

Municipal governments (and other forms of local governments, most notably Regional Districts in the case of British Columbia) have the daunting task of addressing the day-to-day lives of their citizens, facilitating a process of local engagement that can achieve a “sense of community among members” in a way that tempers “individual ambitions with concern for others”.<sup>1</sup> The City of Kelowna conducts a Citizen Survey to “gauge public satisfaction with municipal programs and services and to gain insight into citizens' service priorities”.<sup>2</sup> Analysis of the 2020 survey suggested that “addressing social issues” (such as homelessness, mental health, and addiction) was the top priority for municipal investment, and was again the case for 2022.



Specific concerns shift from year to year, including the rise of more specific concerns around challenges such as poverty and homelessness as well as recent increases in affordability concerns in a high inflationary environment, but social issues “continue to dominate the public issue agenda” (per the 2022 survey).

Kelowna Citizen Survey (2017-2022)			
Top mentions for why quality of life has “worsened”			
2022		2020	
Rising cost of living	21%	Increased poverty/homelessness	15%
Safety concerns	14%	Safety concerns	12%
Housing affordability	11%	Rising cost of living	9%
Too crowded/busy	10%	Drugs	9%
2018		2017	
Traffic congestion	21%	Rising cost of living	18%
Increased poverty/homelessness	16%	Traffic congestion	14%
Safety concerns	14%	Drugs	14%
Rising cost of living	14%	Too crowded/busy	13%

<sup>1</sup> Bish, R.L., & Clemens, E.G. (2008). Local Government in British Columbia (4<sup>th</sup> Ed.). *Union of British Columbia Municipalities*, p.1-2 [LINK](#)

<sup>2</sup> City of Kelowna. (n.d.). Citizen Survey. [LINK](#) – Past Citizen Surveys are also available.

However, while there can be clear community expectations of local representatives to act, the mandate and capacity of local government in addressing these social issues are not always clear.

### Addressing Social Challenges at a Local Level

BC empowers their local governments with distinct powers,<sup>3</sup> although local powers vary across the country.<sup>4</sup> The history of municipal powers in BC<sup>5</sup> have been shaped and challenged by rapid urbanization<sup>6</sup> in the century following confederation. Almost three in four Canadians now live in large urban centres.<sup>7</sup> This has prompted shifting the powers and perceptions of local government as “creatures of the provinces,” in favor of a “balance between the legitimate interests of both municipalities and provincial governments”.<sup>8</sup> This is something the Federation for Canadian Municipalities believes also reflects the preferences of the citizens, with municipal governments tending to have more favorable performance ratings as well as being viewed as better suited to understand and address the challenges of Canadian communities.<sup>9</sup>

Communities of all sizes are often at the frontline of managing social challenges, a point well summarized by Walmsley and Kading in 2018:<sup>10</sup>

Small cities in Canada today confront serious social issues resulting from the neoliberal economic restructuring that began in the early 1980s. Drastic cutbacks in social programs, income supports, and the provision of affordable housing, combined with the offloading of social responsibilities onto the municipal level, have contributed to the generalization of social issues—most visibly, homelessness—once associated chiefly with our largest urban centres... If local governments accept a social agenda as part of its responsibilities, the contributors to Small Cities, Big Issues believe that small cities can succeed in reconceiving community based on the ideals of acceptance, accommodation, and inclusion.

Whether or not municipalities can negotiate increased formal powers, they must still grapple with the complex social issues and problems that “converge in urban centres”.<sup>11</sup> However, this can be complicated, as identified in Kading’s comments on the “awkward ‘leadership’ role that has been thrust upon them from higher levels of government”,<sup>12</sup> and with Torjman and Leviten-Reid identifying a “mismatch between the fiscal capacity of local governments and the diverse responsibilities they are expected to meet”.<sup>13</sup>

### A History of Social Policy in the Okanagan

Reports from as early as 1965 comment that “problems in economic, social and business behavior beset everyone” in the Okanagan; even then acknowledging the same concerns of aging populations and urbanization.<sup>14</sup> However, as was noted earlier, these more often viewed as challenges for higher levels of government to address. As local

<sup>3</sup> Government of BC. (n.d.). *Local Government Governance & Powers* [LINK](#)

<sup>4</sup> See, e.g., City of Toronto. (2001). *Powers of Canadian Cities - The legal framework* [LINK](#)

<sup>5</sup> See Bish, R.L., & Clemens, E.G. (2008). *Local Government in British Columbia* (4<sup>th</sup> ed). *Union of British Columbia Municipalities*. [LINK](#)

