



**COVID-19 RECOVERY PLAN**  
**A Planning Framework**  
**for Municipal Operations**

**JULY 13, 2020**

# INTRODUCTION

The City of Nanaimo's COVID-19 Recovery Plan (the "Plan") outlines the various steps taken toward a gradual, safe and measured reopening of municipal facilities and resumption of City services and programs that have been suspended during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The City has taken steps to prioritize the health and safety of residents and employees. We closed municipal facilities to the public and cancelled programming and events. We found ways to deliver modified services to allow our operations to continue wherever possible. We also found new and different ways to continue delivering as many municipal services as possible.

The COVID-19 pandemic is not over. This virus will continue to affect our operations and our community for many months to come. As we begin to look ahead, this document will serve as the road map to our new reality. It outlines the steps the City will take to keep our residents and employees safe and provides a plan for the safe reopening of facilities and the resumption of services and programs.

The Plan has been developed based on the guidance of the Province of BC's Restart Plan, the recommendations of the Provincial Health Officer and guidelines and directives from organizations such as WorkSafe BC, the Municipal Safety Association of BC and a number of other governing bodies. Like BC's Restart Plan, our Plan uses a multi-staged approach, enabling us to adapt to changing circumstances and to limit risks to our employees' and the public's health.

The plan will be updated as needed and will likely change as the COVID-19 pandemic evolves, as the Province updates BC's Restart Plan and as the Provincial Health Officer makes announcements for reopening other sectors of the economy or relaxing restrictions currently in place.

## A Message from Jake Rudolph, CAO

As BC restarts, the City of Nanaimo is following suit. Outdoor recreation spaces in City parks have reopened, Council has approved the restart of committees and task forces and the roll out of Reimagine Nanaimo, a comprehensive review of a number of key planning documents for the City including the Official Community Plan, is on track.

Although our buildings are closed to the public, the City remains open to business and staff continue to do great work providing excellent customer service. Modifications to City services have been made to accommodate physical distancing. Recreation staff have developed outdoor programs and day camps. Finance staff worked with the Parks, Recreation and Culture department to set up a pop-up tax payment office in Beban Park. Legislative Services staff worked with staff from the IT department to ensure Council meetings could continue to be livestreamed while Councillors joined in from home and other places.

The next few weeks and months will be filled with more transition. We continue to take direction from the Province and have established a working group to develop a reopening plan for all City facilities. This includes how we will safely welcome back the public to our facilities. The group is working on ensuring the highest health and safety standards are put in place so everyone feels comfortable when visiting and at work in our buildings. On behalf of the City of Nanaimo, I look forward to welcoming you back when we take the step to reopen.

# BACKGROUND



The World Health Organization (WHO) declares outbreak of new Coronavirus disease in Wuhan, China in early January 2020.



The WHO declares COVID-19 a pandemic on March 11, 2020.



The City of Nanaimo activates a Level 1 Emergency Coordination Centre (ECC) on March 12, 2020.



On March 17, 2020, Provincial Health Officer, Dr. Bonnie Henry issues an order banning gatherings of 50 or people and declares COVID-19 a health emergency. The Province declares a state of emergency on March 18, 2020.



The City closes all facilities, playgrounds, gated off-leash dog parks and outdoor sporting amenities in City parks as well postpones all committee/task force meetings and cancels all recreation programming.



The Province of BC unveils its Restart Plan on May 6, 2020. The City uses this to develop its own plans to reopen services to the public including setting up a pop-up tax payment office in Beban Park, creating outdoor recreation programs and reopening outdoor amenities that had been closed.



A working group consisting of City staff from all departments develops plans to gradually open up facilities to the public.

*Working toward a gradual, safe and measured reopening of municipal facilities and resumption of City services and programs suspended during the COVID-19 pandemic.*



# GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Plan is guided by the following principles:



## Protection of Health

We will ensure the health of residents and City staff continues to be our highest priority. We will provide opportunities to maintain safe physical distance from others and follow good public health and occupational safety practices while reopening municipal facilities and restarting programs and services.



