

DESTINATION GREATER
VICTORIA

Sustainability Strategy 2024



Destination Greater Victoria Sustainability Strategy 2024

Destination Greater Victoria recognizes, with respect, that its office is located on the Territory of the Łək'wəŋən peoples, now known as the Songhees Nation and Esquimalt Nation. Destination Greater Victoria, as the official DMO for Greater Victoria, also respectfully recognizes that it operates on the Territory of the ƱSÁNEĆ Nations (ƱJOŁŁP (Tsartlip), BOŁÉĆEN (Pauquachin), SŁÁUTƱ, (Tsawout) ƱSIKEM (Tseycum) and MÁLEXEL (Malahat), and the Sc'ianew (Beecher Bay), T'Sou-ke, and Pacheedaht Nations.

DESTINATION GREATER VICTORIA'S VISION STATEMENT

Destination Greater Victoria (DGV) will be internationally recognized as a leader in sustainable tourism development, ensuring Greater Victoria remains one of the top destinations in the world.

DGV'S SUSTAINABILITY JOURNEY SO FAR



Sustainability and sustainable tourism have been priorities for DGV for many years. The priority of being recognized globally as a leader in sustainable tourism development, with an acknowledgement that this is essential to ensure Greater Victoria remains one of the world's top destinations, has long been enshrined within DGV's vision statement. Throughout DGV's last two strategic plans, 2017-2021 and 2022-2026, the organization's commitment to sustainable tourism has been constantly elevated, with recognition that making sustainability a strategic and operational priority not only aligns with shared community values but is also good business.



IMPACT SUSTAINABILITY TRAVEL & TOURISM CONFERENCE



In January 2018 DGV and partners launched the first IMPACT Sustainability Travel & Tourism Conference in response to the rapidly growing need for collaborative dialogue on innovation and tourism’s contribution to a sustainable future. The goal of the IMPACT conference is to align the tourism industry and other stakeholders and communities touched by tourism behind a vision to achieve economic, social, and environmental sustainability. The conference is now a major annual event with high profile globally and is recognized in Canada and increasingly worldwide as the definitive forum to learn about sustainability and regenerative tourism developments and share insights and experiences.

CARBON NEUTRALITY



Destination Greater Victoria recognizes that its leadership and actions can set the tone for industry. Accordingly, DGV has been working diligently to reduce and subsequently completely offset its own carbon footprint. DGV was certified “carbon friendly” by Ostrom Climate and has achieved certified carbon neutrality in February 2021. In 2022 and 2023 DGV has been certified as a “carbon positive” business, meaning we have offset further carbon emissions than we have created through our business activities. As such, DGV is the only major North American Destination Organization to become a certified carbon neutral operation. This is not only aligned with community expectations but also reflects the values of our members, including several major hotels, Harbour Air, Eagle Wing Whale & Wildlife Tours, and others who are operating carbon neutral as standard business practice and have been doing so for many years.

SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE



A common disparity in sustainability efforts is reconciling how targets for sustainability, environment regeneration, and climate action created by governments and related bodies may be best used to mobilize industry and facilitate stakeholders working together to achieve the targets constructively. Targets need to be translated into achievable actions. DGV found that

more coordination was required for industry to achieve its sustainability goals and, importantly, enable a formal forum where governments at all levels and industry can interact and collaborate to drive our sustainability agenda in partnership. Similarly, many tourism businesses are pursuing sustainability initiatives independently with significant success, and there is a need to capture this inspiring work and build capacity to move forward jointly and systematically.

Accordingly, in 2019 DGV established a Sustainability Committee within its governance structure to advise about sustainability issues and opportunities for the tourism sector while also helping to coordinate sustainable tourism initiatives within Greater Victoria. The first meetings were held in 2020. The Committee is developing a program of priorities and work for the years ahead, as one of the central components of DGV's current Strategic Plan. A major deliverable in this regard is supporting DGV's strategic objective to achieve and maintain a world-leading third-party sustainability accreditation, which DGV achieved in 2023, gaining Biosphere Certification for Greater Victoria. In January 2024, the Sustainability Advisory Committee transitioned from being a sub-committee to reporting directly to the Board of Directors as a full DGV standing committee.

MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS



As committed to through DGV's Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion strategy, DGV is dedicated to ensuring that our marketing practices reflect the diversity of our community and the visitors we aim to welcome. We are committed to regularly reviewing our marketing materials, including advertisements, promotional videos, and website imagery, to ensure diverse representation. In doing so, we strive to authentically showcase the vibrant tapestry of individuals and cultures living in and visiting our region. Our ongoing efforts in this area aim to create a more inclusive and welcoming environment for all.

DGV also recognizes the importance of amplifying sustainability successes and stories from our community and the leadership of our membership-based organization. This includes leveraging our marketing resources to tell the story of a destination that embraces regenerative approaches to tourism. By attracting visitors seeking sustainable options, this ensures a market for sustainable tourism products and the financial stability that is necessary for DGV members to invest in sustainability.

SUSTAINABLE EVENTS



DGV manages sales and marketing for the Victoria Conference Centre, a carbon-neutral facility with Biosphere Certification and BOMA Platinum certification. Business events play a central role in DGV's year-round strategy for a vibrant visitor economy. As we continue to bolster business events in Greater Victoria, our commitment extends to demonstrating global leadership in sustainable business events and conferences. This not only aligns with local values but also proves advantageous for sustainable business growth.

DGV actively supports conferences in adopting sustainability through initiatives such as the Green Events Guide and impactful partnerships with local nonprofits and charitable organizations. Our dedication to sustainability extends to the entire business events supply chain, promoting waste reduction and embracing circular economy principles.

To ensure that the positive impacts of business events go beyond economic benefits and encompass positive social and environmental outcomes, DGV is dedicated to developing an enhanced Legacy Program for Business Events.

EQUITY, DIVERSITY, INCLUSION & ACCESSIBILITY



An important facet of our sustainability work includes advancing equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility. Though these principles have always been at the core of our organization, our first policy iteration was drafted in 2022. Since then, we have established an internal EDI committee to carry out this work continuously throughout our organization. This committee will help keep provide accountability and will assist in tracking DGV's efforts in this area. DGV aims to continue EDI staff training, foster partnerships within the community, and ensure our marketing reflects the diversity of our community to foster a welcoming visitor experience. In doing this work, we also hope to increase employee satisfaction levels and engagement resulting in diverse perspectives, new ideas, and innovation within our organization.

BIOSPHERE CERTIFICATION & PROGRAM



At DGV we recognize the importance of transparency through third-party verification of our sustainability claims. With this in mind, we are committed to maintaining a third-party certification on behalf of Greater Victoria. This certification signifies legitimacy in our sustainability work, allowing DGV to position ourselves as a sustainable destination in an authentic way. DGV plans to maintain and improve upon our Biosphere Certification. The Biosphere Certification is based directly on the United Nations 17 Sustainable Development Goals, helping DGV remain aligned with global sustainability goals through measurable progress.

Along with maintaining certification at the Destination level, DGV has an active program offering access and support for any member business to participate in and obtain Biosphere Certification. Through this program, DGV staff provide account set-up, platform training, and action planning assistance to all member businesses interested in the Biosphere Certification. By providing access and assistance for this certification, DGV provides members with a roadmap for sustainable development within their own businesses. These actions result in a compounding effect towards sustainable development at the micro and macro levels within the destination.

GLOBAL DESTINATION SUSTAINABILITY (GDS) INDEX



As part of Destination Canada's Sustainable Events Strategy, destinations across Canada were encouraged to sign up and participate in the Global Destination Sustainability (GDS) Index starting in 2022. DGV participated in the GDS Index for the first time in 2023, obtaining the second highest score in North American. Participating in the GDS index keeps DGV at the forefront of destination stewardship on a global scale, helping to position Greater Victoria as a world class leader in sustainability.

