



Nanaimo Accord: Backgrounder for Potential Partners

Working together to clarify shared ambitions, ground community decision-making, and move forward with purpose.

Introduction

Across Nanaimo, there's growing recognition that we need more than individual plans or institutional strategies. Local governments and anchor institutions are increasingly challenged to secure the resources required to meet community needs. Traditional structures, processes, and revenue streams often fall short, especially when competing for attention and investment from senior governments.

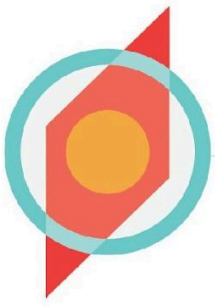
At the same time, Nanaimo is well-positioned. We have strong long-term planning, committed leadership, and the early foundations of collaboration already in place. What's missing is a shared framework - something that reinforces our interdependence, articulates our collective ambition, and signals readiness to act together on what matters most.

The Nanaimo Accord is proposed as that framework. It is not a policy instrument or a detailed action plan. It is a high-level commitment, a compass that orients effort, reflects shared values, and enables coordinated movement across sectors.

Catalyzed by the Mayor's Leaders' Table, the Accord invites civic institutions, Indigenous partners, businesses, not-for-profits, and community leaders to come together, not under a single authority but through a shared sense of direction. It is a call to align without uniformity, to act with purpose, and to show what's possible when we move like a system.

The Accord will offer a way to describe who we are becoming and how we will move forward together. It will set the conditions for investment, experimentation, and co-ownership. And it will not stand alone. A second component, the Prioritized Project Portfolio, will translate shared principles into visible, coordinated action.

What follows is an overview of the Nanaimo Accord: what it is, why it matters, and how this collective effort will take shape in practice.



Why This Work? Why Now?

Nanaimo is at a moment of possibility. Across sectors and communities, there's a shared sense that our city needs a stronger sense of collective direction; something that can help us move from reactive to intentional, from fragmented to aligned.

The Nanaimo Accord is *not* a top-down policy instrument or a formal change in governance. It's a cross-sector commitment to articulate shared values, to orient efforts, and to build a common foundation for coordinated action. The concept emerged from the Mayor's Leaders' Table, where participants recognized a need for something more integrative than any single organization's strategic plan. They saw the value in a framework capable of holding complexity, reflecting diverse perspectives, and still pulling in a shared direction.

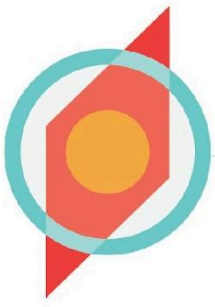
This is about building a city of cascading benefit, where the choices we make together produce momentum, belonging, and measurable improvement in quality of life. The Accord is one part vision, one part compass, and one part invitation - to participate, to experiment, and to co-create Nanaimo's next chapter.

What Is an Accord?

An "Accord" is a *non-legislative* statement of shared principle and ambition. It's *not* a bylaw or a legal document. Rather, it's a public commitment - a social contract - among diverse actors who choose to align their efforts voluntarily. The Nanaimo Accord is informed by global precedents such as:

- **The Freiburg Charter (Germany):** A brief, principles-based framework co-created by citizens, institutions, and planning authorities. It provides long-term strategic direction while allowing flexibility in implementation.
- **The Bristol One City Plan (UK):** A visioning and governance tool updated annually through partnership between civic, institutional, and community stakeholders.
- **The Victoria 3.0 Strategy (BC):** A made-in-BC example of an aspirational economic vision, developed collaboratively across sectors.

What sets the Nanaimo Accord apart is its grounding in regenerative, living-systems design. Rather than presenting a static roadmap, it recognizes that cities thrive when efforts across sectors are interconnected and mutually reinforcing. The Accord is intentionally adaptive. It grows through contribution, evolves through feedback, and strengthens the conditions for collective resilience.

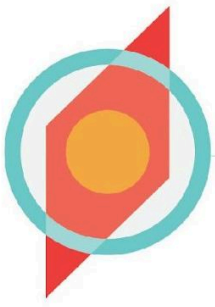


How the Accord Supports Existing Governance

The Nanaimo Accord does not replace formal plans or governing authorities. It complements them by offering a shared compass that helps diverse institutions orient their efforts toward common values and long-term ambitions. It provides a high-level frame that supports coordination without creating new obligations or bureaucracy.

For councils, boards, and executive teams, the Accord is a low-risk, high-value tool. It enhances existing strategies by clarifying shared direction, making collaboration easier to organize, and helping outside partners see where alignment and investment are possible. In a complex environment, it provides coherence without control and momentum without disruption.

