

REPORT

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT

To: Mayor W. Wright and Members of Council in Committee of the Whole Date: December 2, 2013

From: Beverly Grieve, Director of Development Services File: 13.2630.06

Subject: Child and Youth Friendly Community Strategy and Family-Friendly Housing Policy for New Westminster

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council receive this report for information.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to inform Council about the Child and Youth Friendly Community Strategy and the Family-Friendly Housing Policy for New Westminster.

SUMMARY

The Child and Youth Friendly Community Strategy, which will be developed by the City and the Society for Children and Youth of BC, with funding support from the United Way of the Lower Mainland and the Vancouver Foundation, will inform the development of neighbourhoods which meet the needs of children, youth and families.

The Family-Friendly Housing Policy, which will form part of the larger strategy, will facilitate the provision of a range of housing choices for families, including ground-oriented and housing with three-plus bedroom counts.

The strategy and policy will assist in retaining existing and attracting new families with children. Between 2006 and 2011, there was a 2.6% increase in the number of children 0 to 17 years in New Westminster. By comparison, there was a 12.7% increase for the overall population. Of concern, for the time period in question, there was 4.3% decrease in the number of children 6 to 12 years.

Both initiatives will also contribute to the City's child and youth friendliness, while providing a framework for other municipalities.

BACKGROUND

In March 2013, the Society for Children and Youth of BC (SCY) approached the City of New Westminster regarding its interest in participating in an initiative entitled *Municipal Strategies for Implementing Child and Youth Friendly Communities*. As proposed, the initiative would be funded by the United Way of the Lower Mainland and the Vancouver Foundation.

Based on discussions between the City and SCY, it was determined that the initiative would benefit both organizations and that the results would be of extreme interest and relevance to other municipalities in BC.

Regarding the City, the Development Services Department was planning to start work on a Family-Friendly Housing Policy, which would facilitate the provision of more housing with ground-orientation and multiple bedroom counts. The Development Services and Parks, Culture and Recreation Departments are also working to develop five Child Development Hubs and have been extremely active in facilitating new child care spaces in New Westminster.

Currently, there is no unifying vision or strategy to guide the City in its ongoing efforts to work towards a *Child and Youth Friendly Community*. The proposed strategy would provide this vision. It would also document strengths and weaknesses and identify goals and actions to enhance the City's child and youth friendliness. Additionally, it would house and be supportive of the City's Family-Friendly Housing Policy. This will increase the sense of belonging and connectedness of children, youth and families, including those that may be at-risk and vulnerable.

In September 2013, the City was informed that the proposal had been funded. Since this time, the City and SCY have been in discussions to develop terms of reference and a preliminary outline; to identify and assign responsibilities; and to prepare a consultation process.

EXISTING POLICY/PRACTICE

The *New Westminster Children's Charter* (2010), which is based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, contains a number of provisions that the City can impact or influence. These include but are not limited to:

- *providing access to quality child care and early childhood development opportunities;*
- *providing a range of housing options that are suitable and appropriate for families;*
- *creating accessible, inclusive and safe neighbourhoods;*
- *maintaining a healthy, natural and sustainable environment;*

- *facilitating involvement and participation regardless of ability, culture or income;*
- *offering developmentally appropriate and culturally relevant programming.*

The *Downtown Community Plan (2011)* includes 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.* It also includes the following action: *To encourage housing which is suitable for families, guidelines will be established for unit size distribution in new developments (i.e., number of one, two and three bedroom units).*

