

THRIVING FOR ALL: A PLAN FOR HEALTHY COMMUNITIES IN OUR RURAL CITY



BACKGROUND

Introduction



In our small rural city of Trail, BC, we recognize the importance of fostering an environment where all residents can thrive, regardless of their socio-economic status. This document outlines strategies and actionable goals aimed at reducing poverty and promoting healthy communities.

The Tamarack Institute reports that 42% of Canadians living in poverty are employed but still unable to meet their basic needs. People should not be living in poverty, and people who are working should be able to thrive, not just survive. These revised plans aim to address the issues of the working poor and enact changes in the systems contributing to this issue. By amending these community plans, we can create a thriving community for all and increase the financial capacity of low income residents, thereby reducing the depth of working poverty.

The Skills Centre has been actively working to strengthen the local community and build capacity in the Lower Columbia region since 1997. As part of the Building Community Resilience by Ending Working Poverty project, the Skills Centre created a leadership team comprising community members from diverse backgrounds and experiences, including individuals with lived or living experience.

To effect change and create systems that reduce working poverty, collective impact is essential.

Through community engagement consultations, asset mapping, and collective problem-solving, the City of Trail, along with the Skills Centre and the Ending Working Poverty Leadership Table, initiated a re-examination of existing community plans through the lens of working poverty. By revisiting these community plans, the city can construct policies that will ensure more of our community members can move from merely surviving to truly thriving.

Overview



The City of Trail in collaboration with the Skills Centre explored intrinsic, secondary and systemic issues affecting people in Trail, BC, who are working but still having a hard time making ends meet. The goal was to enhance supports and services by revisiting existing community plans. Applying this new equity lens modified existing plans to ensure overall well-being for under-resourced groups. The revised plans will support policy restructuring resulting in systems change.

In 2017, both a poverty reduction plan and a healthy communities plan were developed for the Lower Columbia Region, an area in the West Kootenays which includes five partner municipalities. Numerous organizations have implemented several programs successfully, yet there is still much work to do. To further support this work the updated plans will aid in creating thriving, healthy communities which should increase the financial well-being of people working but still in poverty. Through an examination of local factors influencing working poverty, as well as the impacts of COVID-19, we are better able to support both the regional poverty reduction and healthy communities plans.

The data, in consultation with the leadership table and community members, has resulted in the merger of the two plans. In addition, those plans were further evaluated in terms of Trail's Official Community Plan, a legally obligated plan mandated by the BC Government under the Local Government Act. The updated plan will be identified as the *Thriving for All: A Plan for Healthy Communities in Our Rural City*.



PILLARS OF CHANGE



There are six pillars of change that encompass the Thriving for All: A Plan for Healthy Communities.

1. Housing
2. Food Security
3. Health, Social and Community Services
4. Learning
5. Inclusive and Vibrant Economy
6. Physical Activity and Community Belonging

Some of these pillars remain the same and unchanged from the first edition of the community plans. These will be noted with an *. Changing systems requires time and applying resources in a coordinated fashion. As such, some of the action items and the pillars, while important, are still in the process of change and little update is needed as they are still considered a priority.



HOUSING*

1. Ensure the availability of data and other information required to support affordable housing initiatives.

- Continually assess the current need for affordable housing.
- Implement a regular homelessness count.

2. Facilitate coordination amongst organizations operating subsidized housing for low income households.

- Secure resources to develop a strategic plan that identifies the highest priority gaps and support initiatives to address those gaps.
- Promote ongoing planning amongst agencies involved in affordable housing.
- Identify potential shared service options.

3. Develop mechanisms for low income households to access information on affordable housing options.

- Explore need and resources for a shared website.
- Explore need and resources for a central housing registry.

4. Increase the number of subsidized rental housing options for low income households.

- Research financing and service delivery models.
- Identify and access land, capital and operating funding to develop the additional units.

5. Advocate for support by government to develop and operate affordable housing.

- Advocate for local government support in the form of policy development, zoning decisions, tax relief and access to land.
- Advocate for capital and/or operating funding for affordable housing from senior government.
- Facilitate communication between ministries delivering services to clients and agencies that provide housing for those clients.



FOOD SECURITY

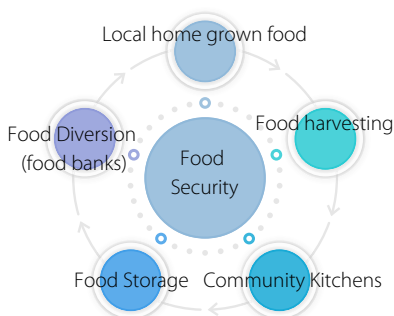


1. Promote the development of well rounded, self-empowering food security programs that use a farm-to-table approach for low income households.

