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Social Planning Update and Directional Document

Community and Social Issues Committee
September 27, 2011



NEW WESTMINSTER

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Introduction

The City of New Westminster is committed to creating a caring, inclusive, safe, supportive and welcoming community. It was one of the first municipalities to incorporate social goals and priorities in its Official Community Plan (1998) and was a forerunner with regard to the development of an Affordable Housing Strategy (1996), Child Care Strategy (1996) and Homelessness Action Strategy (2006). It also established a Community and Social Issues Committee in 1998, whose mandate it is “to promote social policies and community programs which contribute to the general health, welfare and quality of life of the residents of New Westminster.”

While the City was viewed as being socially progressive, it was not always successful in translating social planning policy into action. Initially, there was no designated staff member to implement social



planning policy and when a position was created; it encompassed both heritage protection and social planning. Despite the best efforts of the assigned staff member, this arrangement did not serve either area particularly well. Given the size of New Westminster (approaching 58,000 in 2006) and given the number of social challenges facing the City, including increasing homelessness and a lack of licensed child care, a Senior Social Planner was hired in August 2007.

As part of the job description for this new position, it stated: “You will develop and implement social planning policy in areas such as homelessness, affordable housing, child care, multiculturalism and neighbourhood community development. You will also work closely with the City’s Parks, Culture and Recreation Department on arts and culture, early childhood development, youth and seniors.” A key component of the job description was to “advise Council on an appropriate role for the City on social issues relative to other government and non-profit partners.”

Given that it has been four years since the hiring of the Senior Social Planner, it is an appropriate time to reflect on the status of social planning policy in the City; the appropriate role for the City to play in this area; the accomplishments to date; the challenges that still need to be addressed; and the possible actions for moving forward. It should be emphasized that the progress that has been made would not have been possible without the commitment of Council, the support of City staff in a number of Departments, the assistance of the senior levels of government, and the efforts of community and social service agencies. All have shared in the responsibility and work, thus all must share in the credit.



Definition

Social planning policy is building community well-being. Other forms of planning focus on land use, buildings, or streets. Social Planning policy focuses on people and their relationships. It includes all aspects of living in a community: safe neighbourhoods; services and supports for community members who are at-risk or vulnerable; accessible transportation; adaptable and affordable housing; citizen engagement; community gathering and meeting places to facilitate neighbourliness and social interaction; and a sense of belonging and inclusion for everyone.

Social planning policy is also community development and capacity building, as it brings together individuals, groups, communities and governments to work towards enhancing a community's quality of life. Social planning policy encourages residents to become active in their community and to develop their full potential.

The social planning policy process identifies areas of community change; explores the social impact of the change; and develops appropriate responses or solutions to address specific challenges and needs. The purpose of social planning policy is therefore to provide processes and approaches to bring individuals, groups, communities and governments together to plan for and to develop solutions which can improve and sustain the community's overall quality of life.

While social planning policy often requires a problem-solving approach, it is important to recognize a community's many assets, resources and strengths.¹

¹ Province of British Columbia, [Social Planning for BC Communities: A Resource Guide for Local Governments](#), Ministry of Municipal Affairs; Province of British Columbia, 1996.

Capacity

Historically, local governments have focused on the physical infrastructure of their communities such as roads, sewers, waste disposal and water works. However, the role of local government is changing as communities realize the importance of social programs and services in promoting individual and community health and well-being. Community residents are experiencing addiction, homelessness, poverty and unemployment. Many of these social challenges seem to be escalating in complexity and pervasiveness and senior levels of government have cut back financial support as they seek to balance budgets and eliminate deficits. This has resulted in reduced services and supports in the community. Consequently, many local governments are reflecting on their capacity to influence and address social challenges that impact quality of life.

In addition, the role of local government in British Columbia was expanded under the Community Charter in 2003 to allow community wellbeing to be addressed. The Charter grants local governments broader powers to engage in a range of issues, including an explicit responsibility for "fostering the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of its community."²

Successful cities attract people to their communities because of a reputation for a high quality of life. Some people look for a community that provides exceptional cultural and recreational opportunities. Others want to live in a community where children's needs are met. All want to feel welcomed, valued and included regardless of their country of origin, income, marital status, religion, or sexual orientation.

Social planning policy also makes sound business sense. Business associations, chambers of commerce and employees recognize that

² 2003 Legislative Session: Fourth Session, 37th Parliament of British Columbia, [Community Charter: Bill 14 - 2003, Part 2 - Municipal Purposes and Powers](#).

a community which provides a range of affordable housing and child care opportunities is better able to attract and retain employees. Addressing street and visible homelessness, through longer-term housing initiatives, reduces public nuisance activities associated with camping, loitering and panhandling, which can positively enhance the image of an area, while contributing to an improved sense of public safety. Enhanced physical accessibility can ensure that businesses can serve the growing seniors population.

Limitations

Local governments are limited in their response to social challenges by several factors. Many local governments find that their revenue base is limited to support the demand of social development (in addition to other fiscal responsibilities). Urban infrastructure, which requires costly upgrades or replacement, competes for the limited resources available through taxes, charges and user fees. Other factors include limited staffing resources and organizational capacity.

Another limitation is the perception that engaging in social development perpetuates “downloading” on local governments. Many local governments feel that senior levels of government may be unfairly abdicating their responsibility to levels of government ill-equipped to respond to escalating social challenges. Regarding this limitation, it speaks to the importance of partnerships with the senior levels of government and shared responsibility.



