

20.0 Social Planning

Goals

Support planning for a safe and healthy community through crime prevention through social development initiatives.

Support the provision of housing for all members of the community, including those in core housing need, requiring special needs housing, or emergency shelter. Ensure the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Homelessness Strategy and the Attainable Housing Strategy.

Ensure that the community is free from physical barriers so that all residents can move freely and access services, facilities and programs.

Address financial barriers to service, facilities and program participation.

Support the development of comprehensive, quality and affordable childcare and early childhood education programs.

Meet the emergency food needs of the community and support the development of programs that promote a healthy food system.

Support the development of services, facilities and programs for people with mental health and addictions.

Ensure the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Harm Reduction Strategy.

Create a welcoming community that addresses discrimination and celebrates diversity in all its forms.

Include Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design considerations in new development.

Guiding Principles Met

Foster prosperity for people, business and government
Protect and preserve green spaces and sensitive areas
Ensure housing meets the needs of the whole community
Create a culture of sustainability
Protect agricultural land
Create strong, compact and complete neighbourhoods
Provide alternative transportation
Revitalize the Downtown
Create a youth friendly city

Context

Sustainability is widely understood as having an intrinsic social component, in addition to economic and environmental considerations. Policies and programs must contribute positively to the community's social health and condition, helping community members overcome obstacles related to safe, secure and affordable housing, accessibility, food, recreation, appropriate childcare, health services and safety in the built environment (CPTED). It is important to recognize that many of these issues will affect all of us at some point in our lives: an accessible entrance is a benefit for strollers, seniors, wheelchairs and someone on crutches. All of us want to feel safe when we're out in the community. Many of us will seek childcare for a young son or daughter.



More and more families are facing increasing demands on their time and financial resources. Many aspects of this are not the domain of local government, however, we must consider the role of the built form in this phenomena. Low density subdivisions which do not support public transit and are far from employment, commercial services, schools and recreational opportunities increase reliance single occupant vehicles, with the associated negative impacts of increased costs, additional time and greenhouse gas emissions. The land use plan supports greater opportunities to live near these services, and fundamentally supports the provision of efficient and comprehensive public transit.

At the same time, local government has faced continual downloading from senior levels of government, often without adequate funding to cover new costs. In addition to newly delegated responsibilities, the withdrawal of provincial and federal funding and supportive regulatory standards has created a vacuum in the provision of many services. Residents often turn to their local government, unaware of the division of responsibilities and funding for many social matters. Health care and childcare are both examples of this concern. Although the municipality cannot replace these services, they can take a leadership role in facilitating community planning to address these issues and lobbying provincial and federal levels of government to fulfill their mandates. Communities that have taken the time to identify gaps, form partnerships and gain municipal support in their strategic planning tend to be more successful in securing provincial and federal grants as funding sources become available.

The City recognizes that effective social planning is integral to creating a healthy community. While the responsibility for financing health and social programs rests with senior levels of government, the City has promoted and supported initiatives designed to meet the needs of all residents in the community. Since 2007, Council has supported a contract with the Social Planning Council to assist the City in addressing issues

such as homelessness, childcare, attainable housing, food security and neighbourhood safety. This arrangement has worked very well to date, and should be pursued for as long as practical to do so. In future, it may be necessary to consider establishing a social planning staff position if these issues expand and require more attention.

Crime Prevention through Social Development (CPSD)

Crime prevention through social development (CPSD) focuses on the social factors which underlie crime. Certain childhood experiences (mostly related to living in poverty) are consistently linked with a higher likelihood of criminal activity later in life. Youth living in these conditions are considered to be "at risk" although it must be stressed that not all youth living in poverty become criminally active. By addressing social conditions (such as housing, food security, recreation, family income and childcare) the risk of criminal behaviour is reduced before it occurs. In this way, the wider community benefits in terms of overall safety and security, reduced policing costs and engagement of local youth. The Partners in Action Committee uses a CPSD approach and includes the non profit sector, business community and local politicians in their projects and initiatives.

