

South End Neighbourhood Safety Audit 2021



Nanaimo Community Policing

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Introduction

The Nanaimo Neighbourhood Safety Audit is a hands-on crime prevention initiative undertaken by the Nanaimo Community Policing program in collaboration with the RCMP, Neighbourhood Associations, Vancouver Island University, and many other people and organizations in Nanaimo. Safety audits are a useful tool which have been used in many cities throughout Canada and the U.S to help address safety challenges in neighbourhoods.

Safety Audits work to promote neighbourhood safety by identifying factors relating to safety and crime. Safety audits allow neighbourhoods to work with residents, businesses, police and other agencies to find ways to reduce the opportunities for crime and incorporate relevant crime prevention programming. The findings of the Safety Audits are based on residents' and business owner's experiences and perceptions of crime and safety, crime statistics, social contexts of the local neighbourhood and Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) assessments of problematic locations found in the neighbourhood.

Safety Audits have the potential to bring about a wide range of benefits, including:

- Reduction in opportunities for neighbourhood crime by working to address criminogenic factors.
- Identify a neighbourhood's strengths and weaknesses in regards to crime and safety, and work with neighbourhoods to incorporate community safety and crime prevention tools.
- Increase residents' awareness of neighbourhood crime and crime prevention, as well as reduce levels of fear of crime through the spread of information.
- Reduces isolation and creates opportunities for residents and businesses to share their experiences of crime and vulnerability.
- Strengthens connection between residents as they work together to build a strong and healthy neighbourhood.
- Creates a strong relationship between residents, RCMP, neighbourhood associations, and other organizations through collaboration and communication.

The Neighbourhood Safety Audit seeks to give residents an opportunity to have their voices be heard, and prioritizes effective collaboration between neighbourhoods and other aspects of the community. The recommendations presented in this report are based on the needs of neighbourhood residents, and are intended to work towards effective, long-term interventions to address issues of safety and crime. Safety Audits are a tool that can greatly contribute to safer and healthier neighbourhoods in Nanaimo.

Background

The South End neighbourhood of Nanaimo was one of six areas chosen by the project team to be the site of a safety audit. Several environmental and social elements present in the South End area made the neighbourhood a good choice to be part of this crime prevention initiative.

South End residents showed a high degree of interest in the Neighbourhood Safety Audit project, and were motivated to participate in community policing initiatives. Members of the South End neighbourhood demonstrated a high level of overall social cohesion, and it was evident that these residents wished to work together to address issues of neighbourhood safety and crime. Early inquiries revealed that concerns about traffic safety, as well as drug use and the homelessness crisis were common among South End residents. The high level of investment in neighbourhood safety displayed by these residents made it clear that they would be effective collaborators in the creation and conducting of the Neighbourhood Safety Audit.

The South End Community Association contributed significantly to the safety audit project. Association members offered valuable input for where the best place to conduct an audit would be, the best ways to engage with residents, and what issues were important to South End residents. Association members expressed their priorities to the project team, which helped focus the efforts of the project. In their October 2020 ReImagine Nanaimo report, the South End residents stressed the importance of addressing traffic safety issues in the neighbourhood, especially in the area around Nicol street and Haliburton Street. There are large concerns around the high number of pedestrians in the neighbourhood and the focus on vehicle traffic rather than foot or cycling traffic. The participants at the consultation also placed the reduction of homelessness as a priority. (ReImagine Nanaimo, 2020)

The commitment to building a strong and healthy neighbourhood displayed by members of the South End made it clear that this area would be receptive to the Neighbourhood Safety Audit initiative, and an effective working partner in the undertaking of this project.

Pre-Audit Survey Results

The pre-audit survey distributed to South End residents provided a more detailed look into what issues were most important to the neighbourhood. This helped inform further efforts in the safety audit project. A total of 73 South End residents responded to the survey.

South End residents showed a very high level of overall satisfaction with their neighbourhood. Roughly 82% of respondents stated they felt a strong or very strong sense of belonging to the neighbourhood, and 77% stated they would recommend the South End to others. 98% of residents reported satisfaction with their relationships with family and friends, and 80% felt satisfied with their relationship with neighbours. Respondents also demonstrated a high amount of trust for neighbours, work colleagues, and local businesses.

Despite the generally positive view of the neighbourhood held by South End residents, a very significant portion of the survey sample expressed concerns about safety and neighbourhood crime. 57% of

respondents stated they felt dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with their overall level of safety. 54% said they believed crime rates had increased in recent years, and 57% believed that crime occurred more often in the South End than it did in other neighbourhoods. 62% of respondents stated they felt unsafe or very unsafe walking alone during the night, and a majority believed it was likely or very likely that they would be harassed at some point during the next twelve months.

Many respondents attributed their beliefs to the presence of drug users and the homeless population, as well as personal or second hand experiences with property crime. 70% of the sample stated that they, someone they know, or a business they frequent had been the victim of a burglary within the past year. Residents believed that the neighbourhood's proximity to the downtown core of Nanaimo was a major contributor to the perceived high crime rate, as well as services such as supportive housing which they believed were attracting homeless individuals and those living in severe poverty to the South End.

