

June 2026

COMMUNITY SAFETY AND WELLBEING

City of Nanaimo's Initiatives and Programs

Overview

The City of Nanaimo promotes safety and security through emergency response services, including fire protection, bylaw enforcement, and policing. Beyond these essential services, the City also plays a vital role in addressing the root causes of crime and social disorder. This influence is reflected in the design of the built environment, the provision of community amenities (such as buildings and parks), and the delivery of programs and initiatives that support social development, recreation, culture, and wellness. Many of these programs also provide critical support to individuals experiencing homelessness.

According to Statistics Canada[i], there is a documented correlation between homelessness and criminal victimization. Furthermore, many individuals experiencing homelessness report prior experiences of trauma and victimization, which often contribute to their housing instability[ii].

Between 2016 and 2025, the number of people identified in Point-in-Time Homelessness counts in the City of Nanaimo increased from 174 to 577, an increase of more than 200% over nine years. While the 2025 Nanaimo Point-in-Time Homelessness Count shows a decrease from 621 in 2024, this change should be interpreted with caution. A revised methodology and validation challenges may limit comparability with previous years. In addition, the opening of 54 new temporary supportive housing units likely influenced the count, including where individuals were staying and how they were counted. Frontline service providers consistently indicate that the true number of people experiencing homelessness in Nanaimo is higher than reflected in the count, with estimates ranging from 800 to 1,000 individuals. The 2025 count also identified 54 youth experiencing homelessness, underscoring the need for continued investment in prevention, early intervention, and housing stability supports for young people.

The following sections outline the City of Nanaimo's upstream, midstream, and downstream actions to enhance community safety and well-being for all residents.



References

[i] <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2021001/article/00014-eng.htm>

[ii] <https://www.homelesshub.ca/about-homelessness/legal-justice-issues/trauma-and-victimization>

Upstream Initiatives



Upstream approaches to community safety and wellbeing are about creating a healthy, safe and secure community where everyone has opportunities to grow, work, play, be valued and have belonging.

Housing Initiatives

The City is continuously working hard to ensure that Nanaimo has a range of housing types for people of all income levels. This includes temporary shelter, social or supportive housing, non-market housing, market rental housing and homeownership.

Detailed information regarding the many housing-related projects and initiatives that the City has undertaken to support affordable housing can be found on the City's Housing page. Here, you will find the most up-to-date information on current housing initiatives, including projects in partnership with BC Housing.

Link: <https://www.nanaimo.ca/your-government/community-safety-and-wellbeing/community-and-social-service-programs/housing>

Homelessness Prevention: Rent Bank & Rent Supplement Program

Nanaimo Region Rent Bank

In 2020, the City and the Nanaimo Homeless Coalition established the Nanaimo Region Rent Bank, operated by Connective (formerly the Nanaimo Region John Howard Society). After a successful application to BC Rent Bank, the program began issuing loans in January 2021. From January 2021 to December 2025, the City contributed \$389,000 in Online Accommodation Platform revenue for rent bank capital, with an additional \$37,000 approved for 2026 in November 2025. In 2025, the program issued 96 loans, supporting 272 Nanaimo residents at risk of eviction. A full report is available in the [Nanaimo Region Rent Bank Update - November 19, 2025](#).

Rent Supplement Program

Between 2016 and 2025, the City provided \$425,000 for rent supplements distributed by service providers to individuals and families in Nanaimo. In November 2025, Council approved an additional \$150,000 for 2026 through the Online Accommodation Platform. In 2025, 261 rent supplements supported 324 Nanaimo residents at risk of eviction. A full report is available in the [Nanaimo Rent Supplement Program Update – November 19, 2025](#).

A summary of funds used from Online Accommodation Platform Fund is available in the [Online Accommodation Platform Fund Report – November 19, 2025](#).

Youth Resilience Strategy

To help build a safer community, the City partnered with Public Safety Canada on programs that address the root causes of youth involvement in gun and gang violence. The City received \$1.8 million to develop and implement the Nanaimo Youth Resilience Strategy, endorsed by Council in 2023. Between 2023 and March 31, 2026, eight organizations, including the City's Parks, Recreation & Culture Department, received funding to support at-risk youth and advance the Strategy's focus areas.