Proposed Role

Given the City's capacity to influence and address social challenges that impact quality of life and given the limitations, including jurisdiction and limited revenue streams, the following role is proposed:

The City can function as a catalyst by providing leadership and facilitating and enhancing partnerships to address social challenges, including with other levels of government, businesses, community groups, faith-based organizations, residents' associations, and social service agencies. It can also identify needs and gaps through research and consultation; apply for grants to address identified needs and gaps; and, in some cases, provide staff and financial support to address needs and gaps.



In determining areas for possible involvement, the following questions should be considered:

- Is the involvement supportive of an existing City policy or plan - e.g., Official Community Plan, Affordable Housing Strategy, Child Care Strategy, Homelessness Action Plan, etc.?
- Is the City in a position to add value through its involvement - e.g., research, partnership building, grant writing, advocacy, etc.?

- Is there adequate City capacity to facilitate full and meaningful involvement? Will other areas be negatively impacted through involvement?
- Is there external funding, potential partnerships or other resources to augment City capacity, thus enabling full and meaningful involvement?
- Is the involvement sustainable? Are there definitive outcomes and a timeframe for action?



Principles

As stated in the Introduction, the City is committed to creating a caring, inclusive, safe, supportive and welcoming community. Such a community will benefit everyone, as all members will have opportunities to make a contribution, while feeling connected and accepted. This will build social capital, which will contribute to economic prosperity and a high quality of life.

The five key principles are as follows:

Caring

A community which cares for all of its members, including those that may be at-risk, marginalized or vulnerable.



Inclusive

A community which recognizes and respects diversity; ensures equitable opportunities; and encourages participation in all aspects of community life.

Safe

A community which is free from discrimination, fear and racism, and which is secure from risk and harm.

Supportive

A community which supports and values all of its members and which eliminates barriers to involvement and participation.

Welcoming

A community which welcomes newcomers; creates an environment in which they can feel at home; and provides opportunities for them to participate in all aspects of community life.

Partnership and Funding Opportunities

To advance social planning policy, the City works in partnership with a number of groups and organizations; each of which has an important role to play. These groups and organizations include but not limited to:

- Other Local Governments
 - share promising practices, conduct research, coordinate planning
- Senior Levels of Government
 - provide funding, develop policies and programs, enact legislation
- Community Groups and Social Service Agencies
 - operate programs, advocate, assist in planning, educate and raise awareness
- Educational Facilities
 - educate, act as community hubs, advocate, assist in planning, operate programs
- Ethno-Cultural and Faith Organizations
 - provide venues, advocate, assist in planning, operate programs
- Foundations and Other Funders
 - provide funding, conduct research, coordinate planning
- Business Associations
 - facilitate employment, advocate, assist in planning, educate and raise awareness
- Developers
 - provide funding and amenities

With regard to the local context, the Senior Social Planner sits on the following bodies:

City

- Community and Social Issues Committee
- Multiculturalism Advisory Committee
- Seniors Advisory Committee

Community

- New Westminster Child Care Action Team
- New Westminster Community Action Committee for Women Who Have Experienced Violence
- New Westminster Early Childhood Development Committee
- New Westminster Homelessness Coalition
- New Westminster Inter-Agency Council
- New Westminster Public Partners Child Development Committee
- New Westminster School Travel Planning Municipal Stakeholders Group
- New Westminster Seniors Planning and Action Network | 50+
- Sapperton Child Development Hub Action Team
- Seniors Engagement Toolkit (SET) Working Group
- Welcoming and Inclusive New Westminster Working Group



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Regional

- Burnaby-New Westminster Task Force on Sexually Exploited and At-Risk Youth
- Metro-Vancouver TAC Social Issues Sub-Committee
- Welcoming and Inclusive Communities Inter-Governmental Steering Committee

The City, through Development Services, Parks, Culture and Recreation and the Public Library, is represented on the following bodies, which are also essential to advancing social planning policy:

- Metro Vancouver TAC Housing Sub-Committee
- New Westminster Food Action Committee
- New Westminster Literacy Now Committee
- New Westminster Middle Childhood Committee
- New Westminster Schools Partners Committee
- New Westminster Youth Committee

Partnership building is also important from a funding perspective. The City, often in collaboration with local social service agencies, has been very successful in accessing funding from granting institutions and the senior levels of government with regard to advancing social planning policy. Grants over \$10,000 are listed below:

- \$35,000 from the UBCM Seniors Housing and Support Initiative (SHSI), Province of British Columbia, to enhance information services for at-risk and vulnerable seniors;
- \$25,000 from the Built Environment and Active Transportation (BEAT) Program, BC Healthy Living Alliance, to implement a Wheelability Assessment Project;
- \$20,000 from the Age-Friendly Community Planning and Project Grant Initiative, Province of British Columbia, to develop a Seniors Engagement Toolkit;
- \$40,000 from the former New Westminster Community Development Society to fund a Downtown Mosaic Public Art Project;

- \$15,000 from Welcome BC to prepare a Community Partnership Development Charter, which provides a collaborative vision for creating a welcoming and inclusive community;
- \$50,000 from Welcome BC to implement Changing City, Changing Minds, which is designed to identify 'achievable' ideas which can contribute to a welcoming community;
- \$335,000 from WelcomeBC to fund a Community Gateway Project, Immigrant Mentorship Program, Newcomers' Guide, and Nu Yu (Cultural Youth) Popular Theatre Project;
- \$100,000 in legacy funding from WelcomeBC to fund the Community Gateway and Immigrant Mentorship initiatives.