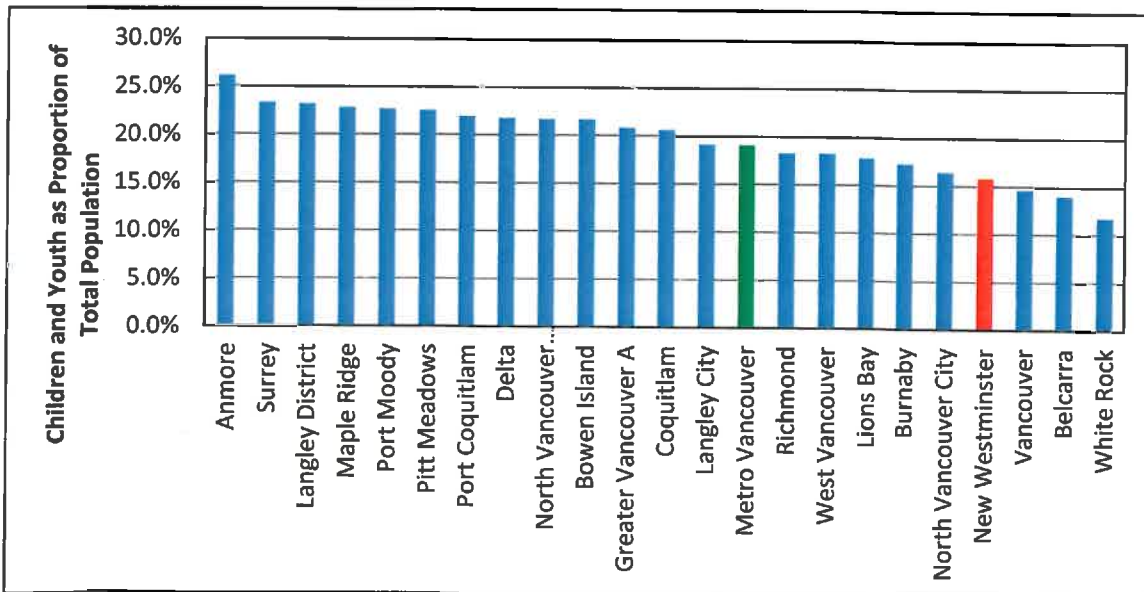
The *Queensborough Community Plan*, which is in draft form, includes the following action: *To establish guidelines for unit size distribution in new developments (e.g., percentage of one bedroom, two bedroom and three bedroom units).*

The *New Westminster Parks and Recreation Plan (2008)* includes the following action: *The Parks and Recreation Department should build family-centred practices for delivering programs, including strategies to support families; build strong relationships with families; develop a family-centred team; and strengthen linkages with other organizations.*

ANALYSIS

Child and Youth Profile

According to the 2011 Census, children and youth (0 to 17 years) composed 15.8% of the population in New Westminster. This ranked 19th out of 22 municipalities in Metro Vancouver.



For children 0 to 5 years, New Westminster ranked 14th out of 22 municipalities in Metro Vancouver. For children 6 to 12 years and youth 13 to 17 years, New Westminster ranked 20th out of 22 municipalities in Metro Vancouver.

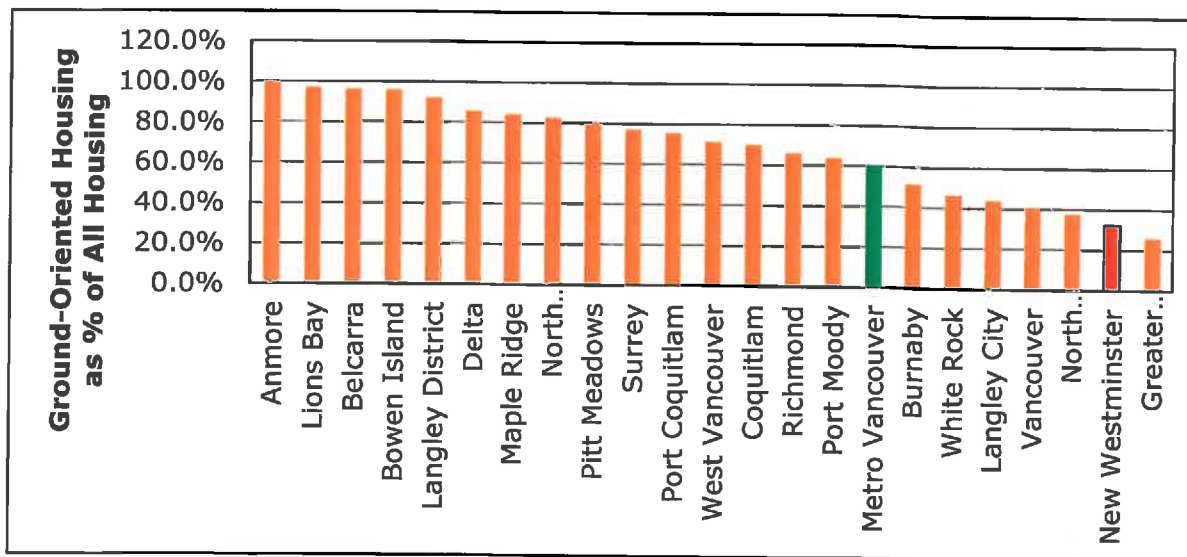
Age	% of Population (2011)	Rank / Metro
0-17	15.8%	19/22
0-5	5.7%	14/22
6-12	5.6%	20/22
13-17	4.4%	20/22

