing relationships, de-escalation and debriefing
  - Indigenous cultural awareness and sensitivity
  - trauma informed practices
  - mental health first aid
  - youth at risk
  - recognizing emotionally disturbed persons
  - drug identification

#### EXTENDED HOURS

*The CSO team provides a minimum of 16 hours of coverage per day, seven days per week.*

- homelessness awareness

Additional training is provided on the use of protective force, CPTED, and other matters.

Community Safety Officers, as described in this section, are relatively new positions in Canadian cities, and are not yet widely used. In recent years, however, a number of municipalities in British Columbia and beyond have created CSO positions in response to increasing social disorder in downtown cores, growing numbers of unhoused and at-risk individuals, and heightened concerns on the part of businesses, residents and visitors around safety, cleanliness and security.

Nanaimo's CSO program is based largely on the successful program in place at the City of Maple Ridge. In Maple Ridge, the CSOs are a critical component of the tiered response model, but also of City's broader Community Social Safety Initiative (CSSI), an evolving, best-in-class and multi-faceted program aimed at improving the health and safety of the municipality's downtown core.

**Measure** — *The City will create the CSO position, and hire, train and deploy a team of twelve CSOs in Downtown Nanaimo.*

### **Tier Three**

The highest level in the tiered response model features the Nanaimo RCMP. RCMP members, who take their authority from the *Police Act*, are trained, equipped and empowered to respond to serious safety, security and social disorder incidents in which there is a significant risk of harm, as well as the potential for use of force, restraint and arrest. Dealing with these types of incidents is the most important role for the RCMP.

The Nanaimo Detachment, similar to RCMP detachments across the province, is struggling to maintain its full complement of police. Staffing challenges, exacerbated by the City's significant geographic size and the force's escalating call volumes, make it difficult for the Detachment to provide an increased presence in the downtown core. The Detachment's Officer in Charge (OIC) has committed, however, to provide ongoing support for the RCMP Bike Squad in Downtown Nanaimo, and to reassign the Detachment's four-member Youth Unit to a Downtown Engagement Team for the summer of 2022.

### **CSO TEAM**

*The City will create the position of CSO, and hire, train and deploy a team of twelve CSOs in Downtown Nanaimo.*

The members on the Bike Squad and reassigned Youth Unit will contribute considerably to the overall efforts under the *Safety Action Plan* to provide an enhanced security presence downtown. The teams will also engage and interact with persons in need, local residents, service agencies and businesses. Some of this outreach will occur in collaboration with Community Safety Officers; some will be undertaken by the RCMP members on their own. At all times, however, the members will be available to the CSOs for support when needed.

**Measure** — *The RCMP will reassign the four-member Youth Unit to the a Downtown Engagement Team for the summer of 2022.*

### **PUBLIC SPACES AND ASSETS**

This grouping of measures consists of City programs aimed at keeping public spaces and infrastructure clean, safe and accessible to the broader community. Seven specific programs are identified for the time being, including:

- > Enhanced Clean Team
- > Vandalism Relief Grant
- > Downtown Parkade Cleaners
- > Parkade Security Improvements
- > Public Space CPTED Improvements
- > Rules & Resources
- > Park Ambassadors

It is expected that the City will develop additional programs and initiatives in the months and years ahead in response to changing needs, opportunities and conditions. It is also expected that other agencies — BIAs, community service agencies and neighbourhood associations, for example — will develop programs on their own, or in collaboration with the City, aimed at improving safety, cleanliness and accessibility. Efforts that may be taken by other agencies are not included in this *Safety Action Plan*, since the *Plan* focuses on measures that rely on City resources under the direct control of the City. Many of these other efforts, however, are important to the overall condition of the downtown core, and worthy of broad support.

### *RCMP PRESENCE DOWNTOWN*

*The members on the RCMP Bike Squad and reassigned Youth Unit will contribute considerably to the overall efforts under the Safety Action Plan to provide an enhanced security presence downtown.*

## Enhanced Clean Team

In late 2019, the City created as a pilot project a Social Disorder Response Team (SDRT) to remove waste from City streets, parks and other public spaces. The SDRT — commonly referred to as the Clean Team — is made up of two City of Nanaimo sanitation workers and one vehicle that has been customized with roll-off garbage bins. The Team spends a large part of its time in the downtown core, but also deals with accumulations of garbage in nearby parks and other areas of the City.