The City, working closely with BC Housing and non-profit housing providers, and with financial support from the provincial and federal levels of government, realized close to \$22.8 million in funding to develop 27 emergency shelter beds and 84 longer-term transitional and supported housing units. These projects included the Russell Residence (\$10.4 million), the Rhoda Kaellis Residence (\$8.7 million), the Maria Keary Cottage (\$3.2 million), and the Elizabeth Gurney House (\$549,960). All four of these projects had to be rezoned prior to realizing funding.

The School District, working closely with the City, prepared a funding proposal in support of three Neighbourhood Learning Centres under the Neighbourhoods of Learning (NoL) Project. The development of the proposal was based on 27 consultation events involving over 1,000 residents. The Ministry of Education, which oversees the NoL Project, appears to be supportive of the proposal, which includes 100 licensed child care spaces; community kitchen, meeting and multi-purpose spaces; a new performing arts theatre; and a welcome centre to address the needs of new immigrants.

Homelessness and Housing Affordability

Status

New Westminster, similar to other municipalities in Metro Vancouver, has experienced increasing homelessness and declining housing affordability. The City, starting in 2005, undertook a number of actions to address these two social challenges. These actions have proven successful with regard to homelessness, and are starting to produce results with regard to addressing housing affordability.

Homelessness

Between 2002 and 2008, the unsheltered homeless population increased by 118.2% in New Westminister. Starting in 2005, the City undertook a number of actions, including developing a Needs Assessment and Strategy, establishing a Homelessness Coalition, hiring a Senior Social Planner and partnering with BC Housing to develop 27 new shelter beds and 84 longer-term transitional and supported housing units. Regarding the latter, planning and rezoning approval took place in 2007 and 2008, with most of the units being occupied in 2009 and 2010.



Based on the Regional Homeless Count numbers for 2011, it would appear that the efforts of the City and Homelessness Coalition are making a significant difference. Between 2008 and 2011, there was a 45.8% reduction in unsheltered homelessness in New Westminister. This has reduced demand on Bylaw Enforcement and Police, with its associated cost savings to the City. It has also made the City a more desirable place to establish a business, live, play or shop.

Housing Affordability

In 2005, about 20% of households were in core need in New Westminister, compared to about 16% for Metro Vancouver. Renter households (30%) were more likely than owner-occupied households (9%) to be in core need. Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation defines core need as those living in housing that does not meet adequacy, suitability and affordability standards and who spend more than 30% of their before-tax income on shelter.

Currently, there are about 1,600 units of non-market (subsidized) housing, including co-op. This housing primarily targets families, persons with disabilities and seniors and comprises between 6% and 7% of the housing stock in New Westminister. In March 2011, there were 428 applications on file for New Westminister at the BC Housing Registry. The breakdown of these applications is as follows: families (153), seniors (110), persons with disabilities (109), singles (34), wheelchair modified (11), and transfers (11).

There are also estimated to be about 2,500 secondary suites, about 300 of which are registered and legal. These suites, which could comprise up to 10% of the housing stock of New Westminister, are generally considered to be a form of affordable housing, although far less secure than non-market housing.

In 2008, the City started work on an Affordable Housing Strategy. As part of this work, two Backgrounders were prepared. Backgrounder 1 (September 2008) included an affordable housing continuum, documented facts and factors influencing affordability, and identified tools to realizing new affordable housing. Backgrounder 2 (October 2008) identified issues related to housing affordability and accessibility. The Strategy, completed in March 2009, included a vision, goals and objectives, and roles for the City. The two primary goals were to preserve and enhance the stock of safe, affordable and appropriate rental housing and to improve the choice of housing for low and moderate income residents and households with unique needs. It also included nine strategic directions to achieve the goals and objectives.

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The City is implementing the Strategy, with one of the first actions being the development of an Affordable Housing Reserve Fund. This fund, which will receive 30% of all density bonusing revenues, will be used to fund new affordable and non-market housing. Other actions include research and policy development in support on rental housing preservation and replacement and requirements to ensure that all new single detached dwellings are suite ready. As with efforts to address homelessness, the City, to be successful, will need the commitment, involvement and ongoing support of the senior levels of government.

Civic Responses

Since August 2007, the City has made the following contributions to addressing homelessness and housing affordability:

- hired a Senior Social Planner, whose responsibilities include homelessness, and tasked a Senior Planner with the responsibility of coordinating housing affordability;
- represented on the New Westminster Homelessness Coalition;
- funded the administrative costs of the New Westminster Homelessness Coalition;
- conducted a survey and assisted in the preparation of a new Homelessness Plan (June 2011);
- helped coordinate and implement the 2008 and 2011 Regional Homeless Counts;
- prepared annual Extreme Weather Response Plan for New Westminster;
- prepared and updated 'Helping Hand' brochure;
- prepared Tenant Displacement Policy (July 2011);
- represented on task group that held discussions with Fraser Health which resulted in funding for the Purpose (Street) Clinic and Resource Centre;



- worked with BC Housing and housing providers to realize 27 new shelter beds and 84 longer-term transitional and supported housing units;
- funded an Affordable Housing Strategy (March 2009);
- established an Affordable Housing Reserve Fund (October 2009), which will receive 30% of density bonusing revenues (which could amount to \$18 million over a 20-year period).



