



Greater Victoria 2025-2035 Destination Master Plan

DESTINATION GREATER
VICTORIA

Territorial Acknowledgement

Destination Greater Victoria recognizes, with respect, that its office is located on the Territory of the Lək̓ʷəŋən peoples, now known as the Songhees Nation and Xwsepsum Nation. Destination Greater Victoria, as the official destination marketing organization for Greater Victoria, also respectfully recognizes that it operates on the Territory of the W̱SÁNEĆ Nations (W̱JOLÉLP (Tsartlip), BOKÉĆEN (Pauquachin), S̱ÁUTW, (Tsawout) W̱SIKEM (Tseycum) and MÁLEXEL (Malahat)), and the Sc'ianew (Beecher Bay), T'Sou-ke, and Pacheedaht Nations.

Table of Contents

Territorial Acknowledgement	2
Message from the CEO	4
Executive Summary	5
An Envable Destination	9
Reconciliation and Indigenous Tourism	11
Community Input	12
Approach and Methodology	13
Regional Collaboration and Sub-Regional Tourism Planning	14
Major Community Infrastructure Initiatives	15
2023 Futures Study	21
Market Analysis	22
Market Overview	23
Situational Analysis	27
Destination Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT)	28
Victoria Conference Centre Development Analysis	29
Greater Victoria Hotel Sector Analysis	37
Stakeholder Engagement	41
Resident Survey	45
DestinationNEXT Assessment	49
Visioning Workshop	53
Overarching Key Findings	54
Destination Vision	56
Destination Master Plan Strategic Goals & Objectives	58
Strategic Goals	59
Strategic Goal #1: Enhance Tourism Infrastructure	60
Strategic Goal #2: Create New Attractions, Events, & Experiences	61
Strategic Goal #3: Emphasize Placemaking	62
Strategic Goal #4: Augment Connectivity & Mobility	63
Strategic Goal #5: Ensure Continued Sustainability & Innovation	64
Next Steps	65
Destination Greater Victoria's Role in the Destination Master Plan	66
Next Steps and Monitoring & Measuring Success	67
Imagine It's 2035 in Greater Victoria	68
Acknowledgements	69
Destination Master Plan Contributors	70
Contributing Stakeholders	71
Appendices	72

Message from the CEO

It is my pleasure to present to you Destination Greater Victoria's 10-year Destination Master Plan. This comprehensive document encapsulates our vision, strategies, and commitment to the sustainable growth and development of our destination over the next decade.

The visitor economy in Greater Victoria employs thousands of people and generates billions in economic impact. From year-round conference business to leisure travel to sports tourism, every visitor counts and adds to the vibrancy of our community. Collectively, the travel, tourism, hospitality, and event industries are a major economic pipeline with the ability to support local people, businesses, and organizations in the region.

In today's dynamic and evolving tourism landscape, it is more important than ever that we chart a clear course that not only preserves the unique elements of our destination but also fosters innovation and resilience. Through extensive collaboration with our partners, stakeholders, and community members, we have crafted a roadmap that addresses the challenges and highlights the opportunities that lie ahead.

Throughout this plan you will read about initiatives and action items related to tourism infrastructure, attractions, events and experiences, stewardship and placemaking, connectivity and mobility, and sustainability and innovation. I hope you find the pages that follow informative, interesting, and inspiring.

The journey towards sustainable tourism requires steadfast dedication, strategic foresight, and unwavering determination; it begins with a solid plan.

Thank you to all who have contributed to the development of this Destination Master Plan. I look forward to working together to turn this vision into reality. I am confident that our collective efforts will pave the way for a vibrant, inclusive, and thriving destination for generations to come.



Paul Nursey

CEO, Destination Greater Victoria





Executive Summary

Under the leadership of Destination Greater Victoria (DGV), this Destination Master Plan was initiated to create further alignment between tourism stakeholders, industry partners, and residents over the next decade towards increasing sustainable visitor engagement and spending that benefits Greater Victoria.