Two changes will be made to the Clean Team under the *Safety Action Plan*:

- > *Additional Unit* — The current two-person team will be expanded to include a second two-person unit. The new unit will focus its efforts on Downtown Nanaimo, and will use a new vehicle that is equipped with a power washer. The addition of this second unit will enable the City to provide an enhanced Clean Team service seven days per week.
- > *Secure Funding* — The expanded team will be made permanent and funded through the City's operating budget. The current pilot project has been funded using successive one-year transfers from reserves.

The enhancements to the Clean Team reflect the success of the program to date in Nanaimo, but also the broader success of similar programs in cities across Canada and beyond. Regular, focused attention to cleanliness in public spaces helps to make the spaces accessible and appealing to residents and businesses. It also helps to manage overall levels of litter and filth. In simple terms, cleanliness begets further cleanliness.

**Measure** — *The City will enhance the Clean Team by adding a second two-person unit and vehicle, and by providing stable and secure funding.*

## Vandalism Relief Grant

Increases in Downtown Nanaimo's social disorder have resulted in an increase in vandalism, not only to public spaces and assets, but also to privately-owned buildings and the properties on which they sit. Graffiti is one example of vandalism; others include broken windows and damage to sidings and finishings. Owners of the vandalized properties are responsible for addressing the damage, and for all

## CLEANLINESS IN THE CORE

*Regular, focused attention to cleanliness in public spaces helps to make the spaces accessible and appealing to residents and businesses. It also helps to manage overall levels of litter and filth. In simple terms, cleanliness begets further cleanliness.*

of the costs involved.<sup>3</sup> In cases where the costs are lower than insurance deductibles, owners typically pay the costs directly without submitting an insurance claim. When costs exceed deductibles, owners have the choice to pay directly themselves or seek coverage under their insurance policies. Claims against insurance may affect the costs of the premiums.

The City will develop and implement a Vandalism Relief Grant to assist property owners in Downtown Nanaimo with the cost of work required to repair damage to, and remove graffiti from, their premises. The City's program will borrow from approaches taken in other communities in Canada, but also from municipalities in the United States that have similar programs in place. The City will consult with the Downtown Nanaimo BIA and Old City Quarter BIA on the terms of the grant program, including eligibility and levels of assistance. The City will also rely on the BIAs to help administer the program to their members since the City itself is unable, under the *Community Charter*, to directly provide assistance to private businesses.

The Vandalism Relief Grant is intended to provide quick relief to downtown property owners in the short-term, while the City works to get the tiered response and other measures from the *Safety Action Plan* implemented. The need for assistance is expected to decline as implementation proceeds. In the interim, however, assistance through the grant for businesses that have been impacted by the level of social disorder in Downtown Nanaimo is important.

**Measure** — *The City will develop and implement, in collaboration with the BIAs, a Vandalism Relief Grant.*

### **Downtown Parkade Cleaners**

The City's enhanced Clean Team, profiled earlier, will focus on public spaces, including streets, sidewalks, plazas, walkways and parks. The Clean Team is not intended, and will not have the capacity, to clean the City's three downtown parkades, including:

- > Vancouver Island Conference Centre / Port of Nanaimo Parkade
- > Harbour Front Parkade
- > Bastion Street Parkade

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<sup>3</sup> Under Nanaimo's *Property Maintenance and Standards Bylaw, 2017, No. 7242*, property owners must remove graffiti.

### **RAPID RELIEF**

*The Vandalism Relief Grant is intended to provide quick relief to downtown property owners in the short-term, while the City works to get the tiered response and other measures from the Safety Action Plan implemented.*

These facilities have become magnets for social disorder and filth in recent years, and require regular cleaning. Under the *Safety Action Plan*, the City's existing use of contract cleaners in the downtown parkades will be extended and increased.

