



SAFER NANAIMO
ANNUAL REPORT
2009

Council initiated a series of discussions in June, 2006, on how to create a safer downtown Nanaimo, leading to the creation of the SAFER Nanaimo Working Group in April of 2007.

It had an immediate impact - in October 2008, the City of Nanaimo received the Solicitor General Crime Prevention and Community Safety Award on behalf of SAFER Nanaimo. This was in recognition of *“outstanding leadership in the area of promoting and implementing crime prevention and community safety strategies”*.

Councillor Merv Unger was appointed co-chair by then Mayor Gary Korpan

“SAFER is a unique approach to public safety in that it brings together social workers and law enforcement to collectively problem-solve the issues of public disorder in our downtown. This approach allows us to assert community standards through our policing stance and respond to issues like mental illness or addictions from a health perspective. We understand it’s not possible to police away these kinds of social issues and SAFER allows us to collaborate on a more comprehensive approach”.

Councillor Fred Pattje was appointed by Mayor John Ruttan as SAFER co-chair in late 2008.

“We began the year with the move of the Harris Health Clinic to Wesley Street and ended the year with an announcement that VIHA will fund an Assertive Community Treatment team in Nanaimo. In between, a tremendous amount has been accomplished across a range of issues. I am especially pleased that we have instituted regular public meetings of SAFER to allow neighbourhoods across the city to bring forward concerns about safety and security, broadening our focus from downtown to the whole of Nanaimo”.

In 2009, SAFER Nanaimo covered a lot of ground:

- The Balmoral Hotel – SAFER facilitated discussions with the South End Citizens Association and VIHA Metal Health and Addictions on programming for the CMHA owned heritage building on Haliburton Street. The purchase of this 1890’s hotel has preserved 20 units of affordable housing and provides a home base for CMHA and VIHA street outreach workers.
- Needle drop boxes – under the auspices of SAFER, four collection boxes for used hypodermic syringes have been installed in Nanaimo. To date more than 950 needles have been recovered.
- ACT team – VIHA has announced that a ten member medical/psychiatric support team will be created in Nanaimo specifically to work with homeless individuals. The team will attend to the physical, mental, and social needs of clients who have mental illness and/or serious addictions issues which impede their capacity to function.
- Supportive Housing – SAFER in 2006 recommended the provision of affordable supportive housing to diminish the incidence of street homelessness in the city. In 2009,

SAFER is acting as the steering committee for the development of 160 units of housing funded in partnership with the provincial government.

- Good Neighbour Agreements – SAFER has participated in discussions with the South End Citizens Association, Neighbours of Nob Hill, Old City Quarter Association, Downtown Nanaimo Partnership, Nanaimo City Centre Association, Vancouver Island Health Authority, and others with regard to the location and operation of high impact social services.
- Wellington/Long Lake concerns were addressed at a public meeting with a resident of the area. The group assisted with his concerns about problem youth in the area and someone living in an RV on church property. The group assisted with a CPTED review and acted as a liaison with the area residents and the church.
- Tour of homeless projects – SAFER co-chairs and members accompanied Mayor and Council on a tour of supportive housing projects in Vancouver to look at examples of how Nanaimo intends to address homelessness in our community.
- Community Policing and Services Office – the CPSO relocated to a storefront on Victoria Crescent in 2009 and SAFER has since played a strong role in developing an operational plan that incorporates daytime/night-time private security, the recently concluded ambassadors' program, the downtown bylaws function, parking, auxiliary RCMP and downtown policing.
- Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) – several members of SAFER took level one CPTED training in 2009 informing the group's work on creating a safe urban environment. A number of members received advanced CPTED training and did an assessment of the sites surrounding the Wesley Street housing project as well as previous assessments for Harris House and the Neutral Zone.
- Public meetings – SAFER has hosted a number of meetings open to the public on issues of safety and security.
- Bar Watch – SAFER has supported the work of the RCMP in initiating and sustaining a bar watch program in Nanaimo that has had a significant effect on the presence of gangs and organized crime in Nanaimo's nightclubs. The Treoscope system is in use in most downtown cabarets and requires that nightclub owners identify and photograph anyone who enters their licensed premises.
- VIHA communications – SAFER has shepherded through a Memorandum of Understanding on communications between VIHA and the City of Nanaimo. Under this MOU both parties agree to consult and communicate with each other on potentially controversial decisions such as harm reduction strategies or rezoning for social service uses.
- Snuneymuxw First Nations – this year SAFER welcomed the addition of SFN Councillors Doug White II and Sandra Good to the SAFER working group. We look forward to working with them in 2010 to enhance the safety and security of residents living on SFN territories in Nanaimo.
- 2010 – the SAFER Nanaimo working group will continue to address those issues affecting the quality of life in our community; crime, public disorder, homelessness, addictions, mental illness, crime prevention, downtown vitality, personal security and such other matters referred by Council or the general public.