<sup>6</sup> Government of Canada. (2018). *Canada goes urban*. *Statistics Canada*. [LINK](#)

<sup>7</sup> Government of Canada. (2022). *Canada's large urban centres continue to grow and spread*. *Statistics Canada*. [LINK](#)

<sup>8</sup> See Good, K.R. (2019). *Municipalities deserve more autonomy and respect*. *Policy Options*. [LINK](#)

<sup>9</sup> Abacus Data. (2019). *Everything Is Local: The Role of Municipalities in Canadians’ Lives and Opinions About New Funding Tools*. [LINK](#)

<sup>10</sup> Walmsley, C., & Kading, T. (2018). *Small Cities, Big Issues: Reconceiving Community in a Neoliberal Era*. Athabasca University Press. Doi: 10.15215/aupress/9781771991636.01. [LINK](#)

<sup>11</sup> Hasso, A. (2010). *The Role of Local Government in Social Policy and Program Development: Impacts of Municipal Reform*. *The University of Western Ontario*. p.14 [LINK](#)

<sup>12</sup> Kading, T. (2012). *The Politics of Social Planning in the Small City*. *Canadian Political Science Association*. p.1. [LINK](#)

<sup>13</sup> Torjman, S., & Leviten-Reid, E. (2003). *The Social Role of Local Government*. *The Caledon Institute of Social Policy*. p.2 [LINK](#)

<sup>14</sup> Gelling, S.P.T., Neufeld, H., Preddy, I.G., & Soiseth, L.O. (1965). *A regional study of social welfare measurements (no. 5: the Okanagan Region): An exploration of the regional assessment of demographic and social welfare statistics for British Columbia, 1951-1961*. *University of British Columbia*. [LINK](#)

challenges grew alongside municipalities themselves, local government began to consider their own obligations and capacities in being a part of social response and development.

In 2006, the Social Planning and Research Council of BC (SPARC BC) was retained by the City of Kelowna to “define the role of the City in providing social/community planning and to recommend a strategy to deliver those services”.<sup>15</sup> In their report, *Defining the City of Kelowna’s Role in Social Planning*, they reflect that “since 1992 the City of Kelowna has had a social planning function in some capacity, for which responsibility has shifted from a Social Planner in the early 1990s to a Community Planning Manager in 1995”. SPARC’s report commented on the municipal activities in that early period:

- Producing the province’s first social plan in 1996;
- Expanding the grants-in-aid program;
- Ongoing input into development processes;
- Creating new affordable housing policies;
- Completing a social needs assessment and housing study; and
- Developing guidelines for crime prevention, accessibility and childcare.

The role of social planners was also noted to differ from municipality to municipality:<sup>16</sup>

Comparison of Social Planner Positions in Four Municipalities

Nature and Scope of Work	N. Vancouver	Abbotsford	Richmond	Kelowna
Coordinate major social planning projects	✓			
Research social planning issues and analyze community social issues	✓	✓	✓	✓
Identify, analyze and prioritize social issues, needs and trends	✓	✓		✓
Research, develop and implement programs			✓	✓
Review, develop and analyze City policy	✓	✓		✓
Prepare reports, studies, presentations	✓	✓	✓	✓
Provide expert advice internally and externally		✓		✓
Review and evaluate land use and development applications and long range plans	✓	✓	✓	✓
Promote social sustainability principles in plan development		✓		
Establish and maintain contact with community groups and organizations	✓	✓	✓	✓
Liaise with senior levels of government		✓		✓

The concerns identified at that time echo the challenges of today:<sup>17</sup>

- Affordable housing
- Homelessness
- Substance misuse and addictions
- Poverty
- Food security
- Crime

<sup>15</sup> SPARC BC. (2006). *Defining the City of Kelowna’s Role in Social Planning*. p.2. [LINK](#)

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, p.27 [LINK](#)

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, p.8-9 [LINK](#)

- Accessibility
- Mental health

Furthermore, community engagement identified a range of potential roles for local government:<sup>18</sup>

Advocate	Champion	Policy creator / monitor	Provider of space	Facilitator / coordinator
Funder	Researcher	Educator	Partner	Leader

The emergent structures created to fulfill those roles were varied and fluid. Archived Terms of Reference also overview the history of committee structures, with a Community Housing Needs Committee emerging in 1995, later amalgamating with the Social Planning Board in 2003, before returning again to a more focused Housing Committee.<sup>19</sup> There was also collaboration with community agencies in early censuses of homeless individuals,<sup>20</sup> and throughout the mid-2000's with the province on their Task Force on Homelessness, Mental Illness, and Addition.<sup>21</sup>

The SPARC report ultimately offers thirteen recommendations grouped into four interconnected topic areas, which they note are best viewed as a “framework for engagement with social planning rather than as independent parts”:<sup>22</sup>

1. The Social Planning and Housing Committee;
2. Planning for planning;
3. The City as collaborator; and
4. Human resources

They go on to note that their recommendations:

“... provide the framework through which the City can adapt its current approach to social planning to satisfy community priorities. While these actions might now be viewed as they relate to priority issues – namely affordable housing, homelessness, poverty, mental health and substance misuse – **these priorities will change over time.** Importantly, however, the **processes** through which the City addresses such issues can remain the same.”