**Measure** — *The City will extend and increase the use of contract cleaners in the downtown parkades.*

### **Parkade Security Improvements**

To varying degrees, the City's downtown parkades lack security features such as proper lighting, security cameras and security gates. The facilities also have "dead zones" and other areas that are inherently unsafe. Improvements to the facilities are needed to:

- > prevent people from occupying stairwells and other parts of facilities
- > prevent vehicle-related property crime
- > protect the safety of parkade patrons

Improvements will help to achieve these goals and, in so doing, change the perception and appeal of the parkades. Improvements will also help the City return the facilities to their original purpose — namely, as off-street parking places for people who work in Downtown Nanaimo, for residents who drive downtown for dining, shopping and events, and for visitors to the city.

At the time of writing, the City is in the process of retaining a security consultant to identify changes to make, and to provide an implementation schedule.

**Measure** — *The City will identify and implement security improvements to the downtown parkades.*

### **Public Space CPTED Improvements**

In 2021, Nanaimo's Community Policing Program collaborated with the RCMP, downtown neighbourhood associations and Vancouver Island University on the Nanaimo Neighbourhood Safety Audit initiative. Under the initiative, three safety audits were conducted in the downtown core.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Six sites in total were selected for safety audits.

### *RETURN TO PURPOSE*

*Improvements will help the City return the parkades to their original purpose — namely, as off-street parking places for people who work in Downtown Nanaimo, for residents who drive downtown for dining, shopping and events, and for visitors to the city.*

- > *Old City Neighbourhood Safety Audit*
- > *Downtown Neighbourhood Safety Audit*
- > *South End Neighbourhood Safety Audit*

Each audit began with a survey of residents and businesses to understand perceptions and concerns related to safety. After the surveys were completed, participants walked as a group along routes that, based on community input, were understood to present safety challenges. Each route included commercial hubs, trails and pathways, and residential areas.

The audits produced many recommendations for residents, businesses, decision-makers at the City, and others to consider. Some of the recommendations identified the need for physical improvements to expose areas that are currently hidden from view, illuminate dark zones,<sup>5</sup> improve public stairways and sidewalks, address laneway issues, and incorporate other CPTED-based changes.

As part of the *Safety Action Plan*, the City will set out specific CPTED changes to make to public spaces in the downtown core. The list of changes will be informed by the safety audits, as well as input from the Community Safety Officers, residents and businesses.

**Measure** — *The City will identify and implement CPTED changes in the downtown core, based on information the safety audits, and input from Community Safety Officer, residents and businesses.*

### **Rules & Resources**

The City acknowledges the rights of all citizens, including those who are unhoused and in need. The City recognizes that all persons deserve to be treated with dignity and respect. Community Safety Officers who engage with persons in need will practice positive and compassionate intervention, will provide persons in need with information on services available, and will help persons in need find and get to services whenever possible. CSOs will also, however, advise persons in need of the community's expectations on conduct, and of the rules that are in place to govern behaviours and actions.

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<sup>5</sup> Some individuals who provided input to the *Safety Action Plan* process noted that improvements to lighting must be considered carefully. Lighting can have the unintended consequence of creating zones of assembly for unhoused persons.

### **RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

*Community Safety Officers will practice positive and compassionate intervention, and will help persons in need find and get to services whenever possible. CSOs will also, however, advise persons in need of the community's expectations on conduct, and of the rules that are in place to govern behaviours and actions.*

To assist the CSOs in their interactions with people, the City will develop a user-friendly, two-part handout guide called *Rules & Resources*.<sup>6</sup> The section on resources will identify current information on services available and where to access them. Information will be presented using a question and answer (Q&A) format, illustrated with icons. The following types of questions will be featured:

- > Where can I get something to eat?
- > Where can I find a shelter with a bed?
- > Who can give me a tent and sleeping bag?
- > Where can I take a shower?
- > Where can I wash my clothes?
- > Where can I get dry shoes and new clothes?
- > Where are drop-in centres, and when are they open?
- > Where can I find a safe injection site?
- > Where can I find a supervised inhalation site?
- > Who can help me apply for new ID and welfare?
- > Who can help me contact my family?
- > Where can I find a nurse or doctor who will help me?
- > Where can I get help for mental health or addictions?