In response to these concerns, South End residents offered a range of solutions. Only 8% of the sample believed that crime prevention strategies had been adequately utilized in their neighbourhood. Respondents expressed their belief that efforts have to be taken to improve traffic safety, writing "Proper bicycle lanes, traffic calming or "Only Crime of concern is road rage, reckless driving, extreme speeding" and "Traffic and the danger to my child" as top priorities. Many others argued for greater efforts to be taken to address the prevalence of drug use in the neighbourhood, as this was identified to be a pervasive issue. Beyond this, others stressed the need to improve overall neighbourhood cooperation and community involvement in crime prevention, believing this would help to build a stronger and more resilient neighbourhood.

Demographic information was also collected during the pre-audit survey. 69% of respondents identified their gender as female, and 72% reported their age as being between 35 and 64 years old. 84% reported their ethnic identity as Caucasian, and 10% identified as First Nations, or as a visible minority. A large range of annual household incomes were reported, with the majority of respondents earning above \$50,000. 43% of the sample stated they were employed full time, and 30% stated they were retired.

These survey results help illuminate the issues that are most important to South End residents, and provide information that was valuable in the conducting of the South End safety audit.

South End Neighbourhood Safety Audit Summary

On May 5th, 2021 at 7 pm neighbourhood residents gathered to conduct a safety audit along a route that was identified through the online survey and anecdotal sources as presenting community safety challenges. Due to COVID safety protocols, participation was limited to 10 participants.

The South End Neighbourhood Safety Audit, had 3 neighbourhood residents participate along with 3 criminology practicum students, the Community Policing Coordinator and a City of Nanaimo Social Planner. The residents that participated represented another key group in the neighbourhood, the South End Community Association. The route chosen, as mentioned previously, was largely based on feedback from those living and working in the South End Neighbourhood. The route included commercial locations, a school, a supportive housing project in development, lane ways and many residential areas. (See Appendix A for specific route information)

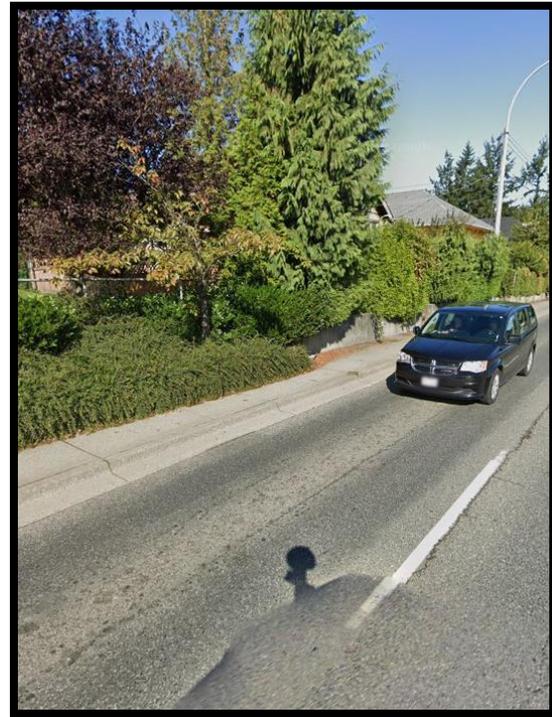
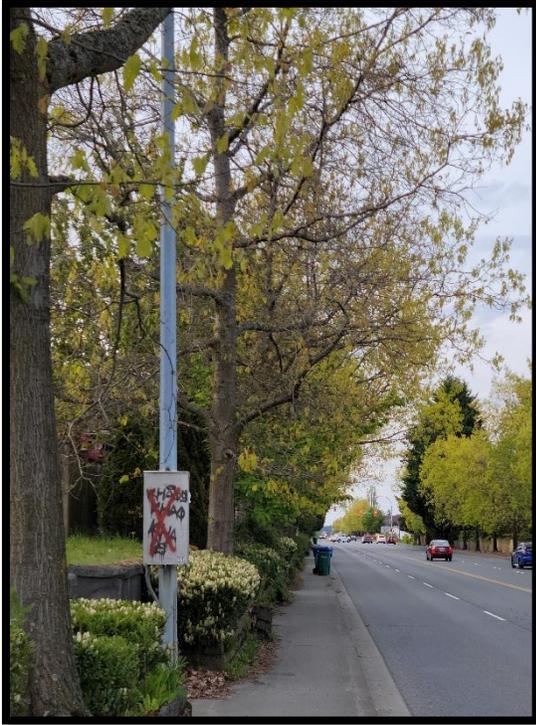
Farquhar Street (Location #1)

The first location that was assessed on the corner of Farquhar street and Nicol street. It was said to be a fluid area with localized issues as it is only half a block away from a problematic residence. Participants noted that the challenges in the area really depends on how much activity is going on, where the activity is happening and the flow of traffic to the particular site. Residents used the example of a suspected drug house about ½ a block away to Farquhar Street however it didn't affect the houses on Farquhar Street since the flow of travel for those accessing the drug house did not take individuals along Farquhar. However, a suspected drug house a couple of blocks away affected the residents on Farquhar street more because many individuals used Farquhar Street as part of their direction of travel to the address in question.

