



# Peter Urquhart

*for Nanaimo Council*

**Business Minded. Community Focused.**

## **Effective Governance**

- ✓ Spending within our means, in-depth budgeting
- ✓ Grow engagement and collaboration, rebuild capacity and trust
- ✓ Efficiency through process refinement and online integration

## **Innovation and Growth**

- ✓ Revitalize under utilized spaces, arts, culture and heritage
- ✓ Economic development - accelerate business, attract investment
- ✓ Empower and leverage community/stakeholder engagement

## **Increased Affordability**

- ✓ Focus on addressing overall housing affordability
- ✓ Prioritize transit and sidewalk infrastructure - increase mobility
- ✓ Develop 'buy local' strategies and food system initiatives

*Authorized by Peter Urquhart - [peter@peterurquhart.ca](mailto:peter@peterurquhart.ca)*

**[www.peterurquhart.ca](http://www.peterurquhart.ca)**

# Introduction

## About Me

Nanaimo has a special place in my heart. I've lived here for 30 years and I absolutely love it here. I have all I need - a loving family and friends, with a lifestyle that suits our needs well in a city that I consider to be unmatched in what it provides in its nature and community. My quality of life is good, and I'm very appreciative of what I have.

In my work life as a software developer, I develop comprehensive business solutions that directly influence and positively impact the bottom line of mid to large-scale enterprises and their customers. In my personal life, I'm actively engaged in the community through a variety of committees and citizen led initiatives.

I'm running for Council because I want to help Nanaimo become a better place for everyone. Our Council that is to be elected has many things to take care of and new challenges to overcome.

I'm a thinker and a doer. I thrive on team work and overcoming challenges, and for people like myself, we see challenges as opportunities to further improve upon the amazing community we live in. I see business and the community as being interconnected and dependent on each other; the quality of life in a community can't be sustained without business, and business can't be successful without the support of the community and as such, both have large impacts on each other.

As a detail oriented, solutions driven person I tackle decision making with solid planning, careful consideration, and forward thinking. As a strong advocate for community engagement and input I believe our community is stronger when decisions are made in a way that is inclusive of all points of view.

A vote for me means your voice is heard. I'm committed to helping Nanaimo become a better place for everyone.

## My Platform

My platform has been organized into sections of **Effective Governance**, **Innovation and Growth**, and **Increased Affordability**. Within each of these sections, I address many of the challenges that I think are important to focus on.

In reading my platform you will get a sense of my values and what I stand for, with my main objective being to embrace the challenges and help our city move forward in positive ways that help it thrive.

You will see that I have proposed solutions and ideas for many of the major issues currently facing our city; many of which I have spent a substantial amount of time researching and considering, but I would also like to make an important point and that is, one seat on council equates to one perspective and one vote.

I look forward to working together as a team that leverages everyone's individual strengths, knowledge and expertise - at the table, and in the community. We have an incredible wealth of knowledge and expertise to draw from and utilize here in Nanaimo, and the more we do that together, the better things will become for all.

# Effective Governance

Good governance is at the foundation of every well-functioning, forward moving city and its community. We have a lot to get done this term, and I am committed to delivering good governance in effective ways by strongly advocating for the following measures:

## Increase Openness and Transparency

- Develop policy that extends the bounds of information which must be routinely released and empower staff to release materials proactively.
- Support the creation of a centralized FOI system and associated policy to ensure that general requests for information and the information subsequently provided is made broadly available for everyone to review in a timely matter.
- Respect proper usage of closed “in-camera” meetings by utilizing them sparingly and ensuring that the scope of subject matter being considered under section 90(1) of the community charter is warranted.

## Develop a Culture of Collaboration

- Cultivate and encourage an organizational culture of collaboration, innovation, support, continuous learning, and employee empowerment.
- Assist, encourage and grow collaboration between stakeholders on subjects with connected interests - throughout the organization and the community itself.
- Introduce focused advisory committees and task forces that can help manage and tackle time intensive and complex problems.