Housing

With the increase in housing costs throughout B.C. in the last ten years, housing has become a concern for many families that would have been able to enter the traditional market for ownership previously. This has resulted in new consideration being given to the ability of households to enter, and graduate to successively higher levels of, the local housing market. This is referred to as attainable housing, and is addressed in Section 7.0 Residential. Market rental housing is also addressed in Section 7.0.



Issues facing those with core housing need differ from those seeking to enter into home ownership. Core housing need describes those people living in housing that is unsafe or in need of major repair, is overcrowded or unaffordable. Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation defines unaffordable as spending more than 30% of a person's income on shelter. While some may choose to spend more than that on their home, those in core housing need do so out of necessity. According to BC Stats, in 2011 20% of home owners and over 45% of renters in the North Okanagan are in core housing need.

The growing proportion of seniors living in the community also requires that special attention be given to ensuring that the housing provided as the city grows will meet the needs of seniors. Often, what seniors need from housing is different than those of other age groups, particularly when health and mobility challenges

start to arise. Discussion and policies surrounding the provision of seniors' housing can be found in Section 6.0 Residential. Special needs housing refers to housing for those people who cannot have their needs met through standard market housing. This may be due to physical disability, mental handicap, addiction or other non-financial barrier to standard market housing.

The primary responsibility for the provision of safe and affordable housing for low income and special needs households remains with the senior levels of government. Local governments have neither the mandate or funding to provide ongoing subsidized housing.

Despite this, the City recognizes that local governments must do what they can in facilitating the construction of safe and appropriate shelter and housing for its citizens in core housing need, with special needs or requiring emergency shelter. In 2008, Council amended the Development Cost Charges Bylaw to eliminate Development Cost Charges for those housing developments that are owned and developed by a non-profit society or government for rental units. The City also adopted its first housing agreements with respect to the provision of both ownership and rental units within a market housing project in 2008, and entered into a long term lease of City owned land for purpose built rental units for low income families.

Emergency housing and shelter serve those members of the community which may be homeless or escaping from an abusive relationship or environment. These community members in crisis may require help for a day or for a prolonged period, and a range of facilities is desirable to meet these needs. The City of Vernon supported the non-profit sector and BC Housing to establish a permanent shelter in Vernon in 2008. Bylaw Enforcement works closely with community outreach workers to reduce the number of homeless camps in Vernon and to ensure campers are connected to services.

Accessibility

Accessibility has traditionally referred to the removal of barriers to physically accessing a service or facility. For example, sidewalk ramps and other alternatives to steps and stairs permit wheelchairs, strollers or mobility impaired people to move more easily. Auditory traffic signals permit sight impaired residents to safely use street crossings. It is important to ensure that the community is free from physical barriers, and to ensure that all residents can move freely and access services, facilities and programs. Accessibility is an especially important issue for Vernon given the large proportion of seniors in the community and given that the population and demographic projections suggest that this proportion is expected to accelerate. In short, accessibility will play a large role in how the city grows and develops over time.

Increasingly, accessibility includes other barriers to participation, including financial barriers. The Partners in Action Committee facilitated greater access to the Recreation Centre's programs for residents with disabilities by helping to design a discount program in conjunction with Parks and Recreation. The analysis of this program indicates enhanced participation by residents with disabilities while maintaining a positive financial benefit. Since 2008, over 900 individuals have accessed the program without the need to increase staff at the recreation centre.

Childcare and Early Childhood Education

Families require options for quality, affordable childcare and early childhood education programs. Elimination of provincial subsidies has made childcare increasingly unaffordable, while for many families childcare is a necessity in securing employment. Quality childcare not only supports economic security for many families, but supports healthy child development and success.