### Aligning Across Levels of Government

There of course exists a vast array of provincially- and federally - administered income and social support programs in British Columbia.<sup>23</sup> In part, these processes must include identifying opportunities – and mechanisms of implementation therein – where a strengthened local role adds value. This may include inaction on areas beyond their jurisdiction or capacities, but also the “Power of Partnerships”:<sup>24</sup>

The basic theory behind partnerships is that working together and leveraging assets and resources is more effective than working in isolation. A partnership draws its strength from coordinating resources so that two or more individuals or groups can work toward a common goal. Partnerships are especially important in addressing issues such as homelessness and poverty. Because they are multi-dimensional, these issues require multi-dimensional responses (such as affordable housing, employment, justice, training, child care, mental health, addictions, etc.) [p.1-2]

<sup>18</sup> SPARC BC, p.14-15 [LINK](#)

<sup>19</sup> City of Kelowna. (2008). Terms of Reference – Housing Committee. [LINK](#)

<sup>20</sup> Kelowna Homelessness Networking Group. (2003). Report on the Census of Homeless Individuals in Kelowna. [LINK](#)

<sup>21</sup> See French, K., & McNeil, M. (2007). Health and Housing: Partnerships for success. In *Housing & Homelessness. Visions (BC's Mental Health and Addictions Journal)*, 4(1). p.4-5 [LINK](#)

<sup>22</sup> SPARC BC, p.32 [LINK](#)

<sup>23</sup> See Petit, G., & Tedds, L. (2020). Overview of System of Income and Social Support Programs in British Columbia. *BC Basic Income Panel*. [LINK](#)

<sup>24</sup> Kading, T. (2012). The Politics of Social Planning in the Small City. *Canadian Political Science Association*. [LINK](#)

This can include grassroots coordination, such as the federal disbursement of Reaching Home homelessness funding directly to organizations in Designated Communities,<sup>25</sup> as well as the many collaborations with provincial homeless services and funding.<sup>26</sup> When local governments clearly articulate a holistic, community specific vision, this can guide and elicit partnerships and concurrent actions with other levels of government and non-governmental organisations. It can also help mobilize the full range of powers, connections, and activities of municipalities in a coordinated direction.

Municipalities do have a range of powers capable of addressing social challenges experienced in their region (see, e.g., the detailed 2009 SPARC BC report on municipal strategies to address homelessness).<sup>27</sup> It is incumbent on local governments to make selections from a range of available actions in accordance with local needs. The City of Kelowna 2012 Social Framework offers a broad overview of the municipal policies enacted to support “social sustainability” in accordance with the broader Official Community Plan (OCP) from that period.<sup>28</sup>



As policies, frameworks, and strategies accumulate across levels of government, they – ideally – build a cohesive framework for collective action and direction for diverse sets of stakeholders and policy makers. An illustrative example of this is the Figure of supporting documents featured in the recent Central Okanagan Poverty and Wellness Strategy,<sup>29</sup> tying the local plan to the poverty reduction strategies at the provincial and federal level.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Government of Canada. (2022). About Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy. [LINK](#)