Residents present mentioned positive elements about the Affordable Housing site operated by Pacifica Housing on the corner of Farquhar and Nicol Street. They mentioned that there have never been concerns about the place and that the property is very well maintained and managed.

Nicol Street (Location #2)

The next location was along Nicol street where participants voiced large concerns about Traffic Safety. This was very apparent as we conducted the audit. We had to walk single file when traveling south on Nicol Street. There was overgrown bushes and utility poles that provided barriers to pedestrians. The overgrowth also creates a darker atmosphere at dusk/night making visibility impossible for vehicles and pedestrians. The sidewalk is also blocked during garbage and recycling days when residents have to put out their bins. This poses challenges to baby strollers, scooters, wheelchairs and walkers. At times it is impossible to pass. This poses a grave danger as going around them if physically able means you need to pass by getting off the sidewalk and walking on Nicol Street. Nicol Street is classified a highway and is very busy traffic wise. There has been historical evidence of excessive speeding along Nicol Street. It was very hard for audit participants to talk along Nicol Street because of the excessive traffic noise. Participants spoke about pedestrians having to run across Nicol Street to get to the other side as there is no crosswalk available south after Needham street until Tenth street which is 2.8 km away. There has also been a past history of accidents as noted on ICBC's Interactive Crash Maps. For instance, at the intersection of Nicol Street and Needham Street, from 2016 to 2020 there have been 35 crashes documented. (Insurance Corporation of British Columbia, 2021) At the intersection of Milton Street and Nicol Street there have been 50 in the same time period (Insurance Corporation of British Columbia, 2021). From Milton Street to Robins Street, just along Nicol Street, and the route we walked, there have been a total of 99 crashes in the past 4 years. (Insurance Corporation of British Columbia, 2021)



Nicol Street and Robins Street (Location #3)

This is the location of the new supportive housing site, 702 Nicol Street. The site will be operated by Island Care Crisis Society. Representatives were invited to attend the audit however were unable to attend. Currently under construction, the supportive housing site will provide much needed housing to vulnerable populations. 52 units will be dedicated for people experiencing homelessness and 14 units in 7 rooms will be reserved for vulnerable women seeking shelter and support (Island Crisis Care Society, 2021).

There are mixed responses to the supportive housing site however generally the participants support the project. The South End Community Association (SECA) also supports the project however they would like a better understanding of what types of services will be offered out of the site. They also believe this information would be helpful to better understand and support the new residents into the neighbourhood. There are concerns that the number of units are too high and might cause a lot of tension and pressure on the neighbourhood.

702 Nicol Street is bordered on the west side by a problematic laneway. Reports indicate the laneway has some challenges around drug activity, prostitution and other criminal behaviour. The Laneways provides no natural surveillance due to the high fencing along the laneway installed by property owners and the lack of lighting in the evening. The audit participants are concerned that this area will see an

increase in negative activity as criminals and drug traffickers may target those living in the new supportive housing units.

There was a lot of discussion on possible mitigation strategies. One was the return of proactive policing by the Nanaimo's RCMP Bike Unit to the area. The presence provided by the Bike Unit were able to provide much needed preventative measures in the area.

Needham Street and Nicol Street (Location #4)

There were several comments about the traffic in the intersection and the near misses in this particular area between motorists and pedestrians. This intersection is used extensively by children, youth and their families to travel to the nearby elementary school and to a large childcare and preschool centre. ICBC data sets show that from 2016 to 2020 there have been 35 casualty and property damage only crashes¹ at this intersection alone (Insurance Corporation of British Columbia, 2021).

The discussion at this location than shifted onto the Old Jolly Minor Pub and the Liquor store which is located at Needham street and Nicol Street on the east side. There is an empty lot adjacent to the abandoned pub. The pub and the adjacent lot has been empty for 10 years and participants feel like this area has been a blight to the neighbourhood for far to long. One resident mentioned that the owner of the property is pretty responsive to cleaning up the lot when called to report garbage or debris on the property but not much has been done past garbage clean up. The liquor store seems to manage their operations well and be the anchor for the site.

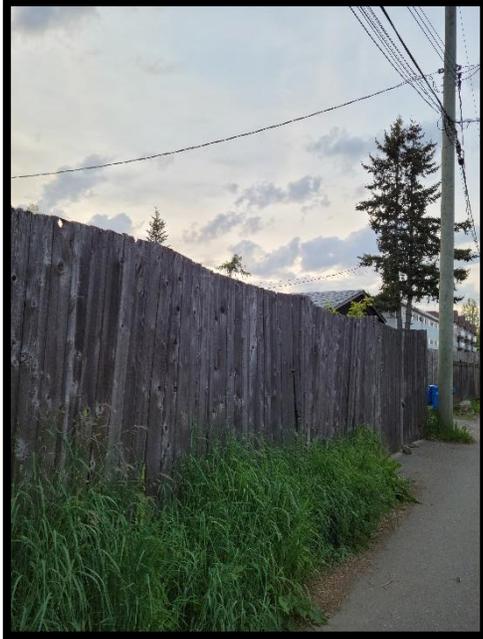


This is an area that attracts a lot of attention from transient people. The lighting in the evening is problematic and the empty lot leads into