The City has an existing publication titled *Surviving in Nanaimo 2022: A Guide to Local Agencies and Services* with a definitive inventory of services available. Information on services and supports in Nanaimo can also be found through the *HelpSeeker.org* app. Both tools provide useful information that will help to inform the *Rules & Resources* guide. Neither tool, however, is a user-friendly pamphlet with the key, basic supports identified that CSOs can share with and explained to persons in need.

The rules part of the guide will set out in clear, simple terms the community's expectations related to acceptable behaviour. Individual entries will address the following types of issues and situations:

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<sup>6</sup> The guide is intended for use primarily by CSOs, but will be available to community service agencies, RCMP Members, Bylaw Enforcement Officers, Ambassadors and others.



- > *Parkades* — "No one can go into a city parkade unless they are parking or retrieving a car. The parkades cannot be used as a shelter, a washroom or a place to store your things."
- > *Conduct* — "There are businesses in Downtown Nanaimo that need to be able to operate and have customers come and go without feeling unsafe or unwelcome. To help make Downtown safe and welcoming to everyone, please do not:
  - swear or use profane language
  - block a street or sidewalk
  - fight with others
  - litter or create a mess
  - use any public or private space as a toilet
  - drink or use drugs in public
  - damage someone's property"
- > *Asking for Food or Money* — "It is not illegal to ask someone for money or food. But the province has a law to limit how you do it. You must only ask someone once. You must not get in someone's way as they are walking, follow them or walk beside them. You must not use abusive language, and you can only ask for money or food if you are on your own."

Rules on setting up shelter will also be included in the guide. The list of rules will identify the specific parks in which, and the hours during which, people may set up shelter. The rules will note, as well, that:

- > shelters may only be set up in permitted areas of parks (signs are posted)
- > shelters may not be set up in playgrounds, on sports fields, in gardens or on pathways
- > shelters must be no larger than 3 metres (10 feet) by 3 metres
- > shelters must be 3 metres from another shelter, and 3 metres from the edge of the permitted area
- > shelters must be at least 30 metres (100 feet) from a playground or school
- > shelters must not be attached to trees or park structures
- > no open fires or fire pits are allowed

- > barbeques must be at least 2 metres from a shelter or park structure
- > shelters must be taken down and packed up by 8:00 am the every morning (unless the City has declared an extreme weather event)

**Measure** — *The City will develop, for distribution by Community Safety Officers, a user-friendly Rules & Resources Guide.*

### **Park Ambassadors**

in 2020, at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the City assigned a small number of Parks staff to the role of Park Ambassador. Under a pilot program, he staff were tasked with patrolling parks to encourage physical distancing. Other duties included litter pick-up.

The City will re-establish the Park Ambassador program for the summer of 2022, and repurpose it to focus on incidents of social disorder in the parks closest to Downtown Nanaimo, including Maffeo Sutton and Caledonia Parks. In some ways the Park Ambassadors will be similar to the Downtown Ambassadors as envisioned in this *Action Plan*. The staff in parks, for example, will provide an important physical (and visible) presence, will observe and report instances of social disorder, and will provide information and assistance to visitors and park users. Park Ambassadors will also collect litter where possible.

Four staff in total will be assigned to the Park Ambassadors function for the summer of 2022. The program will operate seven days per week, with at least two staff on per day. The team will wear colourful uniforms for easy identification. The need for Park Ambassadors in future summers will be assessed as the *Action Plan* proceeds through implementation.

**Measure** — *The City will re-establish and repurpose the Park Ambassador program for the summer of 2022.*

### **ACTION PLAN GOVERNANCE**

The final component of the *Downtown Nanaimo Community Safety Action Plan* is a governance model to oversee the implementation and evolution of the *Plan*. The model features three parts:

### **DOWNTOWN PARKS**

*Park Ambassadors will provide an important physical (and visible) presence, will observe and report instances of social disorder, and will provide information and assistance to visitors and park users.*

- > Downtown Safety Coordination
- > Inter-Departmental Working Group
- > Stakeholders' Committee

### **Action Plan Coordination**

The City will provide the resources necessary to oversee and coordinate the implementation of the *Action Plan*. In the immediate term, the resources will be used for management consulting — an approach that will allow implementation to proceed without delay. In 2023 and beyond, the City may determine, based on a review of the matter, to create an internal position to coordinate ongoing efforts under the *Plan*, as well as adjustments to the *Plan*.