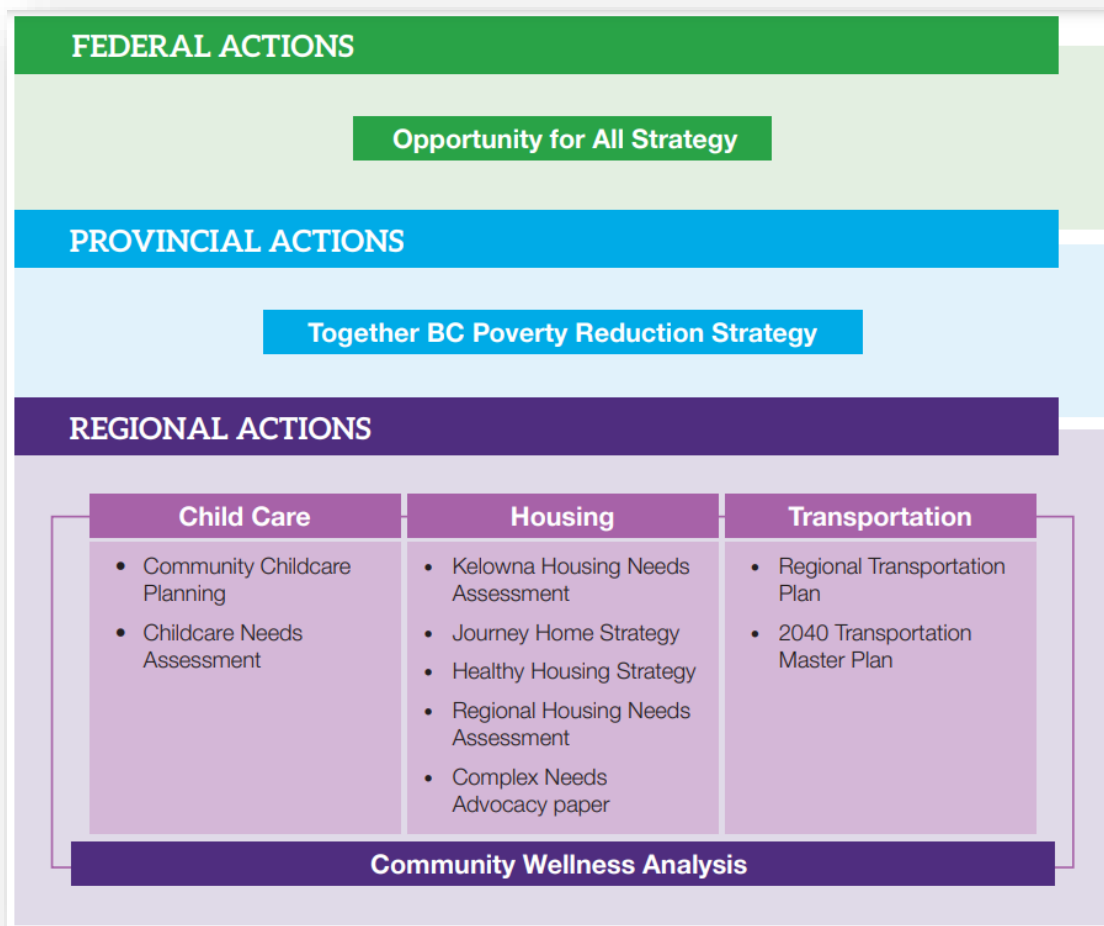
<sup>26</sup> See, e.g., the Government of British Columbia's overview of Homelessness programs. [LINK](#)

<sup>27</sup> SPARC BC. (2009). Municipal strategies to address homelessness in British Columbia: Knowledge dissemination and exchange activities on homelessness. [LINK](#)

<sup>28</sup> City of Kelowna. (2012). Social Framework. [LINK](#)

<sup>29</sup> See the RDCO site for updates on the final draft: [LINK](#)

<sup>30</sup> Additional context on poverty is available in the KHRC document: “The State of Poverty: A Summary of Policy, Data, and Reporting across Canada (Updated Version: March 22 2022)”, [LINK](#)



### Modern Municipal Action on Social Development

Social development priorities have continued to grow in prominence in Kelowna since then, often at the request of the City. For example, documents in 2015-2016 acknowledge that a “dedicated city presence is required” to address homelessness,<sup>31</sup> and reflect that:<sup>32</sup>

“... a multitude of agencies work collaboratively to address the many social issues facing citizens of Kelowna. The City of Kelowna is interested increasing its’ participation with these partners through the addition of a full-time position to advance ideas, liaise with other levels of government and to increase awareness of the issues of homelessness to the community.”

This led to the creation of a Social Development Manager in 2015,<sup>33</sup> followed later by the hiring of a Community Safety Director in 2019,<sup>34</sup> and the addition of Coordinator-level positions for both Social Development as well as Community Development in 2020.<sup>35</sup> An additional Community Development Coordinator role was added in the

<sup>31</sup> City of Kelowna. (2016). Report to Council: Homelessness and Related Social Issues Update. (p.3) [LINK](#)

<sup>32</sup> City of Kelowna. (2015). Report to Council: Homelessness – Municipal Strategies-Working Models. (p.1) [LINK](#)

<sup>33</sup> McDonald, J. (2016). Social development manager takes on difficult homelessness file in Kelowna. *InfoTel News*. [LINK](#)

<sup>34</sup> Maddison, R. (2021). Homelessness in Kelowna with Darren Caul. *Kelowna Now*. [LINK](#)