## Build Capacity and Trust

- Increase recruitment efforts to rebuild sufficient staffing levels
- Reestablish the Grants Advisory Committee, and undo the 2016 “Culture, Heritage, and Social Planning Committee” amalgamation to re-form two committees - a Social Planning Advisory Committee, and an Arts, Culture and Heritage Committee.
- Initiate a request for a Council to Council meeting with the Snuneymuxw First Nation to introduce the new Council. Work towards building a relationship together that is respectful, sincere, and truly inclusive.
- Listen to immediate and upcoming concerns of the Snuneymuxw First Nation and open a real dialogue that will pave the way for meaningful and mutually beneficial collaboration on current and future projects.

## Spending Within Our Means

There is a significant amount of funds required to maintain service levels and invest towards our asset management lifecycle plans and strategic objectives. Property tax increases etch away at the taxpayer’s quality of living and become increasingly unsustainable for many households as property taxes continue to rise.

Council must recognize the significance and weight of this and keep it top of mind. When elected, I will keep this top of mind during decision making and also advocate for the following concrete actions to assist towards this measure:

- Define financial and social return on investment measures and apply them to all strategic projects in progress or being considered.
- Reduce external contractor usage where in-house staff or temporary hires have the expertise and capacity required.
- Review legal proceedings currently underway on an individual basis and with the assistance of legal counsel, determine whether any are potentially reconcilable without court involvement in ways that are to the advantage of the City and its taxpayers.
- Initiate a public engagement session to discuss potential strategic plan updates and their implications for 2019 and beyond.

### **Planning Ahead: Budget 2019-2023**

- Develop a budget draft containing greater granularity and separation of capital expenses from operating expenses.
- Review department cost centers and carryover amounts; identify areas which do not have the capacity to utilize the allocated funds within the 2019 budget.
- Identify items and amounts available for potential fund redistribution in 2019 in order to permit flexibility towards establishing and commencing on priorities determined by Council.
- Hold a community engagement event to facilitate budget exploration and opportunities prior to Council directing revisions to the budget draft.
- Focus on the Project Pipeline, Strategic Priorities, and Core Services Review:
- Report on all projects in the pipeline along with an itemized list indicating their priority, target completion date, current status, funding sources and allocated funds remaining, and anticipated usage of allocated funds grouped by year, and specific notes which identify potential challenges and barriers that are preventing list items from moving forward or reaching completion.
- Report on the current status of the Core Services Review along with an itemized list indicating what has been completed, what has been chosen to not implement, and what is currently or intended to be advanced for implementation along with its current state.

## **Innovation and Growth**

Many of the changes we can make as a city will dramatically improve the enjoyment and satisfaction of our under-utilized spaces without requiring significant expenditures. Recognizing and supporting the valuable hard work put in by members of the community and other organizations that have dedicated themselves to make valuable contributions to the community cannot just fall to the wayside. We need to start embracing these things and not take them for granted. I strongly believe we need to:

- Invest in the city's capacity by leveraging collaborative efforts through focused public engagements which utilize "people power" and the wealth of experience and expertise that Nanaimo has in its population.
- Be willing and prepared to pilot new ideas, and remember that places become valuable and important when everyone has a say.
- Develop a Revitalized Spaces pilot project to be utilized for facilitating changes to our underutilized spaces. Utilize Diana Krall Plaza as the start from which to base the pilot planning upon, and refine the pilot as necessary throughout the process as progress is made in order to

increase the program's effectiveness and positive impacts on the city's underutilized spaces and community. Prioritize community involvement and the leveraging of expertise through design competitions and public engagements on potential space usage.

- Refocus the Terminal Nicol Re-imagined Project and reopen dialogue to begin moving things forward.
- Initiate an RFP for an online integrated 311 subscription-based service to combine the human elements of Nanaimo's public works complaint-based system with online aspects that make the entire process easier, more efficient and effective, open and accountable.
- Identify potential bylaws to revise in ways that are less restrictive and become more reliant upon policy controls where possible to enable and encourage innovation and flexibility through iterative policy design.

## **Engage and Empower the Community**

Identify dedicated staff to work with the community and neighbourhood associations. Inform and collaborate with the community, neighbourhood associations, and staff on city processes, expectations and opportunities.

