

## **Attachment 1**

### **History of Social Planning in the Regional District of Nanaimo**

#### **Social Planning Service**

“Regional District of Nanaimo Regional Growth Management Service Establishment Bylaw No. 1553, 2008” (Bylaw 1553) created a regional growth management service to provide “coordination, research and analytical services relating to the development of the regional district”. Distinct from other forms of development and land use planning, social planning is not considered a development service. Social planning is a process focusing on people by working with community members, non-profit agencies, local government departments and other levels of government and local businesses to address topics that improve the well-being and quality of life of all in a community. Core activities of social planning include:

- **Social research:** Undertake a range of research on social trends, needs and issues relevant to local communities. Including preparing provincially required Housing Assessment Reports every five years.
- **Systems planning:** Planning that ranges from determining service needs to coordination and evaluation of programs and delivery.
- **Convening and collaboration:** Provide a non-threatening “meeting place” for discussion and a focal point for mobilizing those groups most affected by working together through partnerships, networks and coalitions.
- **Community development:** Facilitate and support positive change in collaboration with local government regional and community partners, individuals, and through engaging First Nation representatives and the local business community.
- **Policy analysis and development:** Provide expertise on a wide range of social, economic, and cultural issues to inform policy options and recommendations for decision-makers.
- **Advocacy and social action:** Serve as a catalyst for change by advocating for specific policy positions and resources to senior levels of government.

#### **History of Social Planning in the Regional District of Nanaimo**

Social planning activities, such as the development of the Social Needs Assessment and Strategy (the Strategy) are in addition to the Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) land use and community planning responsibilities and beyond the scope and current resources of Bylaw 1553 to provide development services. Planning resources are exhausted and implementing the Strategy and other studies are beyond current resource capacity. Implementing the Strategy and related social planning projects will require the creation of a new regional social planning service and hiring of a social planner.

Over the last decade the Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) has taken several actions to help support health and well-being, vulnerable populations, housing affordability and homelessness. A few examples of these actions include:

- developing a regional housing needs assessment and action plan (2010);
- land use policies and regulations to support housing diversity (Regional Growth Strategy 2011);

- partnership with Island Health to coordinate the Oceanside and Nanaimo Community Health Networks (2014 to 2022);
- funding to community-based organization (Oceanside Task Force on Homelessness and the Society of Organized Services);
- partnering with member municipalities (land purchase agreement with Parksville and development of the Mid-Island Childcare Action Plan with the Nanaimo);
- facilitating a service agreement between the Society of Organized Services and the Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism Association to use funds from the Municipal Regional District Tax Online Accommodation Platform for housing subsidies in the Oceanside area to support affordable housing; and
- the development of the Regional District of Nanaimo Social Needs Assessment and Strategy (2021).

Except for land use policies and provincially mandated activities, most of the actions came as special requests and it was often unclear which existing service area(s) would be able to accommodate the request (i.e., planning, transit, recreation, other). While this approach provides flexibility, it also furthers the gap in regional coordination and capacity to provide a more strategic, long-term approach to addressing social needs. In response, the RDN has explored creating a social planning service in 2014, 2018 and most recently in 2021, following the completion of the Strategy.

To date, the RDN has not established a service able to provide the capacity or funding needed to advance this strategic direction. To encourage further dialogue on this subject, the Board passed the following resolution on January 24, 2023:

No. 23-059     *that an information report on creating a social planning service be provided as recommended in the November 23, 2021, staff report titled “Report on the Regional District of Nanaimo Social Needs Assessment and Strategy”.*