<sup>35</sup> City of Kelowna. (2020). 2020 Financial Plan. (p.254) [LINK](#)



2022 financial plan to oversee the outdoor sheltering file,<sup>36</sup> among other positions, particularly related to public safety.<sup>37</sup>

This was also accompanied by investment<sup>38</sup> into programs, strategies, and governance bodies in addressing homelessness through the local Journey Home Strategy<sup>39</sup> (developments which were recently and thoroughly overviewed in the Journey Home Strategy mid-term report).<sup>40</sup>

The City has also taken an active role in the pursuit of grant funding to support additional support services through the pandemic.<sup>41</sup> They have also advanced several research inquiries, such as the successful<sup>42</sup> work around complex care needs<sup>43</sup> to promote advocacy with the province for additional supports, the production of Community Trends reports,<sup>44</sup> and the ongoing work on a Community Emergency Shelter Plan to guide considerations on the future location of purpose-built emergency shelters.<sup>45</sup> Other actions have been guided by legal imperatives, such as the 2008 BC Supreme Court case *Victoria (City) v. Adams* decision striking down Bylaws restricting people experiencing homelessness from erecting temporary shelter;<sup>46</sup> this prompted the “designated site” approach to the issue of Outdoor Overnight Sheltering.<sup>47</sup>

Furthermore, it should be noted that the management of social issues – as with all government activities – is also influenced by the politics and procedures of democratic participation, as councils weigh both popular opinion against duty to the most vulnerable of citizens. These tensions and challenges were evident in the public opposition and eventual program redesign of the McCurdy Place supportive housing facility.<sup>48</sup> That corresponding discussions highlight the distinct roles local representatives can play – and associated limits – in impacting matters outside of land use, with Councillor Sieben offering the following view at a July 2019 special council meeting:<sup>49</sup>

“[08:48] ... it made me evaluate: what’s the role of council? What’s the role of a city councillor? And I think there’s three key components. One is to set an overall vision for the City. And part of it is this council – the previous council, but as a concurrent body – we engaged into homelessness. We engaged into trying to take an active role. There was perspectives when we first started – and it certainly wasn’t in the state that it is now – that those were provincial and federal responsibilities. That’s healthcare. It’s mental health. It’s addictions. And technically it probably is. If there’s crime being happened, that’s criminal code. That’s federal. But to be honest, it’s happening in our streets, and we are responsible for it. So I’m – the overall vision was for council to get involved. Council set the stage for the Social Development Manager to be hired, and created that position. Journey Home was birthed out of that, and I thank all the people that took part in that. So that’s the vision component. The day to day nuts and bolts of what council does deals with zonings, and OCP amendments, and variances, and things like that. And that really was the lens that we were dealing with in this particular application. I had one person I spoke to and she very eloquently sort of said she recognized that council’s hands were tied with regards to that, but she encouraged us to untie our hands and get involved in the future. And that’s something that sticks with me, and I think in future discussions is something on how we look at zoning is worthy of discussion. But I think the

<sup>36</sup> City of Kelowna. (2022). 2022 Financial Plan. (p.240) [LINK](#)

<sup>37</sup> Moore, W. (2022). Kelowna council will be asked to approve tax increase slightly higher than expected. *Castanet*. [LINK](#)

<sup>38</sup> Central Okanagan Foundation. (2019). Reaching Home: City of Kelowna Homelessness Plan. [LINK](#)

<sup>39</sup> City of Kelowna. (n.d.). Journey Home. [LINK](#)

<sup>40</sup> COJHS. (2022). Journey Home Strategy Mid-Term Report. [LINK](#)

<sup>41</sup> Barnes, G. (2022). Grant application for Kelowna’s outdoor sheltering program. *Kelowna Capital News*. [LINK](#)

<sup>42</sup> Kelowna Capital News. (2022). 22 new adult substance-use beds, complex care housing coming to Okanagan. [LINK](#)

<sup>43</sup> City of Kelowna. (2021). Complex needs. [LINK](#)

<sup>44</sup> City of Kelowna. (2021). Community Trends 2021 – Housing unaffordability: crisis or crossroads? [LINK](#)

<sup>45</sup> City of Kelowna. (2021). Report to Council: Community Emergency Shelter Plan – Workshop. [LINK](#)

<sup>46</sup> *Victoria (City) v. Adams*, 2008 BCSC 1363 (CanLII) [LINK](#)

<sup>47</sup> City of Kelowna. (n.d.). Outdoor Overnight Sheltering in Designated Sites. [LINK](#)