New Westminster Police Services prepared a Resource Guide (December 2010) which lists appropriate police responses and resources to addressing homelessness in New Westminster.

Possible Actions for Consideration

The following are some suggested actions which could form part of the work program for the Senior Social Planner. These suggestions are based on previous research, committee work and consultation. In some cases, Council approval and funding may be necessary.

- Update the New Westminster Needs Assessment based on the 2011 Regional Homeless Count and 2011 Census.
- Work closely with the Homelessness Coalition to implement the new Homelessness Plan.
- Work closely with the Homelessness Coalition to realize sustainable funding for an Inter-Agency Collaboration Model.
- Work with neighbouring municipalities to enhance responses to homelessness, including within each municipality's borders.
- Continue to lobby the senior levels of government for increased funding in support of the development of a continuum of housing, including non-market housing.
- Continue to implement the Affordable Housing Strategy.
- Develop locational guidelines for institutional uses such as community-based correctional facilities and group living facilities.

Family, Child and Youth Development

Status

In 2006, there were 6,280 two parent and 2,605 single parent households with children in New Westminster. Of these households, 73.4% had both a female (15+) in the labour force and a child at home. These households also contained 7,350 children aged 0 to 12 years and 3,380 youth aged 13 to 18 years.

Based on a survey of 428 parents conducted in the spring of 2008, two of the most important issues facing families were access to quality, accessible and affordable child care and access to information, services and supports related to the needs of families in one's own neighbourhood. Regarding the former, a survey of licensed child care providers (also conducted in the spring of 2008) found that 91% of facilities were operating at capacity and 84% were reporting waitlists. As a result, over 40% of children (in non-parental care arrangements) found themselves in unregulated settings. As for the latter, two studies³ found that many families had difficulty accessing services and supports related to their needs due to cost, cultural and language barriers, distance to facility, inconvenient hours, lack of child minding, and no or only limited information.

In October 2008, the City completed its Child Care Needs Assessment, which documented the current child care situation and identified 10 issues requiring attention. In February 2009, the City completed its Child Care Strategy, which incorporated 21 recommended actions to be implemented over a three-year period. Several of these actions are listed under Civic Responses. Since the completion of the Needs Assessment, there has been a net increase of about 300 licensed child care spaces in New Westminster, with another 25 licensed child care spaces possible pending rezoning approval. Despite these increases, there are still waitlists for infant/toddler and before and after school care. Regarding the latter,

³ Tina Holden, Queensborough Early Years Consultation, April 2007 and Jennifer Wilson Consultants Ltd., Uptown/Downtown Hub Development Project, May 20, 2008.

the implementation of full-school day kindergarten for five-year olds has increased the demand for this care type.

In February 2007, the New Westminster Public Partners Child Development Committee was established. This committee, which includes senior staff from the City,⁴ Fraser Health, the Ministry of Children and Family Development, School District #40 and the United Way of the Lower Mainland, is mandated to support and advocate on behalf of four Child Development Hubs in New Westminster. Hubs are defined as two or more child development or family strengthening services: one of which is licensed child care. Hubs act as focal points for their neighbourhoods and enable families to obtain information and seamlessly access a continuum of services related to their needs. Since its establishment, the Public Partners have made significant progress towards the development of three of the four hubs. The Queensborough Hub is the most advanced, as it is a year from being operational. The Uptown/Downtown Hub could form an integral part of the Neighbourhood Learning Centre which is proposed for the John



Robson site. The Eastside (Sapperton) Hub is currently being studied, with a needs assessment underway.



In 2006, only 28.3% of the housing stock was comprised of single family (18.7%), single family with suite (5.4%) and townhouse/duplex (4.2%) in New Westminster, compared to 53.1% for Metro Vancouver. The vast majority of the housing stock (66.1%) was comprised of apartments. While some apartments offer larger floor plans,

⁴ Assistant Director of Parks, Culture and Recreation and Senior Social Planner

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multiple bedrooms counts and private patios, many do not. As such, families, especially larger ones, face limited housing choice. As part of the Downtown Community Plan (October 2010), it included the following action: “To encourage housing which is suitable for families, guidelines will be established for unit size distribution in new developments (e.g., number of one, two and three bedroom units). Other actions were also included to meet the following strategy: “Support the Downtown as a family-friendly neighbourhood, with sufficient services and amenities to meet the needs of households with children and youth. The new Queensborough Community Plan will also contain similar actions.

Civic Responses

Since August 2007, the City has made the following contributions to supporting family, child and youth development and creating more family-friendly neighbourhoods:

- prepared a Child Care Needs Assessment (October 2008) and Strategy (February 2009);
- prepared a Step-by-Step Guide to Opening a Group Child Care Facility (October 2010);
- represented on the New Westminster Early Childhood Development and Public Partners Child Development Committees;
- developed a Civic Child Care Grant Program, in which up to \$40,000 is available on an annual basis to fund capital improvements by non-profit child care operators;
- developed a Child Care Protocol between City and School District (November 2009), which will stabilize existing and facilitate the development of new child care spaces;



- developed a policy whereby a development variance permit can be used to enable a small amount of the required parking spaces for an existing commercial building in the Downtown to be converted to outdoor play space;
- developing a licensed child care facility as part of the expansion to the Queensborough Community Centre;
- endorsed the New Westminster Children’s Charter (November 2010), which sets out a vision for children and is based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- established a Child Care Reserve Fund (October 2009), which will receive 10% of density bonusing revenues (which could amount to \$6 million over a 20-year period);
- facilitated a lease arrangement with Graham Montessori Daycare which will enable it to use City-owned land to meet its outdoor play space requirements;
- worked closely with School District #40 to prepare a funding proposal in support of three Neighbourhood Learning Centres, which could include 100 child care spaces, community meeting areas, a new performing arts theatre and a welcome centre.

The BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition, in a recent article, recognized the City of New Westminister for its leadership and commitment to child care.

New Westminister’s Commitment to Child Care, May 11, 2011

The City’s Parks, Culture and Recreation Department plays an extremely important role in supporting family, child and youth development through its many facilities, programs and services. Some recent examples include:

- developed All Wheel Park in Queensborough;
- developed Youth Centre @ Moody Park;
- developing active use areas for families as part of the park at Westminster Pier;
- developing youth spaces as part of the expansion to the Queensborough Community Centre.

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The City's Public Library offers a variety of programs which facilitate family, child and youth development, including Babytime and Family and Preschool Storytimes; English and French Language Buddies; and Summer Reading Clubs.

Possible Actions for Consideration

The following are some suggested actions which could form part of the work program for the Senior Social Planner. These suggestions are based on previous research, committee work and consultation. In some cases, Council approval and funding may be necessary.



- Update the Child Care Needs Assessment.
- Continue to work towards the implementation of the Child Care Strategy.
- Continue to monitor the impacts of full-school day kindergarten on the child care system in New Westminster.
- Continue to work towards the development four Child Developments Hubs in New Westminster.
- Provide support for the 'Emerging Plan for an Integrated System of Early Care and Learning in British Columbia.'
- Conduct research on family, child and youth friendly policies and practices in other jurisdictions.
- Work with Parks, Culture and Recreation to explore opportunities in support of Literacy in the Environment (LITE), which places reading inside public facilities and outdoors in public spaces.
- Continue to inform civic facility design and planning processes to ensure that public spaces are family, child and youth friendly.
- Complete work on the Youth Engagement Guide.

- Provide support to the Community Action Initiative, which is being coordinated by the New Westminster Youth Committee and which is intended to address the needs of youth vulnerable to mental health and substance misuse issues.



Age and Ability Friendly City

Status

New Westminster, similar to other municipalities in Metro Vancouver, has an aging population. In 2011, there were 67,514 people living in New Westminster, 8,474 or 12.6% of which were seniors (65+). In 2036, the population is projected to increase to 97,683 in New Westminster, 20,947 or 21.4% of which are projected to be seniors. As such, the seniors population is projected to increase from 8,474 to 20,947 or by 147% over the 25 year period in question.



In 2006, 12,970 people reported a health and/or activity limitation in New Westminster, which represented 22.4% of the population. With regard to seniors, 4,230 reported a health and/or activity limitation, which represented 32.6% of the population reporting health and/or activity

limitations and 57.2% of all seniors. In 2036, using the current ratio of seniors with health and/or activity limitations and taking into consideration future growth forecasts for seniors, there could be 11,940 seniors with health and/or activity limitations. As such, seniors with health and/or activity limitations are projected to increase from 4,230 to 11,940 or by 182.3% over the 30 year period in question.

In 2005, 1,825 seniors lived below the low-income cut-offs⁵ in New Westminster, which is a commonly used proxy for poverty. This

⁵ The term low-income refers to the measure most commonly used as a proxy of poverty - Statistics Canada's Low Income Cut-Offs (LICO). These define an income threshold, based on family expenditures, below

represented about a quarter of all seniors (24.6%). This percentage was far higher than for the population aged 0 to 64 (19.7%). It was also the fourth highest proportion in Metro Vancouver. In 2006, 2,830 seniors lived alone in New Westminster, which represented 38.2% of all seniors. This was the highest proportion in Metro Vancouver.

The aging of the population will impact all levels of government, including municipal. Locally, there will be increasing pressure with regard to the suitability of infrastructure, much of which was built without particular attention to an aging population; there will be increasing demand for accessible and adaptable housing, which facilitates independence and aging in place; and there will be changing utilization patterns and preferences with regard to cultural, leisure and recreational programming. There will also be calls for more accessible transit systems; enhanced community-based seniors care; and improved access to assisted living and residential care.



Concept

An age and ability friendly city encourages active aging and inclusion by optimizing opportunities for health, participation and security to enhance quality of life. In practical terms, an age and ability friendly city adapts its structures and services to be accessible to and inclusive of persons with varying needs and capacities.

The City's Official Community Plan (OCP) (1998) cites that older adults "make up a significant segment of New Westminster's population." It also contains the following goal: "Monitor the needs of an aging population and advocate that these local needs be addressed by senior levels of government or by relevant agencies."

which families or individuals spend more than the average on basic necessities. The cited LICO figures are based on income before tax.

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Additionally, it contains the following policy directions: “Continue to support independent living for older adults and ‘aging in place’ housing choices” and “continue to liaise with public and private agencies to provide for the needs of persons with mental health and physical disabilities.”