Coordination of *Action Plan* implementation in the immediate and longer terms will involve:

- > supporting the development of the Community Safety Offer team
- > liaising with Private Security firms active in the core, the Downtown Ambassadors program and the RCMP
- > liaising with key stakeholder groups, including the Systems Planning Organization, BIAs, community associations, service agencies and others
- > liaising with other municipalities — including the City of Maple Ridge — to stay abreast of best practices and initiatives elsewhere
- > supporting the Inter-Departmental Working Group and Stakeholders' Committee (see below)
- > monitoring, through the collection of quantitative and qualitative data, the levels and the perceptions of social disorder, cleanliness, health and safety in Downtown Nanaimo
- > developing progress measures to gauge the effectiveness of individual actions and the overall plan in achieving the City's desired outcomes
- > developing, in collaboration with City departments and external stakeholders, changes to existing actions and the addition of new actions
- > reporting regularly to Senior Administration and City Council on progress under the *Action Plan*, with recommendations on changes to consider

The *Safety Action Plan* is not a static document that once implemented can be left alone. Conditions in Downtown Nanaimo will change in the months and years ahead (as they have in past years); new

### *EVOLVING PLAN*

*Conditions in Downtown Nanaimo will change in the months and years ahead; new needs and opportunities will arise. The Action Plan will need to evolve in response to changes and, at times, in anticipation of them.*

needs and opportunities will arise. The *Action Plan* will need to evolve in response to changes and, at times, in anticipation of them. Resources dedicated to *Action Plan* coordination will enable the City to stay on top of events in the core, and to determine, in consultation with others, necessary adjustments to the *Plan*.

**Measure** — *The City will provide resources to oversee and coordinate the implementation of the Downtown Nanaimo Community Safety Action Plan.*

### **Inter-Departmental Working Group**

A range of City departments and municipal agencies will be involved in the implementation of the *Action Plan*. Some departments will provide general support to the overall effort; others will be responsible for specific actions. To ensure that all departments and agencies with roles to play are fully aware of steps being taken through *Plan* implementation, an Inter-Departmental Working Group will be created.

The Working Group, chaired by the Deputy City Manager or his designate, will meet regularly and as often as required to coordinate efforts, monitor progress, address challenges and determine changes to consider.<sup>7</sup> The Group will be comprised largely of senior level managers from a range of departments and agencies, as suggested in the following list:

- > Deputy City Manager
- > Inspector, RCMP
- > Director, Public Works
- > Assistant Chief, Nanaimo Fire Rescue
- > Director, Facilities and Parks
- > Director, Community Development
- > Manager, Communications
- > Manager, Bylaws

Meetings will be structured with agendas; minutes will be recorded with actions for members to take clearly identified.

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<sup>7</sup> For the foreseeable future, it is anticipated that the Working Group will meet bi-weekly.

### **WORKING GROUP**

*The Inter-Departmental Working Group will meet regularly to coordinate efforts, monitor progress, address challenges and determine changes to consider.*

**Measure** — *The City will create an Inter-Departmental Working Group to ensure that all departments and agencies with roles to play are fully aware of steps being taken through Action Plan implementation.*

### **Downtown Nanaimo Stakeholders' Committee**

The *Downtown Nanaimo Community Safety Action Plan* focuses on measures the City of Nanaimo can take directly, using resources under its control, to effect positive change in the downtown core. The City recognizes that its own actions, while critical to achieving the desired outcomes, do not represent the full complement of initiatives, programs, ideas and efforts that are in place today, or that are needed in the coming months and years to make lasting improvements. Several other agencies and groups with interests in a healthy and safe Downtown Nanaimo are, and will continue to be, part of the solution.