<sup>48</sup> Clow, C. (2019). Kelowna’s McCurdy house gets operation model redesign. *Kelowna Capital News*. [LINK](#)

<sup>49</sup> Castanet Media. (2019). McCurdy Development Meeting. [LINK](#)

third component that we represent, when you take away the land use, is to be an advocate for the citizens to all levels of government. And I think that's the role we played here... [10:30]"

### A Multi-Layered Community Vision for Kelowna

The musings above illustrate the importance of broader guiding factors. In addition to specific bylaws, funding, and other direct activities, municipalities set visions for their communities. We can see this vision take form in this graphic summarizing the Imagine Kelowna roadmap:<sup>50</sup>



This overarching vision then shaped Kelowna's Official Community Plan (OCP), "a policy framework for Council by addressing issues such as housing, transportation, infrastructure, parks, economic development and the natural and social environment".<sup>51</sup> Pillars within Kelowna's 2040 OCP are as follows:

<sup>50</sup> Imagine Kelowna: The Vision to 2040 (City of Kelowna, 2018 – p.8) - [LINK](#)

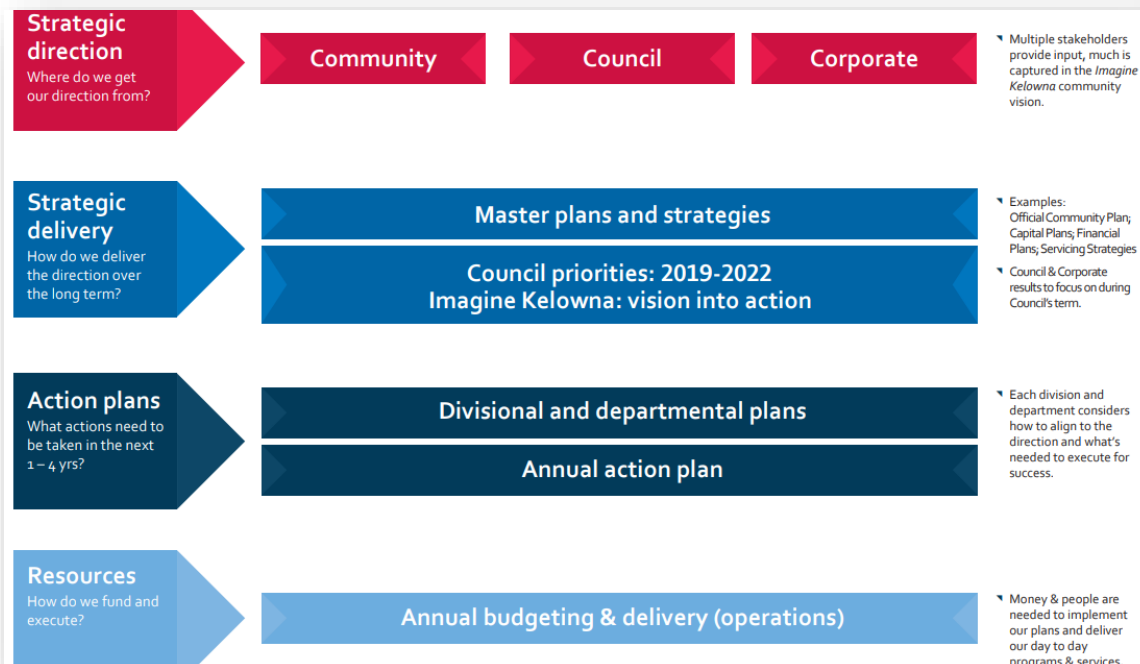
<sup>51</sup> Kelowna 2040 Official Community Plan (OCP) (City of Kelowna, 2022 – p.8) [online](#) / official Bylaw [PDF](#)



Figure 1.2: Official Community Plan Pillars



Specific actions to address these issues are subsequently elaborated in multi-year council priorities,<sup>52</sup> as well as annual action plans:<sup>53</sup>



<sup>52</sup> City of Kelowna: Council Priorities 2019-2022 ([LINK](#))

<sup>53</sup> City of Kelowna: Action Plan 2022 ([LINK](#))