Between 2006 and 2011, the number of children and youth (0 to 17 years) increased by 2.6%. By comparison, the overall population increased by 12.7%. For children 0 to 5 years, there was an increase of 10.3%; for children 6 to 12 years, there was a decrease of 4.3%; and for youth 13 to 17 years, there was an increase of 2.1%.

Age	% Increase/Decrease 2006-2011	Number 2006-2011
0-17	2.6%	260
0-5	10.3%	355
6-12	-4.3%	-165
13-17	2.1%	60

Housing Profile

For ground-oriented housing as a percentage of all housing in 2011, New Westminster ranked 21st out of 22 municipalities.



For two-bedroom units, New Westminster ranked fourth out of 22 municipalities and for three-plus bedroom units, New Westminster ranked 20th out of 22 municipalities.

Bedroom Type	% of Housing (2011)	Rank / Metro
2 Bedrooms	35.3%	4/22
3+ Bedrooms	26.8%	20/22

Need for a Strategy and Policy

It would appear that families, especially those with children reaching school age and those anticipating the arrival of a second or third child, assess their housing situation and the ability of their neighbourhood and community to meet their needs. Given the lack of housing with ground orientation or three-plus bedroom counts, as well as other considerations such as affordability and child and youth friendliness, increasing numbers of families with school age children are moving from New Westminster.

The Child and Youth Friendly Community Strategy and the Family-Friendly Housing Policy will inform the development of neighbourhoods which meet the needs of children, youth and families; will provide opportunities for families to be an integral part of the municipal decision-making process; will enhance family connections with neighbourhoods and the larger community; and will provide a range of housing choices for families, including ground oriented and three-plus bedroom counts. This will address the increasing numbers of families with school-age children which are moving from New Westminster and contribute to the City's child and youth friendliness, while providing a framework for other municipalities.

Child and Youth Friendly Community Strategy

A *Child and Youth Friendly Community* is one in which municipal policy, planning, programs and services support children and youth to be healthy and safe; to actively participate in decisions that affect them; and to develop to their fullest potential.

The strategy will have the following goals:

- to assist the City and other community-led coalitions to understand the principles of child and youth friendliness;
- to identify promising practices based on case study research;
- to identify strengths and weaknesses of the City and its systems;
- to create an overarching vision and strategy as a guide for future actions;
- to develop family-friendly housing policy and design guidelines;
- to create an engagement strategy that facilitates input from children, youth and families;

- to develop a set of indicators to measure progress.

There will be at least eight areas of focus or domains. For each area or domain, there will be a vision, context, goals and indicators. The proposed areas or domains are:

- Working (Employment)
- Living (Housing)
- Caring (Child Care and Child Development)
- Learning (Education)
- Sense of Place (Belonging and Connectedness)
- Moving (Transportation)
- Playing (Parks, Culture and Recreation)
- Engaging (Participation and Inclusion)

For more information, please refer to appendix #1.

Family-Friendly Housing Policy

The policy will facilitate the provision of housing options for families, including ground oriented and three-plus bedroom counts, while addressing issues related to affordability. The policy will inform the Zoning Bylaw and Official Community Plan and may include design guidelines. The policy will also form part of the larger strategy.

Policy development will include:

- to conduct case study research to identify promising practices;
- to analyze the housing stock, including by city and by neighbourhood;
- to consult with families;
- to prepare a draft policy based on the research and consultation;
- to consult with the community and developers;
- to revise and finalize the policy and prepare the bylaw;
- to seek Council endorsement;
- to implement and monitor the policy and bylaw.

Responsibilities and Timeframe

The City and SCY will jointly prepare the Child and Youth Friendly Community Strategy, with funding support from the United Way of the Lower Mainland and the Vancouver Foundation. The City will take the lead on the Family-Friendly Housing Policy and the City's Community and Social Issues Committee will play an important advisory role with regard to the strategy and the policy.