Civic Responses

Since August 2007, the City has made the following contributions to supporting the development of an age and ability friendly city:

- conducted an Age-Friendly City survey, involving 46 respondents, which provided direction as to how the City can adapt its policies, processes and services to be more accessible to and inclusive of older adults;
- developed a seniors database, website and print directory, which contains information on over 400 programs and services;
- held a series of ‘In My Back Yard’ (IBMY) fairs, which were designed to better connect seniors to services and which involved 40 senior-serving organizations and 385 people;
- facilitated bridge financing from the City in the amount of \$15,000 for the Seniors Services Society to continue to operate its mission critical programs which serve about 1,000 vulnerable seniors and persons with disabilities in New Westminster;
- prepared a Seniors Engagement Toolkit (May 2011), which will help ensure that municipal planning and development processes are inclusive of the viewpoints of seniors and responsive to their diverse needs;
- developed an Adaptable Housing Policy (May 2011), which will require adaptable units in a minimum of 40% of single storey units in new multi-family developments;



- informed the development of the New Westminster Extreme Heat Response Plan (2011), which will assist vulnerable populations, including seniors, during extreme weather events;
- implemented the ‘Wheelability’ Assessment Project, which involved over 200 persons with mobility limitations and their companions and which was designed to improve mobility and enhance active transportation options for those using scooters, wheelchairs, walkers, walking sticks and other mobility aids;
- supported Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) resolutions calling for enhance access to community-based care for seniors and elimination of MSP premiums for seniors.

The Wheelability Assessment Project has been featured in a number of publications, including the Gerontology Research Centre News (Vol. 29, No. 1, 2010) and Momentum Magazine (Nov./Dec. 2009). It has also been featured at several major conferences, including the Built Environment and Active Transportation (BEAT) Forum in Richmond and Lower Mainland Local Government Association (LMLGA) Conference in Whistler.

The City’s Parks, Culture and Recreation Department plays an extremely important role in supporting seniors and persons with disabilities through its many facilities, programs and services. Century House, which serves older adults aged 50+ and has about 1,700 members, offers a number of programs, including the Learning, Educating and Developing Seniors (LEADS) Program and the Seniors Peer Counseling Program. It also publishes ‘The Clarion,’ which is monthly newsletter which lists its many activities, programs and services.

The City’s Public Library offers a variety of programs which are of assistance to the growing numbers of seniors and persons with disabilities in New Westminster, including Home Library Services, which delivers library resources for those who are unable to physically access the library, and One-on-One Computer Tutorials, which facilitate basic computer and Internet searching skills.

Possible Actions for Consideration

The following are some suggested actions which could form part of the work program for the Senior Social Planner. These suggestions are based on previous research, committee work and consultation. In some cases, Council approval and funding may be necessary.

- Operationalize the Seniors Engagement Toolkit by ensuring that City staff are aware of and able to effectively use this resource.
- Consider an active role as part of Active Awareness Day in June - e.g., host events or presentations that raise awareness about accessibility issues and what the City is doing to address them.
- Conduct research into becoming a “disability confident” organization which understands how disability affects all aspects of the City’s operations; creates a culture of inclusion; makes adjustments to enable specific individuals to contribute; and acts as a role model for other governments and organizations.
- Develop an Access Guidebook, which will assist persons with disabilities to access City amenities, facilities and services.
- Implement the Wheelability Assessment Project in other neighbourhoods of New Westminster - e.g., Queensborough.
- Work with Engineering to identify opportunities to better accommodate electric scooters and wheelchairs, including stations for recharging.



Multiculturalism and Inter-Cultural Relations

Status

In 2006, 18,360 or about a third (31.7%) of the population was comprised of immigrants in New Westminster, with close to one quarter (23.1%) having less than five years of Canadian residency. With regard to these recent immigrants, the three top source countries were the Philippines, China and Romania. Additionally, close to half (46.8%) of these immigrants spoke a language other than English at home, with the top three most commonly spoken languages being Chinese, Punjabi and Tagalog.

Between January 2005 and December 2009, 163 government assisted refugees settled in New Westminster, with the three top source countries being Afghanistan (50), Ethiopia (27) and Sudan (25). This represented about 4% of the government assisted refugees who settled in Metro Vancouver during this time period.

From 2001 to 2006, increases to the immigrant population comprised 79.1% of total population growth in New Westminster.

Diversity and Immigration in British Columbia: New Westminster, December 15, 2008

Based on an Access New Westminster Immigrant Survey (May 2007), which involved 243 respondents, recent immigrants and refugees face a number of settlement challenges, including:

- finding suitable employment;
- learning a new language;
- locating appropriate housing;
- securing child care;
- adapting to a new culture and values;
- dealing with incidences of discrimination and racism.

They also have far lower participation rates in elections, groups and organized activities, including sports.

Civic Responses

Since August 2007, the City has made the following contributions to facilitating multiculturalism and inter-cultural relations:

- established a Multiculturalism Advisory Committee in November 2007, which is mandated to advise Council on issues related to multiculturalism and inter-cultural relations;
- revised and operationalized the City's Multicultural Policy;
- developed a guide to assist newcomers to become more involved in municipal government planning and decision-making processes;
- established a Multicultural Awards Program, which recognizes the efforts of individuals and organizations for their work with newcomers and fostering understanding, acceptance and positive relations among people of different cultural backgrounds;
- funded the Multicultural Festival, which annually involves over 20 cultural organizations and attracts over 10,000 people;
- helped facilitate the inclusion of a welcome centre as part of the Neighbourhood Learning Centre proposed for the New Westminster Secondary School site;
- provided organizational assistance and a venue in support of the 'Celebration of Opportunities' event in December 2010, which raised awareness among new immigrants about available programs, services and supports in New Westminster;
- developed a Community Partnership Development Charter (June 2009), which provides a collaborative vision for creating a welcoming and inclusive community;