## Results summary: Council | corporate

Imagine Kelowna: vision into action	Council priorities	Community safety	Social & inclusive	Transportation & mobility	Vibrant neighbourhoods	Economic resiliency	Environmental protection
		Crime rates are decreasing	Policy guides where the City invests resources	Investments are connecting high density areas	Number of urban centre development plans is increasing	Infrastructure deficit is reduced	Resiliency & adaptability to climate change
				More trips by transit, carpooling, cycling & walking	Site design & architecture is high quality, context sensitive	City policies are enabling investment	Greenhouse gas emissions are decreasing
		Residents feel safe	Homelessness is decreasing	Travel times are optimized	Affordable & attainable housing mix options	Top talent is living in Kelowna	Predictive modelling & forecasting
				Emerging technologies make it easier to get around	Accessible and multi-purpose amenities		
		Data and analysis is used to understand problems & target responses	Inclusivity and diversity are increasing	More opportunities to learn about transportation	Animated parks & public spaces	Key economic sector impact is increasing	Emergency response & preparation
	People of all ages & abilities can easily get around			Key sites are proactively planned			
	Corporate	Financial management					
		Lower value activities are improved or stopped		Non-tax revenues are increasing		Cost to deliver services is quantified	
		Clear direction					
Common understanding of future direction		Progress on results is measured, monitored & reported	Divisional business plans are created	Divisions have and use performance measures	Innovation is encouraged & supported	Services, processes & business activities are transformed	
People							
Ability to attract, select & retain talent		Collaboration is improving problem solving		Staff engagement has increased	Organizational values prepare us for the future		

**The Future of Social Development and Community Safety in Kelowna (and Regionally)**

More recently, we've seen the release of the further strategies and frameworks to guide action and planning in the local community.

On April 11, 2022, Council endorsed Kelowna's first-ever Community Safety Plan (CSP).<sup>54</sup> At its core, this five-year action plan identifies 5 priority areas for action:

- 1) Crime Prevention, Intervention and Sense of Safety
- 2) Domestic Violence and Intimate Partner Violence
- 3) Housing and Homelessness
- 4) Mental Health and Problematic Substance Use
- 5) Racism and Discrimination

<sup>54</sup> City of Kelowna: Community Safety Plan [LINK](https://khrc.ok.ubc.ca/)

Each priority area was linked to its own recommendations, guided in turn by foundational values and strategic approaches. Also included is a summary of leads and partners for respective recommendations and actions (see, e.g., those relevant to Housing and Homelessness below), as well as clear governance planning to oversee and manage implementation overall.

3 Housing and Homelessness	
Recommendations & Actions	Lead(s) & Partner(s)
<b>8 Recommendation: Enhance multi-sectoral participation to improve housing/ sheltering.</b> <b>Action 8.1</b> Enhance strategies (e.g., legislation and partnerships with landlords) to support maintenance of safe and healthy properties.	<b>S/C Lead:</b> CoK <b>Partners:</b> TBD
<b>Action 8.2</b> Improve planning and emergency responses for vulnerable populations. (e.g., warming/cooling stations, shelters, and disaster response).	<b>S/C Lead:</b> IH, COJHS <b>Partners:</b> CoK, NGOs, community at large
<b>9 Recommendation: Implement strategies to prevent and reduce homelessness.</b> <b>Action 9.1</b> Advance city planning initiatives to ensure Kelowna has a balanced housing system positioned to address the social and economic needs of the region (e.g., Healthy Housing Strategy <sup>6</sup> and Official Community Plan 2040 <sup>7</sup> ).	<b>S/C Lead:</b> CoK <b>Partners:</b> TBD
<b>Action 9.2</b> Support individuals who are precariously housed or experiencing homelessness with connections to income supports and services within the community.	<b>S/C Lead:</b> MSDPR <b>Partners:</b> TBD
<b>Action 9.3</b> Implement an anti-stigma campaign aimed to change people's perceptions and levels of understanding regarding homelessness, especially those experiencing unsheltered homelessness.	<b>S/C Lead:</b> COJHS <b>Partners:</b> All S/C

We have also seen growth at the regional district level, with the concurrent development through the Regional District of Central Okanagan of both:

- The Central Okanagan Poverty and Wellness Strategy<sup>55</sup>
- The Regional Housing Strategy<sup>56</sup>

The draft Central Okanagan Poverty and Wellness Strategy builds on the work of the Central Okanagan Poverty Reduction Committee and the Central Okanagan Community Wellness Analysis,<sup>57</sup> identifying a series of “priorities for process” to “ensure that diverse sectors work together and that actions are based on shared understanding and opportunity for inclusion and involvement” and well as “priorities for intervention” across categories of basic needs, inclusion and community belonging, and preventative interventions. Associated actions are then identified, sorted by process and intervention priorities, with specific immediate and longer-term actions shared for each of the priorities in each category.

