

# Biography on northern nanaimo vancouver island british columbia

[Sociology](#), [Shopping](#)



## **Introduction**

The Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) contains a lovely harbor city on the east coast of central Vancouver Island in British Columbia. Nanaimo is the sixth largest city in British Columbia and is popular for its beauty, large variety of recreational opportunities, and shopping centres. It is the second largest urban city on the Island.

In 1891 the main part of Nanaimo is what is now considered to be the northern part of the City of Nanaimo (Map 1). In the 1890s north ward was the center for retail, industry. At that time the population was approximately 1300. (VIU, 2011)

In the modern world it sometimes seems that all roads in Vancouver Island lead to northern Nanaimo. The northern part of the City of Nanaimo has the most retail and service commercial development than any other part.

Woodgrove Centre, a megamall is located there. It is the largest shopping mall on central Vancouver Island. Many big box stores have located in the same area.

## **Discussion**

Urban Nodes. The Official Community Plan has proposed five “urban nodes” under the plan of a coordinated use and living area along the corridors that serve as “defined areas of concentrated urban use in the city”. (OCP, 2011).

The urban node in the northern area of Nanaimo has many of the big box retail stores where the two main highways join (19 and 19A). This area

contrasts with the harbor portion of the city which offers boutiques and cafes. Compared to the rest of Nanaimo the north also has more shopping opportunities. Most shopping is centered near Woodgrove Shopping Mall.

Figure 1 shows the five urban nodes and the corridors throughout Nanaimo. The Woodgrove area is depicted at the far left. The Economic Growth Development Plan, Part B (2011) defines the Woodgrove area's designated purpose as: "to support strategic economic development and to link commercial and industrial strategies to the land use and rural and environmental protection priorities of the region" (p. 19).

Figure 1. Nanaimo Urban Nodes and Corridor Concept (Plan Nanaimo, 2011, p. 31))

The most famous and popular shopping destination is the megamall Woodgrove Shopping Mall. Woodgrove sits where Nanaimo Parkway (#19) and the Island Highway (#19A) merge. Woodgrove is described as the "economic generator" because of the large commercial area which offers retail shopping opportunities, professional services as well as a variety of other personal services. (Economic Growth Development Plan, 2011)

A large influx of population is expected into northern Nanaimo to fill jobs because it is a shopping and resource area which attracts people from throughout Nanaimo and from the entire region. This is due to the easy highway access from both the north and south as well as quality shopping opportunities. The trend also impacts migrations of young working age people to the northern part of town to fill of jobs in retail and construction.

Residential. Figure 2 below shows northern Nanaimo on the left side. Look for the town named Rutherford. In order to deal with the movement of people to work in the area high level residential areas are allowed to develop in north Nanaimo. This means that high rise buildings

Figure 2. Planning & Neighborhood Areas. (Plan Nanaimo, 2011, pg. 61)

with over 150 apartment units are allowed in the area but they need to be mixed with both compatible land use and medium density development housing. Medium development housing refers to 50 to 150 units per hectare (Plan Nanaimo Part C, p. 36).

In terms of income the median income of residents of northern Nanaimo is higher than the provincial medium. The EDO explains, " In the northern Vancouver area the median income is 25% above the British Columbia (BC) (median income) compared to the south which is about 8% above the BC" (EDO, 2010).

Primary uses. Plan C of Plan Nanaimo (2011) addresses the goals, objectives and policies for the Urban Node known as Woodgrove. These include but are not restricted to the following major points.

Long term planning is needed for sustainable strategy in building housing. Plan Nanaimo encourages energy efficient housing construction (and construction in general). Residents will be encouraged to follow the reduction, reuse and recycling regime which will be introduced with a big promotion.

Plan Nanaimo also calls for the first planning step to be preparation of a Harm Reduction and Housing First Strategy. The objective is to make sure residents with needs that require assistance will have the resources they require nearby. This will call for a review of medical care services available for the elderly, mental health and addiction rehabilitation.

Corridor B of northern Nanaimo is scheduled for review and reconsideration in terms of the Zoning Bylaw every three years. A bylaw review of the corridors is required to evaluate the corridor's general upkeep and personal safety aspects. Bicycle routes and secure parking for bicycles are requirements for retail areas. Bus shelters will be improved along the major routes. Improvements will include " cover lighting and signage" (p. 163).

Another part of the infrastructure that will be included in the zoning review includes the storm water management design to make sure flash flooding isn't occurring and also to make sure that large areas of cement parking lots aren't causing runoff problems. Runoff problems could include, flash flooding, polluted water runoff and too much volume of water for the buffering natural areas to handle.

Plan C calls for the development of " a food system strategy" which includes " ongoing inventory of available program and community involvement in food production and food distribution" (p. 162).

The economy has moved into a " service-based knowledge economy." This means that the economy depends upon the " skills and innovation of the local workforce (EDO, 2010). From the above discussion on housing then it

should be no surprise that Construction is one of the skills which is in high demand. Construction licenses make up 20.9% of all the licenses for businesses in Nanaimo with Retail and Trade licenses coming in second with 14.4% in March 2010. (EDO, 2010)

## **Conclusion**

The Woodgrove urban node is recognized for its importance as a shopping and service area. The plan demands implementation of good design for high density residential areas and office development in the region. The urban areas of Woodgrove must be balanced with respect for natural areas such as forests, watersheds and cliffs. Natural buffers not only add aesthetically to the area but are also important as buffers from the environmental pollution of noise and traffic fumes. Part B defined this objective as “to support strategic economic development and to link commercial and industrial strategies to land use and rural and environmental protection priorities of the regions” (Plan Nanaimo, 2011, p. 19).

Northern Nanaimo, Woodgrove, and Rutherford figure prominently in the Regional Growth Strategy Goals. Goal number 6 is to ensure a “vibrant and sustainable economy” (Plan Nanaimo, 2011, p. 19). With the amount of retail development that has already taken place plus expected growth, thoughtful planning is necessary in order to meet Goal 6. The Woodgrove area is expected to grow in shopping opportunities but the large construction projects will need to be undertaken only after considering the balance of business oriented real estate and the ability to offer enough quality housing for residents. Other services such as schools and medical care need to be

easily available to residents. The residents will also need easy access to food markets.

Nanaimo has always been a beautiful area and an attractive place for visitors to spend their holidays and vacations. With careful implementation of wise land use planning the trend should continue. Not only will people visit for a day or two they will want to reside and work in Nanaimo.

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