Greater Victoria is already extremely well positioned within the tourism landscape, with visitation as one of the region's top economic drivers. Pre-pandemic, Greater Victoria welcomed 4.2 million visitors annually, generating \$2.3 billion in economic outputs, contributing almost \$400 million towards taxes, and supporting more than 22,000 jobs (Source: Economic Impact of Tourism in Greater Victoria, BC: InterVISTAS, 2018). Growing the impact of visitor expenditure in Greater Victoria will benefit the broader community and its residents. However, a plan is only as good as its execution.

Advancing this Destination Master Plan will require commitments by ambitious, thoughtful, and collaboratively minded people across all sectors who want to champion and lead specific initiatives proposed in the plan. As a plan for the next decade, it needs leaders today with the will to build coalitions of people who are passionate about the region's future.

Five primary objectives underpinned development of this Destination Master Plan. These were established early in the project to define shared goals and provide clarity of the scope of work. The objectives were to:

1. Ensure an inclusive process that engages current as well as new and non-traditional stakeholders,
2. Generate big ideas to improve the visitor experience, target new audiences, and set a course for sustainable, responsible growth,
3. Address conference facility needs, hotel development, transportation links, harbourside activation, and other infrastructure opportunities,
4. Develop an aligned road map that speaks to and will respond to the needs of residents, visitors, and stakeholders, and
5. Undertake a detailed multi-modal transportation assessment.

Objective 1 is critical to the success with the remaining objectives as well as the entire plan. Objectives 2, 3, and 4 connect the needs and wants of the community with destination, industry, product, and experience development opportunities that will support building a region focused on the interests of residents and visitors for generations to come. Objective 5 addresses how multi-modal transportation can best connect across the community and help to support the Plan.

During a year of community engagement through focus groups, workshops, questionnaires, individual interviews, and a resident survey, the community articulated the direction it wishes to take and the opportunities to pursue. It is now up to everyone in the community to collaborate and invest in the shared priorities in order to capitalize on the many opportunities across Greater Victoria during the decade ahead.

While some engagement with local First Nations informed this plan, there is an acknowledged need for ongoing meaningful consultation to guide future updates and initiatives, ensuring effective plan implementation. Destination Greater Victoria respects the sovereignty of local First Nations in deciding whether, how, and when they wish to share their knowledge and culture with visitors. As an organization, DGV is committed to holding space, and making itself ready as an organization, to work with local First Nations respectfully and effectively if and when the Nations elect to participate in further development or implementation of this plan, and more broadly in the tourism industry. Reflecting this commitment, Destination Greater Victoria has signed the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada (ITAC) 2030 Indigenous Tourism Pledge and will work to ensure Greater Victoria's visitor economy benefits local First Nations and helps to promote Indigenous businesses.

Through extensive research, this regional plan considers the priorities of the municipalities within Greater Victoria, while respecting the importance of downtown Victoria's globally iconic Inner Harbour to the region. A vibrant and busy downtown at high capacity will benefit the entire region by creating compression and therefore the need to disperse visitors throughout the region. This plan also aims to support the objectives of the municipalities of Greater Victoria by signaling the opportunity and importance of developing experiences that will drive visitor demand as well as the supply that will accommodate the needs of visitors to each area of the region.

Founded on the shared, long-term vision for Greater Victoria to be recognized as a global leader in sustainable tourism and events, delivering world-class experiences while thriving in alignment with local community values and the natural environment, the strategic goals and initiatives identified in this Destination Master Plan are:

1 Enhance Tourism Infrastructure

In Greater Victoria, enhanced tourism infrastructure will serve visitors and residents year-round by reducing or dampening seasonal fluctuations in visitation and business, thereby building a more stable and balanced visitor economy. Importantly, this will also address aging of community infrastructure that is vital to the visitor economy, the destination's brand, and reputation, and for residents.

The most significant opportunities for tourism infrastructure in Greater Victoria are related to the conference centre, hotel inventory, and Inner Harbour activation.

- a. Revitalize and activate the Inner Harbour, invest in aging harbour infrastructure, and support the redevelopment of Ship Point, including an amphitheatre for event hosting.
- b. Incorporate more seating areas and multi-purpose gathering spaces, particularly downtown and at the Inner Harbour.
- c. Develop and action a plan to ensure meetings and conference facilities align with the needs of our dynamic region and are future-proof to ensure Greater Victoria remains competitive in this key market.
- d. Develop more meeting and hosting spaces throughout the downtown and adjoining areas.
- e. Develop hotel options for a diverse range of traveller types and price points, including family-friendly and extended stay options.
- f. Develop full-service hotel options downtown and across the region.
- g. Develop local accommodations (bed & breakfasts, small independent hotels, inns, farm stays, and retreats) to complement regional attractions.
- h. Actively engage in efforts to ensure the Royal BC Museum stays in the Inner Harbour.