¹ Casualty Crashes are crashes resulting in injury or fatality and property damage crashes are crashes resulting in material damage and no injury or fatality. 35 crashes incorporate both types of crashes.

another laneway that is heavily used for drinking and drug use. Audit participants mentioned that there are a few “nuisance” houses in the area, one they referred to as a legal brothel. The area has a lot of graffiti and litter, specifically around the parking lot of the pub. The empty lot attracts encampments and drug use more than before. Participants noted that there needs to be a larger RCMP or community policing presence in the South End.

*Laneway between Nicol Street and Haliburton Street (South to Needham and North to Milton)
(Location #5)*



Generally, the response from the audit group was a lack of safety in the laneway. Many were hesitant to travel there during day light hours and many said they would not travel it at night at all. During the audit there were individuals using drugs along the laneway. Along this specific set of Laneway there are many empty lots and high fencing making the laneway feel very isolated. There are specifically 7 empty lots that back onto the laneway and 6 out of the 7 lots all had overgrown brush, garbage and debris. During the evening hours lighting was very limited and made the laneway very dark.

There was positive discussion around the Food Forest that borders a section of the laneway. Comments included the positive relationship building that took place to make the project the happen and the stewardship that the previous Samaritan House provided for the garden. The Samaritan house provided services to women needing a safe, supportive and shelter environment. The services have been moved to a different location temporarily however it will continue to operate out of 702 Nicol Street. The Community garden has since fallen into disarray and often is a hot spot for drug trafficking and use. It should be noted however that this site is owned by BC Housing and is slated to be a future supportive housing site. There is discussion that



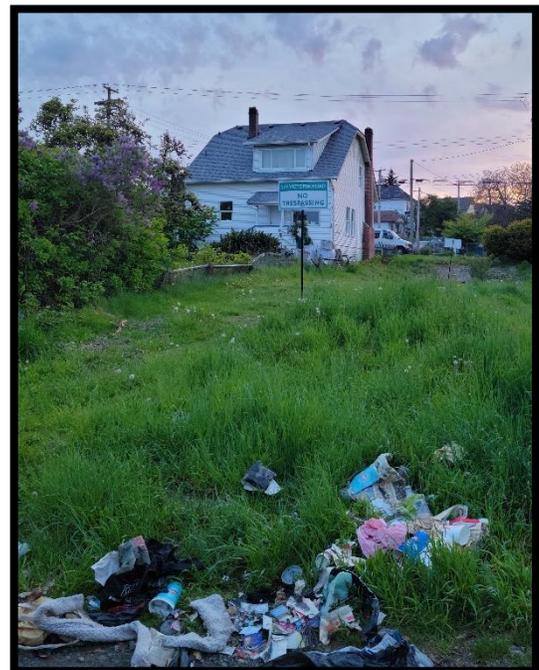
the supportive housing site could claim the stewardship of the Food Forest at a future date.

Audit participants mentioned the positive presence that the Pacifica Housing Site brought to the South End Neighbourhood. There was anecdotal information provided to some of the audit participants that mentioned perhaps there was some vehicle break in occurring in the unsecure parkade. The building site is well managed and maintained by Pacifica.

Finally, the new, modern duplex development at the end of the laneway at Milton Street gave the participants a positive feeling and thought more developments like this would bring positive energy to the neighbourhood. Although not part of the audit route, there were some final comments around the empty lot and the parking lot belonging to McDonald's. The participants and survey respondents both acknowledged that McDonald's staff worked hard to keep their area free of social disorder but noted that it was a big problem requiring a regular police presence.

Laneway between Nicol and Victoria Road (North to Milton and South to Dairy Queen) (Location #6)

Several residential properties are located along this laneway including a motel, 2 restaurants, a parking lot and 2 empty lots. During the audit, there was evidence of drug paraphernalia and a lot of litter and debris. Due to the lack of shelter services and other support services in the City, many individuals take shelter and/or use drugs in the restaurant parking lot. There was also some discussion about the impact of a local gang and the impact of the gang's presence in the neighbourhood. Allegedly they own property including one of the empty lots in the neighbourhood. This lot in question is still empty and contains a lot of garbage and debris. Police are often called to events in the laneway and to the back of the Dairy Queen building.



Other Comments

There was comments around how SECA would like to increase programming within the South End Neighbourhood and specifically along the laneways, at the community garden and at Deverils Square Gyro 2 Park. Participants talked about past projects and the positive contributions it made to the neighbourhood. They also mentioned that they would like to build better relationships with their indigenous neighbours by linking up with Snuneymuxw First Nations and Tillicum Lelum.