A comprehensive childcare policy encompasses more than locations for childcare centres; it facilitates and supports the establishment of a broad range of childcare options. Ideally, childcare facilities should be distributed broadly throughout the community and offer a range of types from home based care to group centres. The affordability of childcare must also be addressed, which can only be fully achieved with the participation of the provincial government.

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design principles (CPTED) increase community safety through the design of the physical environment to positively influence behavior and eliminate opportunities for negative behavior. It is based on the concept that there is a direct relationship between the physical environment and the behavior of people. Buildings and spaces that are well designed can discourage criminal behavior and prevent crimes from taking place.

CPTED has been employed across Canada and internationally, and has proven to be an effective tool in reducing the incidence of crime in communities. CPTED can be applied to the design of new buildings and public spaces, but should also be employed after a development is completed, in the form of maintenance and upkeep.

CPTED principles include:

- Encouraging the strategic placement of physical features, activities and people to preserve sight lines and ensure maximum visibility
- Facilitate pedestrian movement between different spaces by the considered placement of entrances, exits, fencing, landscaping and lighting
- Encourage the use of physical attributes to express ownership, including fences, pavement treatment, art, signage and landscaping
- Promote activity in public spaces and opportunities for “eyes on the street”
- Encourage regular property maintenance to ensure that visibility is not adversely affected by overgrown vegetation or obstructive or inoperative lighting

Supporting Policies

- 20.1 Recognize the role of the provincial and federal governments in the provision of services essential for Vernon residents, and work with and advocate as necessary to ensure adequate funding and services are available in the region.
- 20.2 Continue to work with the Partners in Action Committee, Interior Health Authority, School District #22 and other appropriate parties to identify social policy or advocacy needs.
- 20.3 Recognize and support the important contributions of volunteers, non-profit groups and agencies which bring significant value to the community.
- 20.4 Continue to support the Social Planning Council in the provision of social planning services to the City, including programs and initiatives to address homelessness, childcare, attainable housing, food security and neighbourhood safety. Long term consideration should be given to establishing a social planning staff position to address the increasing number of social issues faced by local government.
- 20.5 Investigate and establish policies and guidelines for property tax exemptions for buildings owned or leased by non-profit organizations to provide social, cultural or recreational services and programs for public benefit.
- 20.6 Foster appreciation and respect for all residents, regardless of income, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, ability.
- 20.7 Enhance access to information regarding services and resources for immigrants and new residents on the City's website.
- 20.8 Encourage affordable housing units, either ownership or rental, within the context of market housing developments through the use of covenants for housing agreements.
- 20.9 Work in partnership with community agencies, non-profit organizations, senior levels of government and the business community in the provision of affordable housing, special needs housing and emergency shelter and housing.
- 20.10 Where appropriate, lease City owned land for the provision of units for those in core housing need or requiring emergency shelter.
- 20.11 Recognize the role of rooming houses in the provision of affordable housing options.

- 20.12 Recognize the need for facilities such as drop in centres, hostels, group homes and other similar facilities. Locations must be appropriate for the need and chosen with regard to proximity to amenities including public transit, commercial, social and recreational services.
- 20.13 Work towards universal physical accessibility in all civic buildings and facilities and support same in all new development.
- 20.14 Ensure all new sidewalks, crosswalks and transit stops are constructed for universal physical accessibility, including auditory traffic signals.
- 20.15 Ensure that fees for civic facility use are set to maximize the accessibility of community facilities to the general public, with due consideration for generating revenues to address the costs of the facilities.
- 20.16 Work with stakeholders and non-profit groups to identify barriers to accessibility and prioritize investment in improvements.
- 20.17 Work with parents, non-profit agencies and senior governments to develop and maintain comprehensive, accessible and affordable childcare and early childhood development programs.
- 20.18 Develop a childcare policy for the community, with consideration of community spaces for childcare centres and the facilitation of more opportunities for home based childcare.
- 20.19 Utilize Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design principles (CPTED) in the review process for rezoning and development applications.