**10
YEARS**

This plan is an invitation for engagement and participation, and a starting point for the next 10 years.

2

Create New Attractions, Events and Experiences

New attractions, events, and experiences become drivers for visitation that support year-round visitation and can drive overnight stays in off-peak periods. They often serve as incentives for meetings and conference delegates to extend their stays. These can also be important opportunities to ensure the visitor economy benefits local First Nations, reflecting a desire to include the Nations as key participants in the visitor economy while helping to promote businesses that are Indigenous owned and/or operated. Some local Nations have developed tourism offerings and others have shown interest in exploring opportunities.

- a. Develop a regional event strategy that builds alignment and collaboration between events in Greater Victoria to create stronger draws for visitors.
- b. Attract or develop a signature annual winter event that extends to neighbouring municipalities and showcases the people, history, and talent of residents (such as festivals based on music, Indigenous history and/or art).
- c. Develop and promote activations in downtown Victoria, including lighting shows, pop-up concerts, artwork displays, or similar events.
- d. Support in principle the shared vision of the Xwsepsum Nation, Songhees Nation, and the Maritime Museum of BC to establish the Future of History Project in the Inner Harbour.
- e. Support performing arts companies with promotion, pop-up performances, cruise excursion performances, packaging, and advocacy.
- f. Advocate to provincial and federal governments for competitive bid funds.
- g. Add or enhance all-season outdoor hiking, biking, and kayaking trails.
- h. The Greater Victoria Sport Tourism Commission will collaborate with local governments and other partners to conduct a regional sports infrastructure gap analysis and develop a targeted action plan.



3

Emphasize Stewardship and Placemaking

Improving placemaking brings opportunities for community engagement and regional collaboration. In Greater Victoria, significant opportunities in placemaking include ensuring Indigenous culture and place are reflected, ensuring social challenges are addressed in partnership with the agencies that are mandated to lead those efforts, and ensuring agritourism opportunities are developed to celebrate and highlight the capabilities of the land.

- a. Activate regional trails by creating a public art trail that links downtown Victoria with neighbouring municipalities.
- b. Partner with local Indigenous artists to lead or support placemaking initiatives.
- c. Continue to support initiatives related to social issues, safety, and homelessness, particularly in downtown Victoria.
- d. Develop and promote unique neighbourhoods and their identities throughout the region with tourism demand generators (art and cultural offerings, events, local restaurants, craft beverages, local markets).
- e. Support local farmers to build capacity and foster circular and resilient local food systems which help achieve overall sustainability goals and speak to the region's brand.
- f. Support accommodation providers in partnering with local agritourism experiences to develop integrated overnight culinary experiences.
- g. Collaborate with experience providers to understand parameters and opportunities to develop unique, boutique accommodations at agritourism experiences.

4

Augment Connectivity and Mobility

Improved mobility options not only benefit visitors but also enhance quality of life for residents. Efficient transportation systems make it easier for residents to commute, access essential services, and participate in cultural and recreational activities.

- a. Develop an integrated regional transportation strategy.
- b. Support expansion of rapid transit throughout the region and from downtown to Victoria International Airport and Swartz Bay Ferry Terminal.
- c. Support BC Ferries in advancing and optimizing Swartz Bay terminal expansion plans.
- d. Develop a coach bus parking strategy for downtown Victoria, including dedicated space.
- e. Increase direct air access from Canadian and U.S. destinations by continuing to invest in air route development.
- f. Optimize intermodal connections at Belleville Terminal to leverage the new pre-clearance facilities towards potential small-ship cruise home porting at Ogden Point.
- g. Enhance sustainable, resident-sensitive access between Ogden Point cruise terminal and downtown.
- h. Support further activation and upkeep of scenic pathways and trails, including David Foster Harbour Pathway.
- i. Advocate for increased shared micro-mobility options in the region (bikes, scooters, e-bikes).