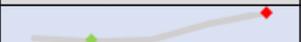
Audit participants also mentioned that they welcomed more densification and felt they would bring positive activity and mixed use of this densification would be complementary to feelings of safety. Finally, they strongly stressed the need for more proactive policing in their neighbourhood and general crime prevention initiatives.

Crime Statistics Summary

The Uniformed Crime Reporting Survey (UCR) was developed and designed as a tool for communities to measure the incidence of crime. This information taken with other indicators can be used by federal and provincial policy makers as well as other agencies for decision making and strategic directions. Official UCR statistics for the South End neighbourhood were provided by the Nanaimo RCMP. This data measures the frequency of various crimes and other activities from January of 2016 to March of 2021.

A dramatic increase in the number of total incidents reported in the South End neighbourhood is illustrated in the UCR data. A total of 95 incidents were reported in 2016, 46 in 2017, and 66 in 2018. This number then increased to 300 in 2019, and then to 467 in 2020. For the first 3 months of 2021, the number of incidents have already reached two thirds of what the yearly average would reach. While this spike in total incidents is undoubtedly noteworthy, it should be acknowledged that this increase may be influenced by other factors and not only an actual increase in the rates of crime. These totals include not only actual incidents of criminal activity, but also incidents in which police were notified of a suspected or possible crime, that may or may not have actually happened. Another factor in play with the increase in total numbers of reported incidents could, for example, be the result of changes in the reporting habits of businesses and residents in the South End Neighbourhood. In addition, in January 2019, the coding methodology of incidents in the UCR changed during this time period. The scoring in the UCR takes a more victim - centred approach. All incidents are “founded” and therefore scored in the UCR unless the incident has been determined through police investigation that the offence reported did not occur, nor was it attempted. This was not the case prior to 2019; this doesn’t mean these types of activities weren’t happening prior to 2019 but rather they were not scored because of the evidence required to make them founded. It is estimated that due to this, General Occurrences, unspecified assistance and Suspicious Occurrence files will automatically increase police statistics because of this change.

The categories of incidents which saw the greatest increase across the 5 year reporting period are those of Other General Occurrences (Other GO²), and Suspicious Occurrences (SO). A total of just 22 Other GO incidents occurred between 2016 and 2018. However, this figure increased to 48 in 2019, and 126 in 2020. For the first quarter of 2021, 42 GO incidents were reported in January, February and March. The yearly average measured over a 5-year span for GO incidents in the South End is 39. Similarly, only 9 SO incidents were reported from 2016 to 2018, but 90 were reported in 2019 and 125 were reported in 2020. Some of the dramatic increase in these categories is likely attributable to changes in the ways in which incidents are classified in the UCR, and may not be entirely reflective of an increase in the actual number of these types of incidents. There was also a notable increase in the number of reported municipal bylaw violations. This may be the result of changes in UCR categorization methodology, as well as changes in reporting habits by the South End residents as well as the organized efforts of SECA and the Blockwatches in the neighbourhood.

SOUTH END	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	5year Trend	5year Average	Jan-Mar 2021
TOTAL	95	46	66	300	467		195	146
ARSON	0	0	1	1	1		1	1
AUTO THEFT	2	2	3	3	6		3	2
BIKE THEFT	1	0	0	0	1		0	1
BREAK & ENTER - BUS	4	1	3	1	3		2	0
BREAK & ENTER - OTH	2	1	0	1	3		1	3
BREAK & ENTER - RES	5	2	2	3	5		3	0
CAUSE DISTURBANCE	28	11	13	30	53		27	11
COUNTERFEIT CURRENCY	2	0	0	1	0		1	0
FRAUDS	4	0	0	4	1		2	1
MISCHIEF TO PROPERTY	18	11	6	20	48		21	21
MUNICIPAL BYLAW	0	0	4	43	55		20	18
OTHER GO	4	3	15	48	126		39	42
OTHER THEFT O/5000	0	0	0	0	1		0	0
OTHER THEFT U/5000	10	7	2	14	14		9	5
POSSESS STOLEN PROPERTY	2	1	2	6	6		3	1
ROBBERY	1	0	0	3	2		1	0
SHOPLIFTING	3	2	8	1	5		4	1
SUSPICIOUS OCCURRENCES	2	0	7	90	125		45	35
THEFT FROM MAIL	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	0		-	1
THEFT FROM VEHICLE	7	5	0	30	12		11	3
TRESPASS AT NIGHT	0	0	0	1	0		0	0

² Other General Occurrences include reports that pertain to Well-Being Checks, the Trespass Act, the Quarantine Act, Lost Property, the Safe Streets Act, etc.

Incidents Causing Disturbances, and incidents of Mischief to Property have been reported at a higher rate in recent years. 28 incidents Causing Disturbance were reported in 2016, 11 in 2017, 13 in 2018, 30 in 2019, and 53 in 2020. 18 incidents of Mischief to Property were reported in 2016, 11 in 2017, 6 in 2018, 20 in 2019, and 48 were reported in 2020. Incidents of Theft from a Vehicle peaked at 30 in 2019, with a total of just 24 being reported in 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2020. Crimes such as Break and enters, Auto Theft, and Theft under \$5000 have been reported at a mostly constant rate across the reporting period, with no obvious trends being present. Serious crimes such as Arson, Robbery, and Theft over \$5000 have been very uncommon throughout recent years.