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- worked with community and social services agencies to access close to \$500,000 from WelcomeBC to fund a Changing City, Changing Minds Project, a Community Gateway Project, an Immigrant Mentorship Program, a Newcomers' Guide, and a Nu Yu (Cultural Youth) Popular Theatre Project;
- implemented a Chinese Reconciliation Process, which resulted in 10 actions in support of reconciliation with the City's Chinese community;
- issued an acknowledgement and formal apology to the Chinese community for its past practices which resulted in discrimination and exclusion;
- rescinded City bylaws identified in the research in support of the Chinese Reconciliation Process that were found to be discriminatory or exclusionary.

The City's Parks, Culture and Recreation Department offers many opportunities for newcomers to gather and share cultural experiences through the use of facilities, direct programming and partnership opportunities, including the Bangladeshi Society, the Deleboro Japanese Cultural Society, the Sikh Temple and the Trinidad and Tobago Society. In Queensborough, monthly fusion dinners are held in which families gather to share food from one culture and entertainment from another culture.



The City's Public Library provides a range of programs and services for newcomers, including:

- books and magazines in various languages;
- books in simple English;
- business directories for ethno-cultural communities;
- current newspapers in various languages;
- government publications in various languages;
- mixed media materials for learning and improving English language skills;
- reference desk for information on classes or groups offering English language learning opportunities;

- service directories in various languages;
- study guides for standard tests in English;
- venue space for seminars and tutorials targeted at newcomers.

Library staff have also taken intensive cultural sensitivity and customer service training and the library is working towards its 'Safe Harbour' designation. Safe Harbour locations offer immediate and safe refuge from mistreatment and staff are trained to respond to racism and discrimination.

The City of New Westminster was the first municipality in Canada to issue a formal apology to the Chinese community for past practices which resulted in discrimination and exclusion. On January 29, 2011, the City was recognized for its humanitarian efforts and positive contributions to the Chinese community.

Theresa McManus, Chinese Reconciliation Work Earns City Kudos, February 5, 2011

The City has also developed a number of sister and friendship cities, which encourage an exchange of ideas; foster increased understanding of international issues; and build a basis for shared economic growth and exchange, including possibilities for increased tourism and business relationships. Sister cities include:

- Lijiang (China)
- Moriguchi (Japan)
- Quezon (Philippines)

Chinese friendship cities include:

- Datong
- Xinzhou
- YunFu
- Zhenjiang

A friendship city becomes a sister city after a strong relationship has been developed between the two communities.

Possible Actions for Consideration

The following are some suggested actions which could form part of the work program for the Senior Social Planner. These suggestions are based on previous research, committee work and consultation. In some cases, Council approval and funding may be necessary.

- Continue to assist in immigrant settlement and integration - e.g., information dissemination, referral, and service coordination.
- Continue to implement the actions in support of reconciliation with the City's Chinese community.
- Continue to support the Multicultural Festival and explore ways of growing the festival and ensuring its financial sustainability.
- Consult with and document the needs of recent immigrants and refugees in order to enhance service provision and delivery.
- Develop a policy on translation services, which will enhance access to important City documentation.
- Ensure that City planning and decision-making processes are inclusive of and responsive to the needs of newcomers.
- Explore and facilitate diversity training for City staff and work towards a 'Safe Harbour' designation.
- Sign the 'Declaration of the Canadian Coalition of Municipalities Against Racism and Discrimination' and develop a plan of action to implement its commitments to reduce racism and discrimination.
- Work to ensure that arts and cultural planning and delivery is inclusive of the range of cultural communities in New Westminster, from established to newly arrived.
- Work with settlement and adaptation agencies to assist newcomers to get more involved at the civic level and translate all or parts of the City's Guide to Civic Involvement.



Community Development and Wellbeing

Status

In 2005, the median household income was \$48,773 in New Westminster, compared to \$55,231 in Metro Vancouver. In this same year, there were 4,995 households whose reported income was below \$20,000. This represented 18.5% of all households in New Westminster, compared to 16.1% in Metro Vancouver. In 2005, the prevalence of low-income was 20.3% in New Westminster, compared to 20.8% in Metro Vancouver.

In 2006, 12,495 or 46.2% of all households rented their housing in New Westminster, compared to 34.9% in Metro Vancouver. Of these renter households, 39.2% spent 30% or more of their income on housing in New Westminster compared to 43.4% in Metro Vancouver. With regard to owner households, 25.5% spent 30% or more of their income on housing in New Westminster, compared to 27.0% in Metro Vancouver.

Income and housing affordability are only two variables that potentially influence quality of life and wellbeing. Other variables are far more difficult to quantify but are no less important. These include belonging, caring, connectedness, equity, inclusion, participation, safety, and security.

Concept

A community is strengthened when trust and social bonds are forged between individuals, groups, organizations and governments. An involved community is one which individuals, groups and organizations activity participate in, contribute to, and help shape community life. An involved community is an engaged community, where neighbours know each other and there are strong connections across diverse groups.