5

Ensure Continued Sustainability and Innovation

Sustainability is increasingly good business as well as an ecological imperative. Travellers are basing their decisions on where to go, where to stay, and what to do around sustainability considerations. Sustainability is also central to aligning with community values in Greater Victoria and maintaining social license. Innovation typically goes hand-in-hand with sustainability efforts, and Greater Victoria is already positioned as a leader in these areas. There are growing opportunities to foster a visitor economy that is sustainable, resilient, and innovative, to deliver shared benefits among businesses, residents, and visitors for years to come.

- a. Leverage Biosphere Certification for Greater Victoria to further build the destination's brand and credentials and to attract funding to support emerging sustainability initiatives, including with industry partners.
- b. Develop and implement an industry-leading circular economy strategy for Greater Victoria's visitor economy.
- c. Support healthy and sustainable local food systems, including access to locally grown food for visitor economy businesses.
- d. Work with industry and government partners to reduce waste and carbon emissions, in alignment with Provincial and local government policies and targets.
- e. Foster partnerships to support ecological restoration and regeneration.
- f. Extend the destination's commitment to sustainable tourism and a positive visitor-resident interface through innovative strategic planning.

These strategic goals and initiatives can be regarded as identified priorities which, in combination, are synergistic in contributing to the overall development and success of a destination. For example, enhanced tourism infrastructure supports efficient implementation of new attractions and experiences, while placemaking and sustainability efforts ensure the destination remains attractive and environmentally responsible.

The intended outcome of this Destination Master Plan is Greater Victoria's shared success. The plan is not simply a document, it is a living process evolving with local priorities and involvement by all stakeholders, from local businesses to government, community groups and individual residents. The plan is also not intended to be tactical, but rather a high-level framework from which industry and stakeholders can build.



An Enviable Destination

In addition to its strengths, positive attributes, and international accolades, Greater Victoria is a visionary community that strives to be the best possible destination for its residents and visitors. This includes serving a diversity of markets (including leisure, conference, and sport) and working innovatively to be a year-round destination.

Destination Greater Victoria's aim was clear when initiating this Destination Master Plan and engaging with industry and community leaders to guide and inform the process: to develop a visionary 10-year Plan that ensures Greater Victoria continues to reflect the needs and interests of residents and visitors alike.

Cities around the world are investing time, money, and goodwill diligently to determine how best to evolve, maintain relevance across generations, attract workers, and drive economic development. Since the pandemic, conversations around these considerations have intensified due to increased remote working and the consequent impacts to downtowns. In many cases businesses have closed, vibrancy has evaporated, and the hubs of communities have lost attraction and shine.

In contrast, Greater Victoria has a transformational opportunity to define itself in alignment with the priorities and values of its communities, including meaningful and respectful Indigenous Reconciliation. This process can also address the region's aging infrastructure, while helping to future-proof against the effects of climate change and global warming by incorporating decarbonized transportation networks, circular economies, shore power, and green buildings and events.

As Greater Victoria looks forward to new development opportunities that are underway or being considered in the downtown and Inner Harbour, it is well placed to adapt to significant trends in the tourism and hospitality industry, including:

Purposeful and Sustainable Travel

Travellers are increasingly seeking experiences that support personal improvement and a departure from their routines. Offering these types of experiences for different audience segments will be key to retaining repeat visitors and attracting new visitors.

Meeting planners and delegates are also increasingly focused on ensuring the destinations they select as hosts for conferences and conventions have sustainability metrics, green practices, and programs for delegates to give back or contribute to the communities they visit. These are becoming standard evaluation considerations for decision makers in these vertical markets.

In Greater Victoria, events, experiences, agritourism, accommodations, venues, and multimodal transportation options that focus on community values of sustainability and Reconciliation will be key draws for visitors for generations to come.





Resilience of Meetings and Conferences

During the pandemic and early stages of recovery, there was speculation that meetings, conferences, and conventions would not return as the large-scale events they had been, and instead virtual or hybrid meetings would overtake the industry. This has not been the case as delegates have continued to seek and demand the in-person experience.