The strategy will be developed over the next 14 to 18 months and the policy will be developed over the next 10 to 12 months. Council will receive regularly updates with regard to both the strategy and the policy.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

The Child and Youth Friendly Community Strategy and the Family-Friendly Housing Policy are supportive of *Envision 2032* (2013). More specifically, they meet the following descriptions of success:

- *There is convenient access to affordable, quality child care which facilitates child development and enables parents to work and to contribute to the local economy.*
- *There are few children being driven to school and it is safe, convenient and affordable for most students, from kindergarten to college, to walk, cycle or take transit to school and activities.*
- *There are opportunities for all residents, including children, youth and seniors, to be fully engaged in the community, to make a meaningful contribution and to be recognized and valued for their contributions.*

OPTIONS

There are two options for Council's consideration:

Option #1: That Council receive this report for information.

Option #2: That Council provide staff with other direction.

Staff recommends Option #1.

INTERDEPARTMENTAL LIAISON

The Development Services and Parks, Culture and Recreation Departments will be working with the Society for Children and Youth of BC with regards to the development of the Child and Youth Friendly Community Strategy.


CONCLUSION

The development of a Child and Youth Friendly Community Strategy and Family-Friendly Housing Policy will contribute to inter-generational and safe neighbourhoods and sustainable schools. Both initiatives are also supportive of the descriptions of success as contained in *Envision 2032*.

Report Authors:

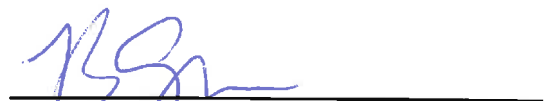


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Appendix #1:

**Child and Youth Friendly Community Strategy Backgrounder and
Outline**

Municipal Strategies for Implementing Child and Youth Friendly Communities – City of New Westminster

Background

The seeds for the *Child and Youth Friendly Communities Initiative* were sown during the **Society for Children and Youth of BC (SCY)**'s Child Friendly Housing Project, which addressed the needs of children in multi-family housing by applying a child and youth friendly lens. This ground breaking work sparked an international movement over 15 years ago after SCY presented the concept of Child and Youth Friendly Communities to the world at UNICEF's Habitat II conference. Since then, communities all over the world have taken the concept of Child and Youth Friendly Communities and made it come alive in their own communities.

According to UNICEF, child and youth friendly communities “emerged in recognition of several important trends: the rapid transformation and urbanization of global societies; the growing responsibilities of municipalities and communities for their populations in the context of decentralization; and consequently, the increasing importance of cities and towns within national political and economic systems.”

But what does it mean to be child and youth friendly? How can we measure or assess how livable a city is for children, youth and families? The purpose of our project is to create an overarching child and youth strategy, complete with a comprehensive compilation of current City initiatives, meaningful indicators, and international standards, to help the **City of New Westminster** know where they stand, about what they can be justly proud, and to help determine where they need to move forward.

What is a Child and Youth Friendly Community?

A child and youth friendly community is one in which policy, planning, programs and services support children to be safe, to be healthy, to actively participate in decisions that impact them, and to develop to their fullest potential. In other words, a child and youth friendly city upholds child rights as detailed in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Benefits of a Child and Youth Friendly Community

Local government is critical for developing Child and Youth Friendly Communities. Building child and youth friendly communities and involving children and youth in the processes of civic government is important for several reasons:

- **It is the right thing to do** – children are individual rights holders, although they do not have equal power to advocate for their own needs. As developing beings, they are more vulnerable to adverse physical and psychological influences, such as poverty or poor air quality. A community fit for children is a community fit for every member of our society.
- **Services will be improved** – children's involvement in decisions that affect them will ensure better targeted and more effective policies, programs and services.
- **It makes good financial sense** – meeting children's needs early in life is more cost effective in the long run. "It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men". Successful societies require thriving citizens, young and old.

- **It increases understanding** – including children and youth in discussion of issues increases understanding of the public and private sector, and the key role played by ‘civil society’ in the holistic development of our children.
- **It will lead to the better functioning of democracy** – empowering children and responding to their input will show them that democracy works. Valuing their input will make them more respectful of others, both now and when they are adults.
- **It will enhance the quality of life for children, youth and their families** – which is a fundamental goal of all government actions.