Civic Responses

Since August 2007, the City has made the following contributions to facilitating community development and nurturing wellbeing:

- developed the 'Everybody Active' project in 2008, which documented barriers to access for leisure and recreational activities and explored ways of overcoming these barriers;
- assisted Westminster House Recovery Centre for Women to establish Clean-Up New West, which provides an opportunity for clients and community members to make a contribution;
- facilitated involvement by former residents of Woodlands, their family members and advocacy groups in discussions related to the future of the Centre Block Tower;
- facilitated a monetary gift in the amount of \$40,000 from the former New Westminster Community Development Society to the City for the purposes of developing a Downtown Mosaic Public Art Project;
- involved in discussions to enhance community programming and involvement related to local television broadcasting;
- involved in the 'Healthy Community Action Plan' initiative, which is being coordinated by Fraser Health and which promotes healthier built environments and lifestyles;
- provided organizational assistance in support of the New Westminster Community Conversation, which explored social belonging and connectedness in New Westminster.

The City's Parks, Culture and Recreation Department supports and facilitates community development and wellbeing through its Manager of Community Development and Volunteer Coordinator; its assistance to community groups such as the New Westminster Community Garden Society; its involvement on numerous committees; and its many events and programs. The Department, through Fraserside Community Services Society, also offers low income residents a discount on registration fees for activities and programs offered in the Active Living Guide.

The New Westminster Police Service Crime Prevention Unit offers a number of programs which are designed to reduce the risk from and fear of crime, many of which are volunteer-based. These programs include: the Block Watch Program, the Citizen Crime Watch Patrol, the Crime Free Multi-Housing Program, and the Volunteer Bicycle Patrol.

The Finance and Human Resources Department developed a Living Wage Policy, which was endorsed by Council. The term “living wage” is used to describe the minimum hourly wage necessary for a family of four with two parents working full-time to meet the necessities of life. This was the first Living Wage Bylaw to be adopted by a municipality in Canada.

Possible Actions for Consideration

The following are some suggested actions which could form part of the work program for the Senior Social Planner. These suggestions are based on previous research, committee work and consultation. In some cases, Council approval and funding may be necessary.

- Assist in the development of the New Westminster Police Service Strategic Plan and ensure that it is inclusive of community and social service agencies.
- Explore ways of engaging business associations in discussions to enhance opportunities for job training, mentorship programs and practicum placements, especially as means for new immigrants to gain Canadian work experience.
- Realize office space through amenity contributions and other means and lease at a favorable rate to non-profits, thus enabling them to apply the savings to enhancing programming.
- Work with the Parks, Culture and Recreation Manager of Community Development to explore new ways facilitating community development.
- Work with the Volunteer Coordinator to raise awareness about the value of and available opportunities to volunteer among both newcomers and youth.



Implementation, Monitoring and Reporting

Planning and policy development are ineffective if there is not a strong commitment to implementation and ongoing monitoring and reporting. All too often, insufficient resources are allocated in support of implementation, which can lead to inaction and frustration on behalf of those who have participated in the process.

Implementation

Social planning policy, to be effective, must incorporate actions or deliverables in support of implementation; a realistic timeframe; a designated body or individual who is responsible for implementation; and a monitoring and reporting back mechanism.

As part of the Child Care Strategy (February 2009), the Child Care Action Team was tasked with preparing an annual Child Care Progress Report. More specifically, it determines the status of each action (e.g., fully, partially or not implemented); it provides an analysis as to the strategy's success, including the net increase or decrease in licensed child care spaces; and identifies recent developments and trends impacting implementation. A similar approach is also being applied to the Affordable Housing Strategy (March 2009) and the Adaptable Housing Policy (May 2011).

Another means to support implementation is the Sustainability Report Card (April 2011), which incorporates social and cultural considerations. This report card applies to all Development Permits, Rezoning and Special Development Permits, as well as major Development Variance Permits, and is intended to assess how an application fulfils the sustainability goals of the City's Official Community Plan and other policies such as the Affordable Housing and Child Care Strategies. For example, applicants would gain a better score if they included affordable market housing or market or non-market rental units in their development.

Other means include the Affordable Housing and Child Care Reserve Funds under the City's Density Bonusing Policy (October 2009). In the case of the former, 30% of density bonusing revenues (which could amount to \$18 million over a 20-year period), will be allocated for new affordable housing; while in the case of the latter, 10% of density bonusing revenues (which could amount to \$6 million over a 20-year period), will be allocated for capital projects in support of new licensed child care. These funds, through leveraging and partnerships, will facilitate and expedite implementation.

Monitoring and Reporting

Monitoring and reporting are important to identifying social challenges; to raising community awareness; to facilitating dialogue; to informing social planning policy development; to evaluating the success of such policy; and to informing future decision-making and resource allocation.

In some cases, the City will do its own monitoring with regard to social planning policy. Examples of internal monitoring include the Adaptable Housing Policy and Affordable Housing and Child Care Strategies. In other cases, the City will rely on information as collected and reported by others. Examples of external monitoring and reporting include but are not limited to the following:

- Federation of Canadian Municipalities' Quality of Life Reporting System;⁶
- Fraser Health's Better Health Scorecard;
- Human Early Learning Partnership's Early Development Instrument Mapping Package;
- Metro Vancouver's Homeless Count;
- Vancouver Foundation's Vital Signs Report.

⁶ Metro Vancouver has become a member of the Quality of Life Reporting System (QOLRS) and Metro Vancouver municipalities will now have access (at no cost) to the QOLRS, including Quality of Life data for their municipality.