DGV plans on continuing to prioritize progress within our GDS Index score. This can only be achieved through strategic action planning and execution taking place on a consistent and ongoing basis. Progress also requires close partnerships with key stakeholders, such as the City of Victoria, in whom our destination relies for a portion of our sustainability progress. By prioritizing continued progress on our GDS Index score, we can prioritize destination stewardship and regeneration in our work.

REPORTING



DGV's sustainability performance will be measured and reported publicly, through the Sustainability Committee, DGV's Board of Directors, and published updates. Measurable targets, including carbon neutrality and numbers of Biosphere Committed and Certified members will be tracked and reported on through DGV's organizational and employee Balance Scorecards. The Circular Economy Strategy, once developed, will include consideration of new environmental and circularity KPIs.

THE LINK BETWEEN SUSTAINABILITY, COMPRESSION AND SEASONALITY



The concepts of sustainability, compression and seasonality interlink. To improve performance on environmental sustainability, significant investments are required. Over recent years many tourism businesses in Greater Victoria have made sizeable investments in sustainability initiatives, such as hotel retrofits, motor coach fleet modernization, alternative fuel systems, and innovative propulsion systems (for example, Harbour Air's electric aircraft) which carry investment risks. A sound revenue model is needed to support this. Business operators are typically comfortable making sustainability investments if they can foresee year-round revenues, which is underpinned by achieving significant future meetings,

conference and sports business on the books. These books of business then drive compression to reduce seasonal variability in business and build a predictable year-round revenue cycle. These links are illustrated in the diagram above.

POLICY ALIGNMENT AND CONTEXT

DGV's sustainability efforts are aligned to the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Through the Biosphere Certification program, DGV will work towards further alignment with these goals, in the spirit of continuous improvement.

Partnership and collaboration are key pillars of DGV's operating and governance model. Through the creation of DGV's 2022-2026 Strategic Plan, stakeholders from across sectors including the private sector and public sector, were engaged and the plan received widespread support. Further, these policies and directions were established in the context of existing sustainability, tourism and economic development strategies of the City of Victoria, Capital Regional District, Province of British Columbia, and the Federal Government of Canada. DGV also works in close alignment with Destination BC, and their sustainable tourism efforts. Additionally, this sustainability strategy is in direct alignment with the City of Victoria's official community plan.

This strategy is to be considered a living document which accompanies the 2022-2026 Strategic Plan, and one that can be updated periodically to reflect new opportunities and changing circumstances.

SUSTAINABILITY GOALS & ACTION PLAN

To work towards DGV's vision of being internationally recognized as a leader in sustainable tourism, DGV must work collaboratively and strategically. This includes incorporating sustainability throughout all operational areas of the organization and embedding sustainability in workplans and operational priorities. Additionally, DGV maintains high-level strategic goals which allow for steady and measurable progress towards sustainability.




















Last updated: April 25, 2024

Approved by:













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Paul Nursey, CEO


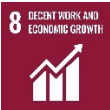



















DESTINATION GREATER VICTORIA

Goal	Description	Alignment with SDGs Targeted	Tracking & Measurement
Maintain Biosphere Certification for Greater Victoria.	Biosphere Certification aligns directly with all 17 SDGs. Maintaining our certification signifies alignment with all SDGs. This certification was created by the Responsible Tourism Institute, which follows the UNWTOs analysis and indicators of the UN 2030 Agenda. DGV has led the work at a destination level to achieve certification by making progress against the 169 targets outlined by the UN, as they related to Destinations. Biosphere Certification requires that destinations undertake, and complete activities related to each SDG to maintain certification.	                	Submit Biosphere evidence and actions through the Biosphere platform for our annual audit.
Support DGV members in adopting sustainable business practices and circular business models, including through the Biosphere Certification program.	Through onboarding members and guiding them through to certification, DGV is assisting with sustainability education for businesses in our community, helping to foster innovation and sustainable economic growth.	   	Track the number of businesses that achieve Biosphere Committed and Biosphere Certified status. In line with our balance scorecard target, assist 22 additional members in becoming Biosphere Committed in 2024.