Child and Youth Friendly Community Goals

The project goals are to:

- Assist the City of New Westminster and other community-led coalitions to understand the principles of child and youth friendliness;
- Identify leading edge policies, bylaws and actions developed by other municipalities in British Columbia, Canada and internationally as a set of best practices or ideas bank;
- Identify the strengths and weaknesses of the City and its systems in relation to the principles of child and youth friendliness;
- Create an overarching child and youth friendly framework that categorizes current child and youth friendly municipal initiatives and provides a strategic guide for future actions;
- Research and develop a family-friendly housing policy and guidelines, including unit-size distribution;
- Create an engagement strategy that facilitates input from stakeholders – children, youth and families; and
- Develop a set of indicators to measure progress over time.

How to get involved

This project is a joint initiative between the City of New Westminster and the Society for Children and Youth of BC with partial project funding provided by the United Way of the Lower Mainland and the Vancouver Foundation.

We are interested in hearing from you. For more information, please contact Andrea Lemire, andrea@scyofbc.org

About the Society for Children and Youth of BC (SCY)

SCY has focused on providing a strong voice representing children and youth. We provide supports to adult duty bearers to improve the well-being of children and youth in British Columbia. Using the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) as a foundation, SCY has a track record of creating and delivering programs that have motivated change in research, legislation, policy and practice in Canada.

For more information on SCY visit www.scyofbc.org

To learn about child rights, visit www.everychild.ca

ⁱ Building Child Friendly Cities: A Framework for Action, UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, International Secretariat for Child Friendly Cities, Florence, 15 March 2004

ⁱⁱ Frederick Douglass, 19th-century abolitionist, orator, author, statesman, feminist, newspaper publisher, and escaped slave (USA).

Child and Youth Friendly Community Strategy

City of New Westminster

Note: this is an outline of concepts; the titles of these sections can change.

1. Executive Summary

2. Introduction

- a. Purpose (of this document)
- b. Concept of child and youth friendly communities (theory)
- c. Universal importance of planning child and youth friendly communities (big picture benefits: e.g., enhanced child outcomes, improved quality of life, more engaged citizenry, more inclusive services)
- d. Local relevance (link and relationship with Council's priorities)
- e. Local benefits and opportunities (benefits specific to the context of New Westminster: e.g., family-friendly housing, intergenerational neighbourhoods, school enrolment, etc.)
- f. Challenges and limitations (reflecting role of municipality: jurisdictional and resource limitations, etc.)

3. Vision

- a. Overarching vision
- b. Contributors to the vision (acknowledgement of stakeholder involvement)

4. Profile

- a. Profile and comparison data of children, youth and families (demographics, health data, EDI, MDI, etc.)
- b. City of New Westminster (city profile, surrounding context of neighbouring municipalities and province, opportunities and challenges, etc.)
- c. Resource distribution across neighbourhoods (asset mapping: e.g., child care, parks, services, etc.)

5. Methodology

- a. Background of the project (collaboration, funding acknowledgement)
- b. Research
- c. Consultation

6-13. Each Domain (Working, Living, Caring, Learning, Sense of Place, Moving, Playing, Engaging)

- a. Introduction
 - i. Context (What is covered in this section: what needs/rights are included here)
 - ii. Rationale/research (financial, social and developmental benefits)
 - iii. City of New Westminster's role (where/how a municipality can have influence)
- b. Vision
 - iv. Vision for this domain
- c. Context
 - v. Current policy context (City, Fraser Health, MCFD, School District)
 - vi. Accomplishments to date (actions that can be built upon)
- d. Goals
 - vii. Immediate actions to take within the next year (recommended or suggested actions)
 - viii. Actions to take within the next three to five years (recommended or suggested actions)
- e. Indicators
 - ix. Statistics/data that provide useful indicators as to the City's progress in this domain (develop and recommend indicators that give both big picture improvements and more immediate results)

14. Conclusion

- a. Ongoing review process and goal setting
- b. A list of feasible action items that fall outside of the scope of this project (e.g., due to requiring partnership buy-in or requiring the completion of current actions)
- c. Bibliography (reference to research materials that informed this document)
- d. Reference documents (materials from community consultations, itemization of documents within the city that reference this strategy, etc.)