- Support continuation of the Public Engagement Pilot Program being undertaken by the CETF (Community Engagement Task Force) until such time that its mandate is complete. Transition the CETF into the establishment of a Community Engagement Committee with a mandate focused towards continued enhancement of public engagement methods and implementations, and on subject specific community engagements as requested by the city.
- Define policy for meaningful public input opportunities and integrate into all projects which have impact on the community and/or other stakeholders.
- Arrange a series of dual-purpose engagements in each neighbourhood, in collaboration with each neighbourhood association, around their respective community plans and in discussing potential affordable housing locations.
- Change the engagement landscape from one where, in reality, the community generally has minimal say towards how things are being done, to one where community input is integrated into meaningful processes and plans. This will ensure that the community truly has a voice and is treated as a valued stakeholder in recognition of all the expertise, experience, and valuable input that exists within the community.

## **Generate Economic Growth**

- Revitalize Nanaimo's downtown through growth and support of arts and culture focuses, and further incentivize medium density, mixed use developments to increase the downtown population.
- Strengthen the local economic base through the development of initiatives that encourage "buy local" preferences which highlight local businesses and help increase local manufacturing and food production. Reducing reliance on external sources generates increased local economic activity, improves local stability, and retains more wealth within the community.
- Establish an Economic Development Task Force to determine best ways on how Nanaimo can best deliver an economic development function in the form of a renewed Economic Development Corporation which envelops innovation that supports, connects, attracts

investment, and accelerates small business. Help empower businesses to thrive here and generate economic prosperity for all of Nanaimo.

## Streamline Development Processes

- Update the zoning bylaw and policies to reduce the need for individual variances; study the most frequently requested variances (setbacks, allowable heights, reduced parking) and adjust bylaw bounds where beneficial; place them into updated policies that deliver increased flexibility where mutual benefits exist between the city and developers, and solidify those bounds to ensure that specific criteria and planning objectives are met
- Create an expedited review process for development projects which addresses specific cases such as:
  - Priority housing proposals e.g. affordable housing projects, green building, target locations.
  - Pre-approval for registered architects and professional engineers which certify that submitted plans are in compliance, reducing permit wait times through a form of automatic plan approval. Quality and compliance is managed by auditing a percentage of certified plans.
  - Provide expedited reviews for an additional fee.

## Increased Affordability

There was a time when even low-income earners could sustain their basic needs and enjoy a good quality of life, unfortunately that is no longer a reality.

Unaffordability of housing, having insufficient access to sustainable quantities of nutritious food and being unable to easily utilize alternate forms of transportation are all interconnected and create a situation where one's quality of life is reduced and the ability for low and mid-income earners to sustain their basic needs is at greater risk. Many are one paycheck away from homelessness.

Along with the many negative social and health effects that result from unaffordability, there's business ramifications as well since less money is able to be spent towards discretionary goods and services, and as people in the workforce move to places which are more affordable, labour shortages occur. In the end it all becomes a vicious cycle where nobody benefits.

There are many good steps we can take at the municipal level that will help make life more affordable and sustainable in our community.

## Food Security

- Develop long-term policies for food security and local area gardening including an inventory of City-owned land for food production and improved coordination of food systems resources and initiatives in the city.
- Allocate existing resources in parks and other departments to implement food security initiatives.
- Strengthen the relationship between the city and school district to maximize the benefit of school lands and facilities.

- Facilitate new partnerships and initiatives with citizens and groups to increase food cultivation on public and private land.

## Transportation

- Create a collaborative neighbourhood process with a “complete streets” lens to better address active transportation aspects of development projects within neighbourhood localized areas.
- Prioritize further development of our sidewalk infrastructure and cycling routes as per the transportation master plan in order to assist with measures that reduce reliance upon individual vehicle transportation and increase mobility aspects for residents to reach amenities.
- Support extended route coverage, rapid routes and frequency improvements prioritized by usage during RDN transit service planning.
- Initiate continuation of planning towards the downtown multimodal transportation hub project which was previously identified as a priority.

## Housing Affordability

One of the most pressing issues in our community currently in regards to affordability is the lack of affordable housing and it affects both low and middle income brackets. Often when the subject of affordable housing is brought up, there are assumed connections to homelessness and their struggles, but to be clear I am approaching this issue in a broader scope (I will address homelessness and supportive housing further down).

There are many people who need affordable housing; economic conditions have changed - housing costs have dramatically increased, while wages, pensions, and other fixed incomes have not.