DESTINATION GREATER VICTORIA

Goal	Description	Alignment with SDGs Targeted	Tracking & Measurement
Reduce DGV's corporate carbon footprint and achieve carbon neutral certification annually.	By reducing our carbon footprint, we are reducing our overall impact on climate change. This is accomplished through reduction methods as well as carbon sequestration projects.	   	Calculate and offset scope 1, 2 and 3 carbon emissions to maintain carbon neutrality. Use these calculations to set corporate carbon reduction targets.
Foster a circular economy at scale in an urban destination through the development of a circular economy strategy.	Fostering a circular economy helps increase efficiencies along all value chains, designing out waste and limiting the need for further resource extraction. This helps fight climate change through changing consumption patterns and can only be done through strong partnerships within our Destination.	    	Create a completed Circular Economy Strategy Greater Victorias visitor economy by the end on 2024. Develop and launch a pilot project using this strategy in 2024.
Include sustainability targets and KPIs within Balanced Scorecard tracking and report results publicly.	Establishing measurable targets allow us to measure our efforts at the local economic level. This is included in our organizational governance structure, helping hold us accountable to the goals we set for ourselves. Transparency through accessible information allows us to share knowledge and progress on our efforts with all stakeholders.	  	Report on and post all balanced scorecard tracking and results to our website on a yearly basis.







DESTINATION GREATER VICTORIA

Goal	Description	Alignment with SDGs Targeted	Tracking & Measurement
Inspire action for sustainability through sharing best practices, storytelling, and events including the IMPACT Sustainability Travel and Tourism conference.	Through collaboration and education, we are able to bring together industry professionals to share innovative ideas around tourism and sustainability. These activities result in sustainable innovation in destinations globally along with sustainable economic growth.	     	Host the IMPACT Conference annually. Develop programming to support DGV members in adopting sustainable practices.
Demonstrate global leadership in terms sustainable business events and conferences, including through the Green Events Guide and an enhanced legacy program.	Sustainable events help to educate while providing sustainable economic growth to the destination. Incorporating a legacy plan and green events planning aids in limiting food waste and ensuring positive social, environmental, and economic impacts from events.	      	Update and enhance the Green Events Guide in 2024. Create and implement an Events Impact and Legacy Program for future conferences and events held at the Victoria Conference Centre by 2025.
Maintain BC Green Business Certification and continually improve sustainability of DGV's corporate operations, including waste reduction and carbon footprint.	The BC Green Business certification includes sustainability in the following areas: building & operations, waste, water, transportation, purchasing & products, social, and climate action. By maintaining this certification while also reducing our carbon footprint, a large majority of the SDGs are targeted through measurable action.	       	Improve BC Green Business score by at least 1 point every year.

DESTINATION GREATER VICTORIA

Goal	Description	Alignment with SDGs Targeted	Tracking & Measurement
Support the sustainability objectives and strategies of our government and tourism partners, including the City of Victoria, District of Saanich, and Destination BC.	It is important for DGV as a DMO to align with the efforts put forth through our local governing bodies, which reflect community values and priorities. By aligning with their strategic objectives, we help stimulate positive outcomes through innovative thinking and build more resilient communities.	    	Align DGVs Sustainability Strategy with Zero Waste Victoria and Clean BC's action plans. Inform Members of new opportunities and strategies adopted by government partners to improve social, economic, and environmental sustainability in Victoria through our Newsletter and social media channels.
Enhance organizational equity by creating and publicly circulating an EDI policy.	By establishing an equity, diversity, and inclusion policy and tracking performance we will help foster deeper equality within our organizational structure and the Destination as a whole.	  	Create, circulate, and implement an EDI policy. Review and update this policy on an yearly basis.
Establish and maintain an EDI committee within the organization.	An EDI committee will assist with implementing and updating our EDI policy and will work to further equity, diversity, and inclusion work within our organization. This also includes training staff in these areas on an annual basis.	   	Create an EDI committee. Track and report on the committee's achievements as they relate to the EDI policy.