Crime Prevention and Community Safety Recommendations

The purpose of the Neighbourhood Safety Audits is to support local neighbourhoods in building resiliency and increase safety. Work is done by activating the neighbourhood by capturing their real lived experiences through tools such as the pre audit survey, the group audits and/or self-directed audits. Engagement of the neighbourhood is important to help co create safety and connect agencies that can provide support in developing and carrying out community safety initiatives or appropriate crime prevention activities.

Crime and community safety issues are complex and are often a symptom of a lack of access to the social determinants of health not only for individuals but neighbourhoods and communities. The root causes of crime are often the results of adverse social, economic, cultural and family conditions. The recommendations made here are suggestions on activities that neighbourhoods can do to contribute to the overall safety and security of the neighbourhood. They do not guarantee that crime will never happen as a result of implementing these recommendations nor will the following recommendations solve complex problems such as homelessness, the opioid crisis or the lack of resources around mental health services.

South End Neighbourhood Recommendations:

1. The South End Neighbourhood has a very robust, committed and passionate Neighbourhood Association and several block watches set up. This has allowed a network of neighbours to evolve into an intricate network. The Neighbourhood Association has set up a Facebook for the neighbourhood and has regular events and meetings. Past events include tree planting parties, litter clean up days, laneway art projects, block parties, etc. Having relationships with neighbours is a positive indicator for increasing neighbourhood safety. This tightly knit network can be used as a resource to improve conditions in neighbourhood. It will be important to sustain this work especially as people move in and out of the neighbourhood. Consider hosting block or work parties several times a year in areas of the neighbourhood that might need some clean up or beautification. These types of events also support relationship building between

residents. There are several options that may cover the costs, for instance, the City of Nanaimo often provides social planning grants that support projects that build community and social connectivity. The Nanaimo Foundation also provides Neighbourhood grants to help build safer communities. These grants can cover supplies and food for event. Community Policing can provide the support of additional volunteers to help with painting, garbage pickup or support with refreshments and cooking. Always ensure you have the permission of the property owner prior to conducting any clean up events or block parties. It's always a good idea to reach out to the municipality to let them know about your plan and if there is any protocols or regulations that might apply to the area you are looking to clean up or host your block party at.

2. Actively encourage new block watches in the neighbourhood. Invite Cst. Gary O'Brien to annual Neighbourhood Association meetings to promote and support the implementations of new block watches within the neighbourhood.
3. Many nonprofit organizations offering services to our most marginalized individuals are very interested in building relationships with residents and businesses. After all they are providing service in the neighbourhood and many of the clients they serve are residents of the neighbourhood. Relationship building between groups in the neighbourhood such as neighbourhood associations, block watches, shelter organizations and businesses are important, first knowing what challenges people are facing in their neighbourhood and second are able to better address challenges collaboratively thus increasing safety for everyone. Consider regular meetings by inviting nonprofit agencies to neighbourhood association meetings or inviting them to block parties or other neighbourhood events. Best practices show that when marginalized individuals living in a neighbourhood have a sense of belonging they are more likely to contribute to the neighbourhood in positive ways. Community Policing or the Social Planners located with the City of Nanaimo can help provide linkages between nonprofit agencies and neighbourhoods where support is needed.
4. Knowledge around who to call and when to call to report criminal or nuisance activity is very helpful in proactively addressing safety issues. Reporting all incidents of suspicious, criminal or nuisance activity help to bring awareness to the problems happening in the neighbourhood and can directly protect family, neighbours and business owners. Many individuals hesitate to call the police or the local municipality out of fear of getting involved, sounding overly suspicious, taking up scarce resources or they may fear being identified. Only residents in a neighbourhood know who or what stands out in your neighbourhood so this is a critical part of crime prevention. There are several ways and points of contacts to make reports so this can be confusing to residents. It is encouraged that all residents in the South End Neighbourhood receive the appropriate information via digital or physical resources. Community Policing Services will work with the City of Nanaimo to deliver the "Who to Call and When to Call" pamphlets to residents. Pamphlets can be available once a contact is established for the Supportive Housing at 702 Nicol Street. Information can also be shared around what types of

details are needed to share with departments such as police, bylaw, sanitation, at Neighbourhood Association meetings.