<sup>55</sup> Regional District of Central Okanagan: Central Okanagan Poverty and Wellness Strategy [LINK](#)

<sup>56</sup> Regional District of Central Okanagan: Regional Housing Strategy [LINK](#)

<sup>57</sup> United Way BC: Central Okanagan Poverty Research [LINK](#)

## Priorities for Process

### Reconciliation



Building  
Partnerships



Cultural  
Safety



Data  
Sovereignty



Calls  
to Action

### Systems Approach through Collective Impact



Governance &  
Infrastructure



Strategic  
Action Planning



Community  
Engagement



Ongoing Evaluation  
& Improvement

## Priorities for Intervention

### Meeting Basic Needs



Transportation



Housing



Health &  
Wellness



Food  
Security



Financial  
Resources

### Inclusion & Community Belonging



Community  
Events



Diversity &  
Accessibility



Welcoming  
Places

### Preventative Interventions



Child  
Development



Youth  
Well-Being



Universal Benefits  
& Supports

The draft Regional Housing Strategy provides an overview of our current housing situation regionally, and identifies a series of draft recommendations associated with five core objectives:

1. Strengthen coordination between RDCO electoral areas, member municipalities and first nations.
2. Coordinated a regional housing advocacy strategy aligned with provincial and federal housing policy to approach higher levels of senior government for additional Central Okanagan resources and support.
3. Strengthen mechanisms for information sharing and partnership with first nations, local governments and non-profit housing providers.
4. Develop regional best practices to regulate and protect rental housing stock and facilitate the development of affordable housing.
5. Regionally assess policy and development processes to build staff capacity, identify opportunities for policy coordination and streamline approvals with senior government.

Further to this, this year the City of Kelowna is also expected to complete a “Social Policy Key Learning Paper and Roadmap”. The City provides the context for this added guidepost on their Open Data portal:<sup>58</sup>

“Creating a strong and community driven social policy framework will provide a focus on planning for social well-being in Kelowna. It places emphasis on preventing, or at a minimum, mitigating the likelihood of future social concerns. It also provides a blueprint to help evaluate and prioritize investment, while providing an opportunity for the City to coordinate more effectively with, and encourage coordination between stakeholders, making better use of limited resources to address community social needs linked to Kelowna’s overall social well-being.”

“While the Official Community Plan defines a socially sustainable community and indicates that the City can play a role in achieving this by providing facilities and services, the development of a social policy would assist in further defining and clarifying the City’s role in supporting the social well-being of citizens and identifying priorities for investment. A social policy will support a coordinated and integrated approach across city departments and across community partners and provide a mechanism for mitigating or preventing future social concerns through proactive long-term planning.”

## Conclusion

We are in a period of increased attention to the social development of our communities, such that they remain safe, engaging, and prosperous places to live, play, and work.

These strategies and frameworks – when drafted in response to identified community needs and challenges, and when cumulative and compatible with all other guiding documents – add more specific guidance to local governments on navigating their own role in fostering social development at a local level, as well as providing the community an overarching direction and focus to social development in our community.

This applies to the work of our own group, the Kelowna Homelessness Research Collaborative, as well as the work of all other non-governmental stakeholders involved in the broader social support system. Frameworks help guide action-oriented partnerships. They guide research inquiry to explore evidence-based solutions. They also demonstrate community need, supporting the case for dedicating internal funding to relevant causes, as well as supporting proposals for external funding.

We look forward to following progress on these and other planned social wellness files, as documented on the City’s Social Wellness page,<sup>59</sup> as well as any future developments in this area; that page further overviews related work in

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<sup>58</sup> City of Kelowna. (2021). Council priority: Social & inclusive. [LINK](#)

<sup>59</sup> City of Kelowna: Social Wellness [LINK](#)



the Strong Neighbourhoods and Block Connecting programs, the other municipal work in addressing homelessness, and the work specific to supporting healthy children and youth (including the recent Youth Services Framework).<sup>60</sup>

We also hope that any progress on these files is documented on the Open Access platform <sup>61</sup> and elsewhere, and that actions moving forward help to advance the individual and collective wellbeing of our community.

The Kelowna Homelessness Research Collaborative (KHRC), is a multidisciplinary team of researchers interested in understanding and supporting the provision of services to – and the perspectives of – individuals with lived experience of homelessness or who are vulnerable to homelessness. Investigators and collaborators are primarily based in the Okanagan Valley of British Columbia, Canada. For additional resources, check out our website: <https://khrc.ok.ubc.ca/>

**Any feedback related to this report can be submitted to:**

[Ask.khrc@ubc.ca](mailto:Ask.khrc@ubc.ca)



<sup>60</sup> Urban Matters CCC. (March 2022). Kelowna Youth Services Framework. *City of Kelowna*. [LINK](#)

<sup>61</sup> City of Kelowna. Open Kelowna: [LINK](#)