DESTINATION GREATER VICTORIA

Goal	Description	Alignment with SDGs Targeted	Tracking & Measurement
Participate in the Global Destination Sustainability (GDS) Index on behalf of Greater Victoria and work towards improving our score.	The DGV Team will prioritize progressing our GDS Index score year over year through continued collaboration across departments and between important stakeholders within our Destination. We will work to push forward in areas of possible improvement in all departments of DGV with facilitation from the Sustainability Team.	     	Submit evidence to the GDS Index on yearly basis and improve our GDS Index score year over year.

Appendix 1

Sustainability Policy for Destination Greater Victoria

DGV's Vision Statement

Destination Greater Victoria will be internationally recognized as a leader in sustainable tourism development, ensuring Greater Victoria remains one of the top destinations in the world.

Purpose

At Destination Greater Victoria, we are committed to sustainable tourism practices that benefit the environment, the local community, and visitors alike. This policy outlines our principles and objectives for sustainability and serves as a guide for our organization's actions and decisions.

Policy Principles

Destination Greater Victoria is committed to operating in alignment with local community values and to fostering a tourism economy that provides shared benefit for residents, businesses, and visitors.

Environmental Responsibility - We recognize that tourism can have a significant impact on the environment, and we are committed to minimizing our ecological footprint and supporting regenerative tourism. We will promote circular and sustainable business practices, reduce waste, conserve resources, and support the protection and restoration of the natural beauty of our region.

Social Responsibility – We aim to enhance the well-being of the local community by supporting local businesses, creating employment opportunities, and promoting cultural diversity. DGV will play an active role in the community and have a positive impact.

Economic Responsibility - We seek to drive economic growth in a sustainable manner, creating long-term benefits for the local community.

Circular Economy – DGV will work to foster a circular economy at scale, demonstrating the role a DMO can play in aiding the transition to a circular tourism economy.

UN Sustainable Development Goals

Destination Greater Victoria is committed to furthering the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through our policies, practices, and partnerships. DGV aligns our work to these goals through the Biosphere Certification program, which is founded upon and measured against the UN 2030 Agenda and the 17 UN SDGs. Biosphere Certification requires continuous improvement, and in that spirit, DGV will implement our Biosphere Certification action plan on an ongoing basis.

Alignment With Business Objectives

Sustainability is integral to Destination Greater Victoria's 2022-2026 Strategic Plan. DGV's sustainability policy is closely aligned with our business objectives, which include promoting Greater Victoria as a sustainable tourism destination and enhancing the visitor experience. DGV recognizes that sustainable practices are critical to achieving our goals, and we are committed to incorporating sustainability into all aspects of our business.

Continuous Improvement

We are committed to continuous improvement in all aspects of our sustainability performance. To achieve this, we will regularly review our sustainability practices, measure our progress, and seek feedback from stakeholders. We will use this information to identify areas for improvement and implement initiatives to enhance our sustainability performance. We will also work with our partners to develop and implement sustainable tourism practices that benefit the local community and protect and restore the environment. DGV will train staff on sustainability programming and best practices, in alignment with DGV's Sustainability Training Policy.

Policy Review

We will periodically review our sustainability policy to ensure it remains current and relevant. This review will involve an assessment of our progress towards meeting our sustainability objectives, as well as an evaluation of emerging sustainability issues and opportunities. We will also seek input from stakeholders, including local communities, businesses, and visitors, to ensure our policies and practices are meeting their needs and expectations.

Last updated: May 12, 2023

Approved by:

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Paul Nursey, CEO

Appendix 2

Destination Greater Victoria – Sustainability Training Policy

DGV Vision Statement

Destination Greater Victoria will be internationally recognized as a leader in sustainable tourism development, ensuring Greater Victoria remains one of the top destinations in the world.

