

18.0 Community Services

Goals

Work with School District #22, Okanagan College and other education service institutions to provide more education opportunities in the city.

Continue to provide emergency services meeting the needs of the community, and anticipate and plan for expansion of those services as necessary.

Work with senior government to ensure health care services are available to meet the growing and changing needs of our community.

Work with senior government and community organizations to provide services meeting the needs of the community.

Guiding Principles Met

Create a culture of sustainability

Create strong, compact and complete neighbourhoods

Create a youth friendly city

Context

Although the City of Vernon does not have jurisdiction over many of the services provided in our community, the Official Community Plan may state the broad objectives of the City with regard to those services as per Section 474(2) of the Local Government Act. This also provides the direction for City policies and initiatives which can serve to support and encourage service provision in our community.

Education services in Vernon are critical to the future well being of the residents and the growth and health of the local economy. 2010 Canadian Socio-economic Information Management System (CANSIM) data lists the median household income in Vernon at \$50,644, somewhat lower than the B.C. average of \$60,333. For household income to rise, better job opportunities are required and education plays a significant role in a resident's employment opportunities. In order to attract more and better job opportunities in the community, employers are looking for an educated and skilled work force. In 2011, 50% of Vernon's working age population had a certificate, diploma or degree, compared to the B.C. average of 56%. As the attraction and retention of employment in the community is desired, as well as youth, improvements education opportunities for our residents is necessary.

Education services in Vernon are provided by a wide range of organizations. The largest education service provider is School District #22 with seven elementary schools and three secondary schools in Vernon. Post secondary education is available through Okanagan College and the University of British Columbia - Okanagan is nearby in Kelowna. In addition to these major education service providers in Vernon, there are trade, technical, diploma and career development programs offered through private sector and government funded programs.



As per Section 476 of the Local Government Act, School District #22 will regularly be consulted and their input sought on school facility and service needs for the community. While sufficient sites are identified on the land use plan, the reality facing the School District is not expansion but declining enrolment. However, facility renovation and replacement continue to occur, including the recent replacement of Vernon Secondary School.

Emergency services provide safety and security for our community. This includes services under the City's jurisdiction: fire protection services provided by the Vernon Fire Department; policing services provided through the RCMP and Community Policing; and search and rescue services provided through the RCMP by Vernon Search and Rescue. Services under provincial jurisdiction include ambulance services provided by B.C. Ambulance Service and forest fire support services provided by the Ministry of Forests.

Health services in Vernon are provided by Interior Health through Vernon Jubilee Hospital, Vernon Public Health Centre and various other facilities and programs in the community. Medical professionals, medical service providers, mental health service providers, dentists and denturists combine to provide comprehensive services for the health and well being of Vernon residents. Vernon has a population older than the provincial average. 2011 Census indicates that 37.2% of Vernon's residents are 55 or older, while the B.C. average is 29.6%. As the portion of the city's population over 55 is projected to increase over the next twenty five years, expansion of health services and facilities will be required to meet not only the growth of the population but also the aging of the population and their increased demands for health care. Senior government must recognize this increased need in our community and ensure adequate funding is available.

In addition to health services, Vernon's growing seniors population requires expanded social, recreational and cultural services, and will put additional pressure on ensuring physical accessibility is enhanced at a broad range of facilities.

Cemetery services are provided by the City of Vernon. The current cemetery site on Pleasant Valley Road is nearing capacity. As such, provision of cemetery services in the future should be reviewed with consideration of expansion of the existing site and facilities and/or location of a new cemetery site.

Supporting Policies

- 18.1 Support and participate in sub-regional, regional, provincial and national initiatives that will result in enhanced community services for Vernon residents.
- 18.2 Support and participate in cooperative efforts with School District #22, Okanagan College, UBCO and other education service providers in the community expand opportunities for the residents of Vernon. As education opportunities are provided for residents, the City shall pursue economic development that provides corresponding employment opportunities. In addition, the City shall encourage the provision of educational opportunities that support the goals of the Economic Development Strategic Action Plan.
- 18.3 Provide policing facilities to meet community needs as it grows, including community policing services.
- 18.4 Support and participate in cooperative efforts with the Vernon Fire Department, RCMP, Community Policing, Ministry of Forests, B.C. Ambulance Service and Vernon Search and Rescue towards the enhancement of emergency services for residents of Vernon.
- 18.5 Seek commitment from the provincial and federal governments for provision of funding for health services in the community to meet the requirements of our growing and aging population.
- 18.6 Ensure sufficient area is identified in the growth strategy to accommodate for health services within the City Centre and Neighbourhood Districts to ensure convenient access to services.
- 18.7 Support non-profit groups and agencies which provide services to our growing seniors population.
- 18.8 Support integration of community services such as religious facilities, schools, care centres, group homes and seniors housing into residential areas of Vernon while mitigating any impacts on the immediate neighbourhood.
- 18.9 Support the development of additional fire hall sites, as necessary, to improve long term fire fighting capacity.
- 18.10 The development and construction of new school sites is the responsibility of School District #22. The City will liaise with the School District to assist in early planning of required educational facilities in new neighbourhoods.
- 18.11 Continue to support the use of schools, gymnasiums, meeting rooms and school grounds between different user groups in the community.

- 18.12 Continue to support the public use of other facilities such as religious facilities in meeting the needs of community services such as childcare, seniors programs, youth programs and meeting space for neighbourhood clubs and other community organizations.
- 18.13 Review future cemetery requirements and implement an appropriate strategy, including expansion of the existing site and facilities, and/or development of a new cemetery site in the community.