5. Community Policing will implement regular Crime Watch patrols throughout the South End Neighbourhood to increase their presence and provide additional “eyes” and “ears” for the neighbourhood. Crime Watch Patrols will focus on the areas noted most problematic, along Haliburton Street between Woodhouse Street and Crace Street, the Laneways between Haliburton Street and Nicol Street, the laneways between Nicol Street and Victoria Road (North to Irwin Street and South to Woodhouse Street and South Street). The Community Policing Volunteer Program hosts almost 50 dedicated and caring volunteers. They report all suspicious, criminal and nuisance behaviour they observe. Patrol teams are trained to keep notes and maintain contact with RCMP dispatch, City Bylaws and City Sanitation as needed via cell phone.
6. Traffic safety along Nicol Street is one of the top concerns of the South End Neighbourhood. Nicol Street is considered a highway and under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure. Speeding is an issue and as noted previously, Nicol Street has high rates of motor vehicle incidences. Pedestrians struggle to travel north or south along Nicol Street as there are many barriers placed on sidewalks. Unfortunately, pedestrians don’t have much choice other than to use the laneways for travelling north or south. The laneways in the South End Neighbourhood are strategically placed to allow pedestrians or cyclists to travel throughout the neighbourhood avoiding the highway. Unfortunately, the laneways are hot spots for crime, drug use and other public disorder events. The laneways would need to be more safe for pedestrians or cyclists to consider this an option. Efforts could be considered by engaging private property owners who might be having challenges with criminal activity on their property and see if they might be interested in having a Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) Assessment. Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) incorporates a set of strategies that help to reduce the opportunities to commit crimes, reduce the fear of crime, and prevents negative activity by replacing it with generators of positive activity (International CPTED Association, 2020). CPTED is grounded in practical and theoretical knowledge primarily from the fields of criminology, sociology, psychology, and architectural design. Property owners have tried to target harden their properties along the laneway by installing high non-permeable fences not realizing that these types of actions actually can perpetuate crime in these laneways by removing any risks for surveillance for those participating in criminal behaviour and has created dead zones in the laneways. **note this is in progress for one business along the route.*
7. To promote pedestrian safety and create safe and accessible walkways, residents along the West side of Nicol Street between Farquhar Street and Robins Street should be provided education as to the hazards presented to pedestrians when landscape is overgrown and creates barriers. They should be reminded to remove their waste and recycling bins from sidewalks as soon as possible on pick up day. Any serious safety challenges on the sidewalks should be reported to bylaw. **note discussions are in progress with sanitation.*

8. The representatives from SECA who were on the walk shared some fond memories and experiences of the Food Forest along Haliburton. With the Samaritan House gone there isn't an agency or entity who can take stewardship over the site. Consider engaging neighbours living nearby to take on this stewardship until a new housing project is built at the old Samaritan House site. Some other Neighbourhood Associations across the island take up stewardship of food forests or community gardens within their neighbourhoods and because of their societal status are able to apply for funding to pay for a caretaker or gardener to tend to the site. Another option is to engage the operator, once identified, of the future supportive housing site at 335 Nicol Street to see if there is an opportunity for them to become partners and include the maintenance and management of the area within their programming parameters.

Opportunities for Change:

1. As mentioned, traffic safety is one of the biggest concerns in this neighbourhood. Speed monitoring and traffic enforcement is just one approach to traffic safety. Linkages to the City of Nanaimo and the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure will be important to create proactive structural change along Nicol Street and at the most challenging intersections where Nicol Street meets with Milton Street and Needham Street. Some suggestions by residents include more visible signage for drivers travelling north bound into the South End Neighbourhood from a more highway environment. Some residents also pointed to the Terminal-Nicol Re-imagined Plan from 2016 and their support for the framework, suggested implementation plan and cost estimating (Terminal Nicol Re-Imagined Committee, 2016). The current signs just south of Needham warning drivers about pedestrians is hidden by over grown landscaping and trees. This Neighbourhood Safety Audit Report will be shared at the Nanaimo Road Safety Committee where local and provincial agencies involved in traffic safety are represented.
2. The laneways in the South End in the current state pose immense community safety challenges. Laneways in the south end are isolated, poorly maintained and managed, and allow individuals to maintain anonymity. Improvements to laneways can transform these neglected spaces into useful, well used public spaces. Many other urban centres across Canada are tapping into the potentials laneways can have, not only as service spaces for deliveries, waste storage, parking and emergency access but also as vibrant arteries to cities by providing gathering spaces and transportation hubs for cyclists and pedestrians. For example, The Laneway Project in Toronto, is a nonprofit social enterprise, working to transform laneways throughout the City of Toronto (The Laneway Project, 2021). They provide many case studies illustrating the improvements to the safety and well-being of neighbourhoods with laneway improvements and usage. Even smaller urban centres are tapping into the value of laneways, Brunswick, an inner-city suburban of Melbourne in Australia is working through their Community Crime Prevention Council to transform laneways into safe public spaces (Department of Justice and Community Safety, 2021). Opportunities for neighbourhoods could include working with the City of Nanaimo to

incorporate a focus on laneways in their neighbourhood plans and may include advocating for some flexibility in navigating permit and/or bylaw requirements for laneway improvements. Neighbourhood Associations could also explore funding opportunities for beautification, placemaking or safety projects.