Commitment to Sustainability

Destination Greater Victoria works to be a global leader in sustainable tourism. DGV's commitment to sustainability is core to our operations, marketing, and strategic priorities. As a demonstration of our commitment to sustainability, and in the spirit of continuous improvement, DGV maintains certification as a Climate Positive organization, Biosphere Certification for Greater Victoria, and Green Business Certification.

Approach to Training

Destination Greater Victoria will include the Sustainability Policy, and Sustainable Procurement Policy in the Employee Handbook which is reviewed with every employee when they are onboarded. DGV will offer training on sustainability best practices, and workshops for employees, board and committee members, related to DGV's sustainability programming, policies and certifications. For example, DGV offers workshops on the Biosphere Certification program for DGV members and staff. Sustainability training for employees will be offered on an ongoing basis, at least annually.

Last updated: May 12, 2023

Approved by:

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Paul Nursey, CEO

Appendix 3

Destination Greater Victoria Sustainable Procurement Policy

Statement Destination Greater Victoria recognizes that every purchase can be leveraged to create economic, environmental, and social impacts.

By adopting a circular and sustainable procurement policy, Destination Greater Victoria demonstrates its commitment to sustainability, promotes responsible business practices, and contributes to the long-term health and well-being of the communities it serves.

Destination Greater Victoria is committed to fairness, openness, and transparency in its procurement practices. For purchases with a valuation of over \$10,000 or for contracts that span multiple years, DGV will utilize a fair and open tendering procurement process.

All significant external suppliers with standing contracts will undergo annual contract and scope reviews, while the contract relationship itself will be assessed after three years of collaboration to ensure continued effectiveness. Notable examples of such suppliers include partnerships with publishers, marketing and communications agencies, and human resources support.

These guidelines are to be considered alongside and balanced with the need to equitably support DGV members through DGV purchasing.

Definition of Sustainable Procurement

Sustainable procurement is the process of procuring goods and services in a way that considers environmental, social, and economic factors. This includes reducing waste, minimizing carbon footprint, promoting fair labour practices, and supporting local businesses.

Priority Areas for Sustainable Procurement

Destination Greater Victoria recognizes that the most significant environmental impacts of our procurement activities include energy consumption, waste generation, and greenhouse gas emissions.

Our priority areas for sustainable procurement include:

- Reducing waste and increasing reuse, repair, and recycling
- Reducing energy consumption and promoting energy efficiency
- Supporting local and regional suppliers
- Promoting sustainable transportation options
- Promoting fair labour practices and ethical sourcing
- Supporting circular business models

Sustainable Procurement Guidelines

Factors to consider when making procurement decisions:

- Prioritizing suppliers that are local, particularly suppliers who are members of Destination Greater Victoria.
- Suppliers that can demonstrate a commitment to sustainability through 3rd party certifications, or publicly stated commitments will be given preference.
- Purchase decisions will consider a circular economy lens including life cycle cost, environmental impact, and social impact.
- Purchases will prioritize locally and regionally sourced products and services to support the local economy.
- Efforts will be made to reduce waste and increase recycling in all procurement activities.
- Indigenous owned suppliers will receive favourable consideration.
- Suppliers will be expected to employ good labour practices, including worker health and safety, non-discrimination, and fair wages.

Monitoring and Reporting

Destination Greater Victoria will monitor the impacts of its sustainable procurement performance and will report progress as part of its annual BC Green Business Certification process. The adoption of new KPIs related to sustainable procurement will be considered as part of its Circular Economy strategy.

Continuous Improvement

Destination Greater Victoria will continually review and update the sustainable procurement policy to reflect new best practices, emerging technologies, and changing priorities.

Date last updated: May 10, 2023

Approved by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul Nursey', with a stylized, flowing script.

Paul Nursey, CEO