- Assist lower income households to grow nutritious food by providing access to resources including garden plots, supplies and equipment, seeds and gardening skills. Include harvesting and food storage skills development for year round access to grown food.
- Connect food security programs to ensure a closed loop, linking home grown food producers, community gardens to community kitchens, food banks and farmers markets, being mindful of food diversion whenever possible.
- Create a sense of community belonging and commitment through the various networks working together to ensure local food production is available to low income families.
- Continue existing programs or systems that reduce costs to low income households to purchase produce sold at farmers markets.

2. Encourage planning and communication amongst food security players that contributes to the reduction of poverty.

- Develop systems to redirect food “waste” to services that can use and distribute that food.
- Support climate resiliency through food diversion and reducing greenhouse gasses through local food procurement.



Health, Social and Community Services

1. Consistent promotion of community based programs and events as well as social and health services.

- Expand the “navigator” model aimed at helping individuals and households gain better access and understanding of community based programs and events as well as social and health services.
- Introduce a community hub of programs using multifaceted approaches which could include: a digital kiosk, online hub, information drop-in place and paper bulletins.
- Encouraging the creation of a centralized community space in the downtown core as identified in the City of Trail’s Official Community Plan (OCP).
- Encourage and support opportunities that lead to the co-location of services wherever possible.

2. Promote increased access to affordable transportation options for residents living and/or working in the Greater Trail region.

- Advocate for both increased ridership and increased services for public transportation across the Lower Columbia Region.
- Advocate for reduced or free public transit fares for individuals in households facing economic hardship, using a Community Access Card to demonstrate eligibility, as well as youth ages 13-17 years of age.
- Explore the expansion of community based transportation options, including carshare, on-demand and active transportation options.
- Increase access to transportation in the Waneta Junction area, specifically the airport and up to Red Mountain, as outlined in Trail’s OCP.

3. Promote barrier free access for lower income households to recreation, arts and culture in the region.

- Expand the Community Access Card program to include transportation, arts and entertainment for individuals facing economic hardship.

PROMOTE CONTINUED LEARNING*

1. Continue to offer learning and academic upgrading for low income individuals.

- Advocate for employment services for the “working poor”.
- Provide voice to people living in poverty to support learning and development services.
- Develop mechanisms for increasing awareness by individuals and agencies of resources available to assist with tuition and other learning support expenses.
- Identify additional opportunities to combine child-minding services with academic upgrading.
- Support individuals to improve by providing academic/essential skills upgrading.



2. Improve access to barrier free supports for families, children and youth.

- Promote shared strategic planning (including data sharing and analysis) amongst family serving agencies and service providers in addition to information on family support services and programs.
- Identify and encourage opportunities to cluster service delivery in the region and ensure opportunities exist outside of a traditional working day (ie, encourage delivery of programs and services after hours)
- Continue to provide opportunities for early childhood assessment and referral.
- Continually engage with families from diverse backgrounds and compositions to support a family friendly city.

VIBRANT AND INCLUSIVE ECONOMY*



1. Promote the living wage as a means of allowing workers access to a good quality of life in the region.

- Update the regional living wage calculation annually
- Partner with employers and agencies to raise awareness of the benefits of living wage incomes and related policies.
- Encourage local governments and other employers to pay their employees and contractors a minimum of the living wage.

2. Promote the employment of lower skilled individuals by supporting the development of workplace essential skills.

- Advocate for funding and promote collaboration amongst K-12, post-secondary and employment services organizations to provide training in employability and essential skills.
- Raise employer awareness of essential skills assessments and training.
- Advocate for resources to develop social purpose enterprises that increase employment opportunities for lower skilled workers.

3. Support the development and diversification of the local economy.

- Encourage community economic development organizations to promote economic initiatives that increase employment opportunities for people living in poverty.
- Integrate social needs and perspectives of people in poverty into development planning.

4. Improve the availability of and access to childcare.

- Advocate for choice in childcare spaces and to make childcare more affordable and accessible.
- Support the retention of ECE workers by promoting living wages and recognition of professional status.
- Increase availability of shift-friendly and/or extended hour childcare services.



Physical Activity and Community Belonging



1. Promote and support physical activity

- Support active play programs in parks to promote physical activity for all ages.
- Continue to find ways to break down financial and social barriers to participation in recreational activities.
- Promote regional transportation options to facilitate movement between communities.

2. Promote and support community belonging

- Improve social and community development and consider how space can impact individual and community wellness and support community belonging.
- Foster social interaction and community engagement through hosting regular community events, volunteer opportunities, educational workshops, and recreational activities to bring people together, promote civic engagement, and create opportunities for community belonging.
- Create inclusive and accessible public spaces through the design of public spaces, community centres, and green areas that are safe, inclusive, and accessible to everyone.
- Support cultural expression and diversity by developing culturally reflective spaces and support local art and cultural programs to celebrate diversity, enhance community pride, and foster a sense of belonging among residents.
- Create a program hub(s) of information regarding services, events, and programs that are free or low cost to users.

References:

1. **Tamarack Institute.** (2022). Building Community Resilience by Ending Working Poverty
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