3. A common challenge plaguing urban centres and mid-size cities like Nanaimo are the number of vacant properties popping up. Vacant properties in neighbourhoods can create financial strain through a variety of ways, decreased tax revenue, maintenance costs, and costs through increased safety and crime issues (Mallach, 2018). Vacant lots also create a blight in a neighbourhood often lowering the value of properties nearby. This phenomenon now coined Hyper-Vacancy³ correlates in neighbourhoods with concentrated poverty, unemployment and health problems. Vacant lands or buildings are often associated with physical disorder, and ties true to the Broken Window Theory⁴, vacant lots indicate a lack of control within neighbourhoods and these types of environments are subject to criminal activity, prostitution, drug use and the sale of drugs. There are a high number of vacant lots that have posed problems in the South End Neighbourhood. As mentioned previously, there are 7 vacant lots along Nicol Street and Haliburton Street that all back on to the laneway. This trend continues throughout the neighbourhood. Some of these sites include the old Patricia Hotel site adjacent to the old Jolly Miner Pub site along Haliburton. There are some additional big vacant warehouse sites in the neighbourhood and many sites along Irwin Street creating many urban dead zones within this particular neighbourhood. There are several cities across Canada and in the United States where municipalities are looking for ways to address these vacant lots. Municipalities and neighbourhoods have created pocket parks, food forests, or created affordable housing and shelter options through expropriation and Use It or Lose It type bylaws (Mallach, 2018). More utilization of the City of Nanaimo's current Property Maintenance Bylaw and the Nuisance Abatement and Cost Recovery Bylaw may help to further engage property owners to maintain and manage properties better or be charged the costs for the City to attend and clean up properties. A closer look needs to be taken at vacant lots and how policy and planning can help revitalize neighbourhoods and move them away from a tipping point.
4. As mentioned in the survey and at the audit, there are large concerns around the suspected drug houses operating in the neighbourhood. The residents feel that the problem will only be exacerbated once the supportive housing developments are operational. There are some

³ Defined in a submission by Alan Mallach where neighbourhoods have vacant buildings or lots compromising more than 20% of the building stock. (Mallach, 2018)

⁴ The Broken Window Theory, defined by social scientists James Wilson and George Kelling in 1982, as any visible sign of disorder in a neighbourhood will encourage further disorder and misbehaviour leading to more serious community safety issues. The more the space is in disarray the more the message is sent that no one cares for the space and therefore the space is "free" for the taking. For instance, in high crime neighbourhoods in Philadelphia there was an initiative to repair abandoned properties and transform vacant lots into community parks which subsequently saw the reduction of gun violence by 39% (Psychology Today Canada, 2021)

concerns that those living in the supported new housing development, as being some of our most vulnerable citizens, will be targeted by these drug selling houses. Proactive policing and proper management of the housing sites will be important to avoid a tipping point in the neighbourhood once these sites become fully operationally. Supporting the neighbourhood now with targeted enforcement of these problematic drug houses will provide some positive support and strengthen the neighbourhood for all its citizens. **note some efforts are being made here but face challenges and barriers due to policing capacity and resources.*

5. Another large concern of the South End Neighbourhood is the public disorder correlated with the drug, mental health and homelessness crisis. Many residents are concerned with the lack of housing, and support services for individuals with mental health and addictions issues. The public disorder causes fear among the residents and many are worried that the lack of housing and the pressures of moving homeless individuals from one location to another in the downtown area will put additional pressures on the surrounding neighbourhoods. Linkages and collaboration between neighbourhoods and the Nanaimo Homeless Coalition will be key in getting community support and the resources the Coalition may need to carry out their Action Plan. Partnerships such as these also help to tackle stigma and correct any harmful myths with evidence based research on what is working to address homelessness and our current drug and mental health crisis'.

Summary

The South End Neighbourhood falls on the unceded territory of the Snuneymuxw People and who have made their home on the Nanaimo Harbour for time immemorial. The South End specifically contained an important village, now known as Reserve #1, that had important access to the rich resources of the Estuary (City of Nanaimo, 2008). The South End Neighbourhood is rich with diversity and character and is one of the most inclusive neighbourhoods in the City of Nanaimo. The residents with the support of SECA are passionate about their neighbourhood and provide a welcoming response to those who choose to make the South End their home. SECA is doing important community safety and well-being work in the neighbourhood and Nanaimo Community Policing is pleased to provide support wherever needed. It would be very beneficial to revisit the South End Neighbourhood again in 2 to 3 years to see what crime prevention programs have been implemented and what positive impacts have been made in the neighbourhood.

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Appendix A

South End Neighbourhood Route Map

~Start and Finish on Farquhar Street (@ Dairy Queen)

- 1) Head South on Nicol Street to Robins Street (Stop 1).
- 2) Off Robins Street turn right on the Lane way that runs parallel to Strickland and Nicol Street.
- 3) Turn right on Needham and cross East and North at Needham and Nicol street intersection.
- 4) Turn North (Left) on the laneway between Nicol Street and Haliburton Street (Stop 2).
- 5) Follow the laneway all the way to Milton (Stop 3 @ Community Garden in laneway).
- 6) Turn Left at Milton Street and cross Nicol Street
- 7) Turn left on the laneway between Nicol Street and Victoria Road (Stop 4 behind Dairy Queen)
- 8) Finish at Farquhar Street