To harness the energy of stakeholder groups, the City will establish a Downtown Nanaimo Stakeholders' Committee with representation from a range of groups, including the following:

- > City of Nanaimo
- > Systems Planning Organization
- > Nanaimo RCMP
- > Business Improvement Associations
- > Tourism Nanaimo
- > Nanaimo Prosperity Corporation
- > Neighbourhood Associations
- > Community Service Providers
- > Snuneymuxw First Nation
- > Island Health
- > BC Housing
- > Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions

The Committee will serve as a forum to identify opportunities for collective action, identify data and other needs for effective advocacy, develop joint positions, coordinate individual actions and

programs, and monitor changes and improvements in the city centre. The Committee will be chaired, at least initially, by the City's DSC, and will meet monthly or bi-monthly.

**Measure** — *The City will create a Downtown Nanaimo Stakeholders' Committee as a forum to identify opportunities for collective action, identify data and other needs for effective advocacy, develop joint positions, coordinate individual actions and programs, and monitor changes and improvements in the city centre.*

## SUMMARY OF MEASURES

Fourteen measures to take are identified under the three components (combined) of the *Downtown Nanaimo Community Safety Action Plan*. The measures are summarized as follows:

### > Tiered Response Model

- *The City will develop, in collaboration with other interested organizations, a Downtown Ambassadors program.*
- *The City will continue to rely on Private Security for City parkades and facilities.*
- *The City will create the CSO position, and hire, train and deploy a team of twelve CSOs.*
- *The RCMP will reassign the four-member Youth Unit to the a Downtown Engagement Team for the summer of 2022.*

### > Public Spaces and Assets

- *The City will enhance the Clean Team by adding a second two-person unit and vehicle, and by providing stable and secure funding.*
- *The City will develop and implement, in collaboration with the BIAs, a Vandalism Relief Grant.*
- *The City will identify and implement security improvements to the downtown parkades.*
- *The City will identify and implement CPTED changes in the downtown core, based on information the safety audits, and input from Community Safety Officer, residents and businesses.*

## STAKEHOLDERS' COMMITTEE

*The Committee will be a forum to identify opportunities for collective action, identify data and other needs for effective advocacy, develop joint positions, coordinate individual actions and programs, and monitor changes and improvements in the city centre.*

- *The City will develop, for distribution by Community Safety Officers, a user-friendly Rules & Resources Guide.*
- *The City will re-establish and repurpose the Park Ambassador program for the summer of 2022.*

> Action Plan Governance

- *The City will provide resources to oversee and coordinate the implementation of the Downtown Nanaimo Community Safety Action Plan.*
- *The City will create an Inter-Departmental Working Group to ensure that all departments and agencies with roles to play are fully aware of steps being taken through Action Plan implementation.*
- *The City will create a Downtown Nanaimo Stakeholders' Committee as a forum to identify opportunities for collective action, identify data and other needs for effective advocacy, develop joint positions, coordinate individual actions and programs, and monitor changes and improvements in the city centre.*

## SECTION 3 ACTION PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

The *Downtown Nanaimo Community Safety Action Plan* was originally intended to be fully implemented over a three-year period, from 2022 to 2024. In recognition of the acute nature of the social disorder, health and safety concerns that exist in Downtown Nanaimo today, however, the City has determined to put of the actions in place in 2022. Figure 3.1 presents an implementation schedule.

Figure 3.1  
Implementation Schedule

		2022			2023				2024			
Safety Action Plan Measures		Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Tiered Response	Downtown Ambassadors											
	Private Security (City Parkades)											
	Community Safety Officers											
	RCMP Youth Unit Transition											
Public Spaces & Assets	Enhanced Clean Team											
	Vandalism Relief Grant											
	Downtown Parkade Cleaners											
	Parkade Security Improvements											
	Public Space CPTED Improvements											
	Rules & Resources											
	Park Ambassadors											
Governance	Action Plan Coordination											
	Inter-Departmental Working Group											
	Stakeholders' Committee											

Design/Plan  
 Implement  
 Monitor/Adjust