## Health, Well-Being and Productivity

We will consider the health, well-being and productivity of employees when determining the most suitable location for them to do their best work.



## Economic Recovery

We will prioritize those municipal services or activities that generate revenue for the City, or that contribute to the economic recovery of the City or the community.



## Community Priorities

We will consider the services that are most valued by the community.



## Resource Availability

We will consider the availability of resources such as staff, physical and financial resources, personal protective equipment and more.

*We will consider the services that are most valued by the community.*



## COVID-19 Recovery Plan Steps

The Plan is divided into four steps, each aligning generally with BC's Restart Plan. Through each step, the health and safety of residents and City staff will be the primary focus, as we balance the needs of the community and City Council with running a safe and efficient operation. Our approach will be gradual, and adaptive to changing circumstances in relation to the COVID-19 prevalence in our community, on Vancouver Island and in the province.

Each step the City takes will follow the lead of the Province of BC and take guidance from the Provincial Health Officer, Island Health's Medical Health Officer and WorkSafe BC. Advice from these professionals will determine the speed with which we proceed through the steps of reopening and will help to determine if health and safety measures need to be adjusted at any time. The dates referenced at each step are approximations only.

Everyday actions to protect the health of residents and City staff – like physical distancing, frequent hand washing and staying home if sick – will continue through each step.

The City would like to thank residents for their cooperation in response to the pandemic. It has been a time of great uncertainty and strain. We are dedicated to ensuring the public is well-informed by providing clear communication on City services and easy access to information from trusted sources.

Moving forward, we will continue to provide up-to-date information on the City's reopening plan, what can be expected as we take each step and how we will ensure residents are safe and healthy when visiting a City facility, recreating in our parks and engaging with us.

## STEPS

1

### MARCH TO MAY

Focus on closure of facilities and park amenities (playgrounds, sport courts, gated off-leash dog areas), cancellation of in-person recreation programming and providing services online.

2

### LATE MAY TO SEPTEMBER

Focus on reopening park amenities and some indoor facilities, offering limited outdoor recreation programming and modified summer camps as well as opening up a pop-up tax payment office that accommodates physical distancing.

3

### APPROXIMATELY SEPTEMBER AND BEYOND

Focus on further expanding public access to programs and services.

4

### DEPENDENT UPON RELEASE OF A VACCINE

Focus on resumption of normal operations and service and program delivery.



# STEP 1

*March 2020 to May 2020*

*\*Return in the event of another wave*

This step focuses on responding to Provincial health orders by implementing measures to reduce the risk of spread of COVID-19 in the community. In the event of another wave, the City may return to this step.

## **Parks, Recreation and Culture**

- Closure of recreation facilities.
- Closure of park amenities - sport courts, bike tracks, playgrounds, skate parks
- Closure of gated off-leash dog parks
- Cancel in-person recreation programming
- Transition to online/social media programming and community engagement for recreation and culture programs/opportunities
- Install guideline signage to ensure physical distancing in parks and on trails

## **City Administration and Operations**

- Closure of City Hall, Public Works building and Service and Resource Centre
- Provide City services online, by phone or by email
- Institute work from home practices
- Institute virtual/physical distancing meetings for Council, committees and staff
- Continue to provide essential services such as garbage and recycling collection, drinking water distribution and sewer operations
- Provide guidelines on safe recycling and disposal of waste

## **Emergency Management**

- Activate the Emergency Coordination Centre (ECC)



## STEP 2

*Late May to September 2020*

This step focuses on a phased expansion of public access to services where physical distancing can be maintained. Protocols will be developed using guidelines and recommendations from various organizations, including the Province of BC, WorkSafe BC, BC Recreation and Parks Association, Lifesaving Society and viaSport.