Link: <https://www.nanaimo.ca/your-government/projects/projects-detail/building-safer-communities-gun-and-gang-violence-prevention>

Parks, Recreation & Culture Programs

The Parks, Recreation and Culture (PRC) Department supports City Plan goals of inclusion, wellbeing, and connectedness through parks, public spaces, recreation facilities, and accessible programming. In a homelessness and social development context, PRC provides supports such as safe public spaces, washrooms, and opportunities for social connection that reduce isolation and support physical and mental health. A key equity tool is the Leisure Economic Access Pass (LEAP), which gives low-income residents free access to recreation services and connections to cultural amenities such as the Nanaimo Museum and Nanaimo Art Gallery.

Link: <https://www.nanaimo.ca/parks-recreation-culture>

Social Development Grants

The City's Social Development Grants support City Plan goals, particularly Healthy Nanaimo: Community Wellbeing & Livability. The grants fund programs that strengthen community vitality and wellbeing, build social cohesion, address root causes of poverty, and advance equity and inclusion. The City provides \$85,000 in funding annually. For information on 2026 funded projects see the Social Planning Grants 2026 Report – November 19, 2025.

Link: <https://www.nanaimo.ca/your-government/grants/social-development-grants>

Neighbourhood Associations

The City supports neighbourhood associations as an effective intermediary between the City and residents to address neighbourhood interests and concerns. This includes mitigating the impact of homelessness on residents and businesses.

Link: <https://www.nanaimo.ca/property-development/land-use-bylaws/neighbourhood-and-area-plans/neighbourhood-associations>

Midstream Initiatives



Midstream approaches to community safety and wellbeing help to support the City's more marginalized populations and work to reduce and respond to acutely elevated risk situations to mitigate harm and decrease the likelihood of victimization and trauma.

Health & Housing Action Plan

The Health & Housing Action Plan (HHAP) grew out of the City's Health and Housing Task Force and provides a roadmap for collaboration toward a shared vision of health and housing for all. HHAP implementation has moved from planning to active system coordination, service delivery, and partnership development across priority areas. A formal governance structure is now in place through the provincially aligned Alignment Project, with the Homelessness Response Leadership Table coordinating system planning, shared data, and service alignment across government, Indigenous partners, and community organizations.

Current work includes strengthening coordinated access to housing and supports, improving outreach and encampment response, and expanding data-sharing and system coordination. Housing options have also increased through new and planned supportive, transitional, and complex-care units delivered with BC Housing, Island Health, and non-profit partners, though demand continues to exceed supply.

Link: https://www.nanaimo.ca/docs/default-document-library/healthandhousingactionplan-document_for-website.pdf

Community Policing Program

The Nanaimo RCMP Community Policing Volunteer Program is a joint effort between the City and the Nanaimo RCMP. The program supports a range of community-based crime prevention programs and community policing initiatives, including: Neighbourhood Safety Audits, Speed Watch, Block Watch, Crime Watch, 529 Garage Bike Registry, and other additional safety education and awareness campaigns and events.

Link: <https://www.nanaimocpvolunteers.ca>

Nanaimo Acute Response Table (Situation Table)

The City facilitates the Nanaimo Acute Response Table, bringing together front-line professionals from health, social services and public safety to respond rapidly to a vulnerable person or family in a high-risk situation that needs to be connected to services quickly.

Council has committed ongoing staff support (until 2031) to the work of the Nanaimo Acute Response Table. Although the Table provides broad support to individuals living in acutely elevated risk, many of our referrals are for people living in homelessness (especially women and youth).

Link: <https://www.nanaimo.ca/your-government/projects/situation-table>

Downstream Initiatives



Downstream approaches to community safety and wellbeing focus on the City's ability to respond to emergencies and requires an immediate response to stop harm, minimizes victimization, and holds individuals accountable.

HEART and HEARTH MOU with the Ministry of Housing

On January 29, 2024, the City entered into a HEART and HEARTH MOU with the Ministry of Housing to participate in the Provincial HEART and HEARTH programs. HEARTH temporary housing provides spaces for people staying long-term in shelters, helping free up shelter capacity in Nanaimo and reduce encampments. Current HEARTH sites are listed below.

- 2250 Terminal Ave (Newcastle Place) – 50 units are occupied and the site is operated by Island Crisis Care Society.
- 1300 Island Highway – 50 units are occupied and the site is operated by Connective Society BC.
- 1030 Old Victoria Road – 59 units are occupied and the site is operated by Vancouver Island Mental Health Society.
- Total occupied units - 159

Link: <https://www.nanaimo.ca/your-government/projects/projects-detail/heart-and-hearth>

Downtown Nanaimo Community Safety Action Plan

As part of the Downtown Nanaimo Community Safety Action Plan, endorsed by Council in 2022, the City hired 12 Community Safety Officers (CSO) and 2 community Clean Teams to monitor the downtown area. In addition, CPTED assessments of City-owned spaces were conducted, and a Vandalism Relief Grant was created. The City has committed \$2.5 million annually to enhance downtown safety, including increasing the CSO unit to 22 members by the end of 2026.

