

The logo for Nanaimo Daily News, featuring the text "Nanaimo Daily News." in white serif font on a blue rectangular background.The logo for Harbour City Star, featuring the text "HARBOUR CITY STAR" in white sans-serif font on a red rectangular background.

Foundation plans ambitious project

Effort will allow community to weigh in on issues and decide where charitable dollars should go

[Spencer Anderson](#) / Daily News

April 4, 2014 12:00 AM

A Nanaimo charity group is planning a new project it hopes will raise its profile and allow the organization to become a benevolent force to be reckoned with.

The Nanaimo Foundation announced it was in the stages of producing an in-depth survey and report of Nanaimo's livability, including statistics on the city's standard of living, housing, health and safety for residents.

The project will be called 'Vital Signs,' and is modelled off existing reports prepared by the Victoria Foundation and Vancouver Foundation.

Nanaimo Foundation chairman Ted Carson said the project will allow the community at large to weigh in on what issues are important to them and where charitable dollars should go.

But he said the project also marks an ambitious new chapter for the foundation, which he said has fallen behind in name recognition in the city.

"I think basically we've been flying a bit lower under the radar than I would like," said Carson.

"A lot of people in Nanaimo don't know we exist."

Carson said the organization is financially healthy. But he added a lack of profile had hindered the organization from attracting gifts and donations from the estates of a growing number of seniors in the city, a source of revenue other organizations have tapped into.

"The amount and growth they've had in legacies and endowments is huge," Carson said.

"I'd like to see their money stay here."

However, the foundation has made strides in other areas.

It has a redesigned website, a new downtown office location and equipment and a new board of directors with high-profile members such as Tom Harris, one of Nanaimo's most successful business people.

He said the Vital Signs project, expected to be formally launched in the coming weeks, will build on the momentum.

"It'll be a measuring tool to see which areas the people of Nanaimo want to see their charitable dollars going," he said. "Nanaimo's a very giving community; they just need to have the opportunity."

With more funding in its pocket, Carson said the organization can offer a more wide-ranging alternative to support local causes.

He said possible recipients could include theatre and arts groups.

According to its website, the foundation currently manages \$3 million in eight different funds, although a statement notes the organization "is in the beginning stages of strategic growth."

Carson said the foundation has doled out approximately \$1.5 million over the past 20 years.

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