### **Parks, Recreation and Culture**

- Reopen park amenities - sport courts, bike tracks, playgrounds, skate parks
- Reopen gated off-leash dog parks
- Provide limited outdoor recreation programming including modified summer day camps
- Reopen some indoor facilities
- City parks and trails remain open with guideline signage to ensure physical distancing is maintained

### **City Administration and Operations**

- Provide services via phone, email or City website
- Provide safe in-person tax payments via pop-up tax office in Beban Park
- Expand virtual/physical distancing meetings to include public hearings and public consultation
- Follow WorkSafe guidelines to provide a safe work environment



## STEP 3

*September 2020 and beyond*

This step focuses on a phased reopening of facilities to the public following guidelines and recommendations from various organizations, including the Province of BC, WorkSafe BC, BC Recreation and Parks Association, Lifesaving Society and viaSport.

### **Parks, Recreation and Culture**

- Reopen recreation facilities with limits on attendance and physical distancing measures in place
- Expansion of indoor recreation programming where physical distancing can be maintained
- Continue online engagement for recreation and culture programs/opportunities

### **City Administration and Operations**

- Reopen City Hall, Public Works building and Service and Resource Centre with safety plans in place
- Resume pre-COVID front counter services

*We will provide opportunities to maintain safe physical distance from others and follow good public health and occupational safety practices while reopening municipal facilities and restarting programs and services.*



## STEP 4

### *Once a vaccine has been released*

This step considers a return to normal City operations, programs and services.

#### **Parks, Recreation and Culture**

- Lift restrictions in place in parks (including park amenities) and on trails
- Return to normal recreation programming and facility operations (including rentals)

#### **City Administration and Operations**

- Reinstate in-person Council and committee meetings, public hearings and public consultation
- Continue virtual meetings and online services where proven to be most effective

# FINANCIAL IMPACT

*We will prioritize those municipal services or activities that generate revenue for the City, or that contribute to the economic recovery of the City or the community.*

The City of Nanaimo is taking a measured approach to its response to the COVID-19 pandemic positioning the organization for a strong recovery. As with other municipalities, our response to the pandemic has resulted in facility closures and modified service delivery leading to revenue losses. In response, the City has identified areas where expenditures can be reduced or avoided. Moving forward, the City will continue to monitor and proactively address the financial impacts of COVID-19 and adjust as opportunities arise to accelerate recovery and mitigate the longer-term impacts to the community.

## **Financial Response and Recovery Framework**

In April, the City created a financial model to illustrate the potential impact of the pandemic as well as any impacts from financial relief policy decisions and multi-level government relief directives. A review of the services and projects that have some flexibility took place to determine if any adjustments, cancellations or deferrals could be made to mitigate immediate and longer-term financial pressures.

## **Revenue Anticipation Borrowing**

Council approved a revenue anticipation borrowing bylaw that authorizes the City to borrow up to \$50 million to access funds for cash flow in the event the City experiences low property tax collection. The Province has extended the term for repayment of any revenue anticipation borrowing to two years.

## **Billing and Tax Date Extensions**

To provide some immediate financial relief for residents impacted by the pandemic, Council extended the payment due date for City of Nanaimo user rate bills from 30 to 90 days for all billings issued after March 17, 2020. Also, late payment penalty dates for 2020 property taxes was extended to 5% on October 1, 2020 and 5% on November 12, 2020.

## **Project Plans**

The City took a careful approach in revisiting the 2020 Project Plan to assess any necessary adjustments. Following this exercise, the City found sufficient resource capacity to continue with the plan as originally intended. This approach not only benefits the City and residents, it also ensures the many businesses the City relies on for supplies and project completion can continue to employ staff and contribute to economic recovery.

## **Reserve Transfers and Reserve Funds**

In 2019, a General Financial Stability Reserve fund was set up as a result of the new Reserves Policy, to help mitigate risk arising from lower than expected revenues or sudden unplanned expenditures needed to maintain delivery of City services. In addition, the Special Initiatives Reserve was topped up with \$2.8 million from the 2019 surplus to help fund any potential COVID-19 related shortfall and other priorities. Finally, the Province has allowed interest-free borrowing from existing capital reserves for local governments to help cover revenue shortfalls with a repayment term of up to five years.



250-754-4251



455 Wallace Street, Nanaimo, BC V9R 5J6



[www.nanaimo.ca](http://www.nanaimo.ca)



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