By signing on to the Accord, we demonstrate our readiness to work with all partners - public, private, Indigenous, and community-based - to build a stronger Nanaimo under a common banner of shared values and coordinated action.



Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Is the Accord a replacement for strategic plans or policies?

A: Not at all. The Accord is intentionally high-level. It doesn't duplicate the work of official plans or policy documents; it adds coherence and direction above them, helping align existing work across institutions.

Q: Will this create new obligations or bureaucracy?

A: No. The Accord is voluntary. It does not impose new compliance requirements. It's a values-based commitment to collaboration and ambition, not a governance structure or administrative burden.

Q: What makes this different from a mission or vision statement?

A: A mission statement usually belongs to one organization. The Accord is co-owned. It's also action-oriented - it's as much about what we're going to do together as it is about what we believe.

Q: Who leads this work?

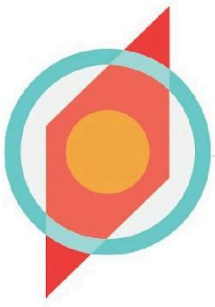
A: The Mayor's Leaders' Table is holding space for this process, not as the authority but as a convener of shared ambition. The Nanaimo Prosperity Corporation is supporting the work by providing facilitation and coordination to help translate shared vision into shared action. Success depends on broad participation and co-ownership. It is not about one organization taking the lead, but many moving together.

Q: What does it mean to "sign on" to the Accord?

A: Signing on to the Accord is a public expression of alignment with its values, principles, and shared ambitions. It signals your organization's intent to collaborate, contribute, and coordinate efforts with others across sectors. Endorsing the Accord does not create legal or financial obligations - it is a voluntary commitment to work together under a common banner. Accord signatories will be acknowledged as foundational partners in shaping and advancing Nanaimo's next chapter.

Q: Why now?

A: Because the need is clear and the opportunity is real. We're entering a decade that will shape the long-term trajectory of our city. Whether it's adapting to economic shifts, stewarding our natural environment, or ensuring inclusive prosperity, our best shot is to move together.



From Vision to Action: Introducing the Prioritized Project Portfolio

If the Nanaimo Accord is our shared compass, the Prioritized Project Portfolio is how we begin to move. It is the living translation of our collective vision, values, and guiding principles into meaningful action. It answers the question, “What do we do with this?” with concrete, coordinated steps forward.

This Portfolio is not another plan. It is a tool for alignment and acceleration. A curated collection of projects and strategies that reflect our ambitions, leverage our existing assets, and activate the conditions for long-term success.

This is not about adding new work to everyone's plates. It is about seeing our current efforts through a shared lens. The Portfolio helps us identify where we already have momentum, where new collaboration could unlock value, and where investment would generate the most meaningful return.

Why a Portfolio?

Cities are living systems. Their strength lies not in static strategies but in the flow of effort, energy, and ideas. The Portfolio is designed with that in mind. It evolves as we learn. It grows through contribution. It is shaped by experimentation and by the feedback loops of real-world outcomes.

Rather than treating projects as isolated bets, the Portfolio clusters and curates initiatives that reinforce one another. This approach creates cascading benefits and allows us to move with purpose, even in the face of complexity.

The Portfolio also sends a signal. It tells funders, partners, and citizens that we are serious about implementation. It translates ambition into investable action.

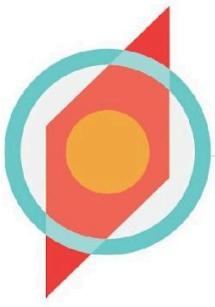
How We Choose What to Prioritize

The Portfolio is not exhaustive. It is intentionally selective. Projects and strategies are chosen based on their alignment with the Accord, their potential for system-wide benefit, and their readiness to move.

We look for initiatives that:

- Reflect the principles and identity outlined in the Accord
- Build on existing momentum or remove key barriers
- Demonstrate potential for cascading benefits across systems
- Invite participation from multiple sectors
- Are feasible, fundable, and measurable

This is how we move from scattered effort to collective progress.



Who Is Holding the Process?

The Mayor's Leaders' Table continues to provide the space for shared ambition and direction. It is a forum for coordination, not control.

The Nanaimo Prosperity Corporation is supporting the work by providing facilitation, coordination, and technical support throughout the process.

Success, however, depends on participation and shared stewardship. This is not the work of any one organization. It is a shared opportunity and a shared responsibility.

Why It Matters

The Accord gave us a shared compass. The Portfolio gives us a shared course of action. Together, they mark a shift in how we work as a community.

We are not just writing another strategy. We are designing the conditions for real change - guided by principle, grounded in practice, and shaped by what we learn along the way.

This is what it looks like to move like a living system. Not with rigid plans, but with coordinated action. Not alone, but together.