



## Strategic Priority 3: Thriving Children and Youth

### What we are trying to achieve: OBJECTIVES

- Advocate for and identify opportunities to Improve accessibility, affordability and quality of childcare in Delta.
- Increase access to child and youth programs and services that promote their healthy development.
- Improve Delta’s youth sense of belonging and access to services and public places in Delta.

A table of actions for each strategic priority can be found on page 63.

### Why it is important:

Children and youth are the decision makers of tomorrow and the future of our communities. They learn by observing and participating; hence, young people are greatly affected by their daily routines and the environments they interact with – the environment adults create for them. What will it look like to grow up in Delta in 10 years? How do we create a safe, nurturing and child and youth-friendly city where children thrive and which more young families will call their home? The seeds of change we plant today will be our harvest in years to come. Addressing children and youth needs in Delta is a shared responsibility and together with our community partners and senior levels of government, the City will work towards a more children and youth-friendly community.

| Delta children and youth by age group,<br>N=23,340, Census 2016 |              |            |
|---|--------------|------------|
| 0 to 4 years old  | <b>4,505</b> | <b>19%</b> |
| 5 to 9 years old  | <b>5,610</b> | <b>24%</b> |
| 10 to 14 years old  | <b>6,270</b> | <b>27%</b> |
| 15 to 19 years old  | <b>6,955</b> | <b>30%</b> |



## Thriving Children and Youth

### What we know: LOCAL CONTEXT

**Fewer Children:** Delta has fewer children now than ten years ago. According to Statistics Canada, in 2006, there were 18,135 children under the age of 14. Ten years later, this number has dropped to 16,385.

**Kindergarteners' Vulnerabilities:** In Delta 28% or 255 children were vulnerable on at least one area of development as measured by the Early Development Index in Wave 7 (2016–2019). North Delta East has the highest vulnerability rate at 35% and Tsawwassen is one of the neighbourhoods in the province with the fewest vulnerabilities (13%).

**After-School Activities:** In 2020-2021 Middle Years Development Instrument reports, the majority of Delta's Grade 4 students (78%) reported participating in some structured/supervised after-school activity twice or more a week (22% never participate in such activities).

- Only 15% participate in activities offered by youth organizations (Scouts, Boys and Girls Clubs, etc.), which is slightly lower than the average for all School Districts; for teens (Grade 7 and 8) this number was even lower and over 90% suggested they never participate in activities organized by a youth organization. Close to 30% of children and youth said they wish they could do more activities.
- Of those Grade 8 who wish to be doing additional activities, over 50% wanted to do more physical and/or outdoor activities and close to 25% wanted to do more activities at a community centre.<sup>34</sup>

**More Diverse Students:** The South Asian community is the largest visible minority group in Delta, but Delta's population is becoming increasingly diverse and it is important to develop policy interventions that support the needs of diverse children and youth.

**High School Completion Rates:** Delta School District has significantly higher school completion rates compared to other BC communities.<sup>35</sup>

| 2019-2020               | BC residents | Indigenous | Special Needs | All Students |
|-------------------------|--------------|------------|---------------|--------------|
| Delta                   | 96%          | 84%        | 89%           | 88%          |
| Typical range across BC | 81% - 91%    | 65% - 80%  | 60% - 76%     | 77% - 88%    |

### What we can build on: DELTA'S ASSETS

**Delta School District:** Delta's 24 elementary and seven secondary schools provide safe, culturally diverse and nurturing learning environments. DSD takes a holistic approach to student learning, which recognizes students' individual talents and the importance of community collaborations.

**A Culture of Collaboration:** Delta's Children and Youth Committee has been bringing together partners serving children and youth for the last 30 years.

**Municipal Supports and Services:** The City funds various community agencies to deliver services to children, youth and families. The City also offers preschool/playtime programs in all three of Delta's communities.

**The Mayor's Youth Council** was formed in 2019 to provide Council with input on issues affecting youth, increase education and awareness of local government in Delta's youth, and build future leaders.

**Delta's Child Care Strategy** was completed in 2020 and identified key strategic directions and recommendations to improve accessibility, affordability and quality of childcare in Delta.

## Thriving Children and Youth

### What we heard: CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

**Gaps in Services:** In the 2021 City of Delta survey of service providers, North Delta was identified as the most underserved area for children and youth in Delta; teenagers (13-15 year old) and youth (16-18 year old) were identified as the most underserved age groups in Delta. A gap in services for vulnerable youth was recognized as one of the most pronounced challenges, and service providers called for better community-wide coordination on this pressing issue. Consultations highlighted the desire for designated staff to advance youth issues city-wide.

**Youth Voices:** Delta youth, who participated in the 2021 City of Delta survey, would like to see more outdoor public spaces (82% of respondents); more job opportunities for youth, more recreational and sports activities; more indoor spaces to get together and more opportunities to learn life skills and participate in civic life.

**Parents Voices:** According to the 2015 DeltaKids survey<sup>36</sup>, Delta parents believe that their children feel welcome at Delta schools; however, parents are concerned about limited recreational/ sports programs available for children in Delta as well as limited opportunities for children and youth to make decisions that affect the whole community.

**Childcare Needs:** In Delta's Child Care Needs Assessment (2020), the state of childcare was described by parents, childcare providers and community partners as a significant community limitation; parents are struggling to afford and access quality child care and care providers are struggling to meet the needs of the community in an economically viable way. It was estimated that Delta would need to add additional 1,051 child care spaces in the next 10 years to reach the current Canadian average ratio per 100 children (27.2).<sup>37</sup>

**Persistent Problems:** Five years later, the challenges identified in the 2017 Social Profile are still prevalent in Delta, including inconsistent or decreased funding for specialized supports for children with different abilities; lack of accessible, low-cost space for programs and services throughout Delta and limited funding and persistent need for family services, mental health supports and outreach workers for agencies.



### StoryWalk® Promotes Physical Literacy in Delta

The Delta Children Youth Committee, in partnership with the City, Fraser Valley Regional Library, Delta Literacy, Delta School District and Rotary Clubs, brought the StoryWalk® initiative to all three communities in Delta. StoryWalk® was created by Anne Ferguson of Montpelier, Vermont and has been installed in 50 US states and 13 countries.

## FUN-iture Initiative

In 2020, the City of Delta initiated a street FUN-iture program. Evidence shows that small urban greenspaces and pop-up parks build more connected communities and provide social benefits to residents, including opportunities for social interactions, physical and mental wellness, reductions in “screen time”, and more overall time spent outdoors.