Housing affordability is primarily measured by the percentage of income one spends on housing, and the broadly accepted sustainable amount is 30% or less of one’s income. To put this in perspective, this is how Nanaimo measures up to that number:

- 48% of renters in Nanaimo are spending more than 30% of their income towards housing costs.
- 23% of them actually spend more than 50% of their income towards housing
- 17% of homeowners are spending more than 30% or more towards housing costs

Based on stats and census data that means approximately 6,101 renter households and 4,490 owner households (over 10,000 or around 25% of all households in Nanaimo) are experiencing a housing affordability problem

There is no one size fits all solution for such a wide spread issue. Recognizing the influencing factors, committing to solid action and being innovative towards addressing this in a variety of ways is what will begin to solve the problem, bit by bit. This problem is being faced - and has been successfully addressed - all over the world, and there’s no need to reinvent the wheel. We just need to step out of the box and get to work - and we have a strategy to get started with.

Our recently released Affordable Housing Strategy takes some solid steps forward towards addressing housing affordability here in a variety of ways. It contains five objectives, which are to:

1. Increase the supply of rental housing
2. Support infill and intensification in existing neighborhoods

3. Diversify housing form in all neighborhoods
4. Continue to support low income and special needs housing
5. Strengthen partnerships

Within those objectives in the strategy, there are policy directions, key measures and priority ranges of 1-2 years, 3-5 years and 5-10 years. Overall, I am very much in support of this strategy, and all it entails. My primary concerns exist in the prioritization aspects - specifically in the 1-2 year and 3-5 year objectives. I think we can, and should, begin certain aspects in the 1-2 year timeframe, rather than the 3-5 years.

- Raise the priority of the following policy direction items, where possible, so that rather than beginning work on them at the 3-5 year mark, work begins within the 1-2 year mark towards:
  - Expanding the secondary suites policy
  - Supporting infill and intensification in single detached neighbourhoods
  - Reducing barriers to tiny homes
  - Introducing an adaptable housing policy
  - Increasing community engagement and education

To move this affordable housing strategy forward in solid ways that can really assist households that are struggling to make ends meet and begin to close the gap, Council needs to be prepared to provide solid direction and oversight to ensure that the resources are available to develop the policy changes required to put the affordable housing strategy into action.

As well, a systemic barrier needs to be removed to encourage innovation that can respond to the different pieces of the puzzle that are required - that the municipality and builders work with rather than against each other towards finding solutions. That creates opportunities that benefit everyone.

- Establish an Affordable Housing Strategy Task Force with a focus on collaborating with planners, developers, other stakeholders and related expertise, and the community to draw out and explore new opportunities and concepts which can contribute towards addressing the policy directions of the Affordable Housing Strategy objectives in various ways.
- Consider whether the Affordable Housing Strategy Task Force could also be assistive towards the Community Planning and Development Committee in relation to the Affordable Housing Strategy aspects by adding focused capacity and assistance towards the research, analysis and formulation of initial drafts for affordable housing policy direction items to be advanced further by the Community Planning and Development Committee.

From a prioritization perspective, since the Official Community Plan (OCP) is up for review and is bound to be receiving various updates - I believe we should place extra weight in prioritizing measures of the Affordable Housing Strategy which are related to the OCP and the zoning bylaw so that prospective changes that are ready can be applied at the same time.

A direct example of why I think now is the time to explore opportunities and prioritize measures of the strategy related to the zoning bylaw, associated policies, and the OCP that's up for review is this:

One of the concepts I have been formulating is one that tackles a piece of the puzzle within the subject of supporting intensification. It's mostly OCP, zoning bylaw, and policy related, and it's all about increasing housing density and the availability of affordable housing units through the provision of

smaller lot sizes and small homes. Smaller lots yield more units per hectare and can lower costs for single family dwellings.

These smaller lots and smaller homes can be quite beautiful - those that simply want to reach their dream of home ownership with a little piece of land - to have a place of their own they can be proud to call their home - this gives them an avenue of opportunity. It's a market that cannot be activated here until these base changes are made. It's an opportunity that benefits residents, developers, investors, owners and the community as a whole.

But remember, this concept isn't intended to address everything - it's just to give an example of how we can, and need to, move forward on the pieces of the puzzle because each piece addresses a different set of needs. It requires leadership to apply vision, initiate direction, and provide oversight - and to see it through to its completion.