In July 2023, the City received \$75,000 from the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General to evaluate the Downtown Nanaimo Community Safety Action Plan, explore the feasibility of expanding the plan to other areas of the city and ensure that the action plan is aligned with the Health and Housing Action Plan, Nanaimo Youth Resilience Strategy, City Plan, the Nanaimo Acute Response Table and Nanaimo RCMP Strategic Priorities. The review was presented to Council on April 29, 2024.

Resulting from the recommendations of this review, 10 new Community Safety officers and a part-time support person were added in 2025, and an additional four officers will be hired in 2026. A Superintendent, Sanitation, Recycling & Cemeteries position has been added as well to assist with expanding the Clean Team's efforts.

Link: <https://pub-nanaimo.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=42120>

Extreme Weather Response

To address gaps in basic-needs services for people living unsheltered, reduce safety risks, and meet the City's legislated public safety responsibilities during extreme weather emergencies, the City allocated \$584,257 to match federal Reaching Home funding for a Drop-in Hub service.

The Hub was the city's only daily drop-in service for people living unsheltered, offering food, hygiene supplies, clothing, and support during extreme weather. Partner agencies also provided regular onsite services, helping connect people to housing, shelter, health care, cultural supports, and income assistance. The Hub was a key part of the City's extreme cold weather response and served as the main operational site during cold weather events in 2025 and 2026. A summary of the Hub, its services, neighbourhood impacts, and mitigation measures was presented to the Finance and Audit Committee on July 16, 2025. At that meeting, Council approved an additional \$125,000 to extend Hub services to March 31, 2026, and directed staff to work with service providers and United Way BC to identify and secure a more suitable location. In December 2025, an update report on Hub relocation, funding, and service delivery was provided, and efforts to secure a new location are ongoing.

The City's response to extreme weather is guided by its Emergency Management Plan and Extreme Weather Response Procedures, informed by the Extreme Heat Mapping, Assessment and Planning Summary and Recommendations Report (2023). The report identifies the populations and neighbourhoods most at risk, helping the City target its limited resources where they are needed most. Extreme heat thresholds are set by the Provincial Heat Alerting Response System.

Link: <https://www.nanaimo.ca/your-government/social-issues-and-community-safety/community-and-social-service-programs/homelessness/services-and-supports>

Shower Program

Between 2018 and 2025, the City has provided \$355,853 to fund a shower service program at Caledonia Park for those experiencing homelessness. In December 2023, Council approved increasing funding for this program by \$16,450, to provide an additional hour of services daily Monday-Friday in 2024. A project was also added to undertake building improvements to Caledonia Park which were completed in summer 2024.

Police Services (RCMP)

Four officers are dedicated to the Repeat Violent Offending Intervention Initiative, and eight officers are specialists in dealing with social disorder and homelessness. From 2020 - 2025, 15 new officers were added, with 12 more starting in 2025 (four per year), with one new Public Service employee. Additional police support positions include two in 2025 and two more in 2026

Nanaimo Fire Rescue

Firefighters respond to more calls per member than comparable departments. Trained to the Emergency Medical Responder level, they provide safety & medical response across the city. 20 new firefighters were hired in 2023, with another 20 added in 2025.

Surviving in Nanaimo Guide

The Surviving in Nanaimo Guide is a City-supported resource that connects residents to low- and no-cost services through a centralized directory of supports such as shelters, food programs, hygiene services, health care, mental health and substance use services, and pathways to housing, income, and legal assistance. It plays a key navigation role by reducing barriers, improving awareness, and helping individuals and frontline workers quickly access appropriate resources, while its inclusive scope, featuring culturally specific services and supports for youth, seniors, and Indigenous communities, aligns with City equity goals; a condensed “pocket guide” version is also available for those who are unhoused, highlighting essential services.

Link: <https://www.nanaimo.ca/your-government/social-issues-and-community-safety/community-and-social-service-programs/surviving-in-nanaimo-guide>

Key Contacts

Dave LaBerge

Director, Public Safety

dave.laberge@nanaimo.ca

Christy Wood

Manager, Social Development

christy.wood@nanaimo.ca

Lisa Brinkman

Manager, Community Planning

lisa.brinkman@nanaimo.ca

Resources

[Social Service Projects and Programs](#)