I would like to see the Affordable Housing Strategy Task Force flesh out this initial concept among other intensification efforts, and work with the Community Planning Development Committee to accomplish the following:

- Initiate dialogue around tackling the challenges of addressing intensification objectives and small lot home developments within this segment and with a broader scope in mind.
- Discuss OCP related aspects and work towards a plan to develop a new DPA (Development Permit Area) designated specifically for Intensive Residential Small Lot Development, of which the entire city will be designated. This helps keep things flexible, and it only applies to specific zoning measures. This would be done pursuant to Section 919.1 (1) (e) of the Local Government Act for the purpose of establishment of objectives for the form and character of intensive residential development. This is where the overarching goals and base objectives of developments of this nature would be detailed - small homes - we don't want to go too deep here or we risk stifling innovation. The rest goes into the zoning bylaw and policies, and as varying needs arise and new ways of accomplishing intensification that is of this nature, the complexity and time required to introduce specific changes can be reduced.
- Begin drafting a new zone and associated policy which would allow much smaller single-family dwelling lot sizes than what are currently permitted in our R2 small lot zoning. The base requirements would already be defined within the OCP as described above; for zoning of this nature, an automatic inclusion into the new DPA would occur, and the specific bounds around what the new zone would permit, would be regulated through the definition of its zone and associated policy development.
- Produce the completed works and proceed towards final consultations, potential revisions, and implementation.

Whether or not the concept example I have provided resonates with you, the important point I'm trying to make here above all is that there are many pieces to the puzzle in what people need and want from housing - none of it is all encompassing and most of the changes that need to be made to enable affordable housing at a larger scale come down to policy development, bylaw updates, OCP amendments, and embracing innovation - and we need to start that now, in my opinion, not years down the road - so that it can begin to build traction.

To close on this piece, I'll just point out one last thing. Our close neighbour - Victoria - has done well with this in their OCP and zoning bylaw implementation. They have zoning which allows very small lots and homes. Nanaimo can too. We don't need to, and shouldn't, entirely reinvent the wheel here as we so often see happen.

Here is how Victoria has done it:

- OCP changes which encompass small lot development  
<https://www.victoria.ca/assets/Departments/Planning~Development/Community~Planning/OC P/Replaced/OCP Book 2012 amended Sept 2016.pdf>
- Zoning for small lots  
<https://www.victoria.ca/assets/Departments/Planning~Development/Development~Services/Z oning/Bylaws/1.42.pdf>
- Small lot house rezoning policy package  
<https://www.victoria.ca/assets/Departments/Planning~Development/Development~Services/A plications/Small%20Lot%20Rezoning%20Package.pdf>

## Homelessness and Health Crisis

I am very thankful for the hard work and effort that the Nanaimo Homeless Coalition has put towards their action plan focused on addressing homelessness and the related health aspects. They have produced an excellent strategic action plan for 2018-2023, which offers solid direction and 10 strategies to help tackle the problem. There's a lot of work to be done, and I support the strategies that the coalition has recommended. We need to begin implementing the recommendations that the city can help with.

In the Greater Victoria area, they have made a significant impact on addressing the many facets of homelessness - since 2016 they have reduced their homeless count by 18%, and just this year they secured \$90 million in funding through a regional partnership with the provincial and federal government. They are well on their way towards reaching their goals.

Here in Nanaimo, the homeless population has greatly increased - the most recent point in time count shows that the minimum number of individuals experiencing absolute homelessness in Nanaimo on April 18, 2018 was 335, which was before Discontent City was established.

The need for increased supportive and supported housing and specialized health services has already been long established. There's a lot that needs to get done and we cannot afford to delay things further - the longer we do that, the worse the problem gets for the entire community. Things are unraveling at an increasing speed and we cannot just stand by and watch it grow. We need to lead and take action, and the city as a whole will benefit as a result.

## Thank You

Thank you for taking the time to read through my platform - if you have any questions or would just like to have a conversation, please feel welcome to reach out to me by phone or email.

### Peter Urquhart

Phone: (250) 714-9869

Email: [peter@peterurquhart.ca](mailto:peter@peterurquhart.ca)