Meetings, conventions, and conferences have been a resilient segment of the tourism and hospitality industry, and this is forecast to continue. This is critical for Greater Victoria to consider because the meetings market helps to create a sustainable economy throughout the year, bringing high-value visitors in the shoulder and winter seasons. To support this and respond to opportunities, Greater Victoria needs sufficient meetings and conference venues along with appropriate accommodation options.

Outdoor Experiences

The pandemic spurred significant and enduring interest in outdoor experiences. Visitors are increasingly seeking opportunities to be outdoors, whether for adventure, walking, sightseeing, or dining. Few destinations in Canada are as well positioned as Greater Victoria to offer these experiences year-round, and the Inner Harbour has the opportunity to be a gateway for these experiences.

Impacts of Technology

Technology is changing how visitors select and book vacations, how meeting and event planners source destinations, and how DMOs experience providers and accommodation providers market and engage with customers. The opportunities arising from AI and other digital technologies will continue to evolve.

Greater Victoria can continue its leadership in innovation by embracing technologies that support efficient transportation networks, climate change mitigation, shore power, engaging visitor experiences, and more.

Intense Competition

Travel has returned in a significant way. Not only are Canadians and Americans travelling more, but international visitation to North America is also building back. This is driving intense competition amongst destinations globally and is a fundamental reason for focusing on experiences development, remaining aligned with consumer trends, and being prepared with resilience and contingency plans.

Collectively, Greater Victoria has an exciting and positive pathway forward with a vision for the long-term health and resilience of its visitor economy. The destination has the leaders, resources, and aspiration to evolve for the benefit of its residents and visitors. This is an enviable situation for a destination.



Reconciliation and Indigenous Tourism

Destination Greater Victoria (DGV) respectfully acknowledges that it operates on the traditional territories of the **Lək̓ʷəŋən** peoples (Songhees Nation and Xwsepsum Nation) and the **W̱SÁNEĆ** Nations (**W̱JOLELP** (Tsartlip), **BOKÉĆEN** (Pauquachin), **S̱ÁUTW** (Tsawout), **W̱SIKEM** (Tseycum) **MÁLEXEL** (Malahat)), and the Sc'ianew (Beecher Bay), T'Sou-ke, and Pacheedaht Nations. We respectfully honour the deep connection these Nations have with the lands and waters discussed in this plan.

In recent years, DGV has initiated efforts to strengthen relationships with local First Nations, notably the Songhees Nation and Esquimalt Nations, upon whose lands DGV's offices are situated. Recognizing the journey ahead, DGV is committed to continuing efforts to build trust and foster meaningful partnerships. This includes enhancing internal policies and providing comprehensive training for staff. It is imperative that these endeavors to strengthen relationships and engage in ongoing consultation continue throughout the implementation of this strategy.

Aligned with the Province of British Columbia's incorporation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) into law, and mindful of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action, this work must consider UNDRIP's principles. This includes engaging in meaningful consultation, ensuring equitable access to opportunities for Indigenous Peoples, and educating corporate management and staff about Indigenous history and rights.

Indigenous Tourism represents a significant Indigenous economic development opportunity over the next decade. Destination BC's research indicates that one in four visitors to BC seeks authentic Indigenous experiences. Recognizing the sovereignty of local First Nations in deciding how to share their culture and heritage, DGV respects their autonomy in choosing their level of involvement in tourism. DGV is committed to supporting Indigenous Tourism in a respectful and appropriate manner, and pledges to provide all its employees with comprehensive training in respectful and effective engagement with Indigenous Peoples. This initiative is foundational to our readiness to support Indigenous tourism in a manner that is welcomed and appropriate.

It is recommended that consultation continues as an integral component throughout the process of finalizing and implementing this plan, and that in collaboration with local First Nations, Destination Greater Victoria develops a guiding document to outline DGV's approach to supporting Reconciliation and supporting Indigenous Tourism moving forward.



Community Input

This long-term and wide-ranging Destination Master Plan has been developed with extensive input and support from numerous Greater Victoria visitor economy stakeholders, businesses, industry organizations, government partners, First Nations, community groups, and residents of Greater Victoria.



Industry partners and stakeholders

Industry partners and stakeholders are the engine and backbone of the visitor economy, providing the experiences, accommodations, attractions, and services that ensure positive engagement for visitors, while also driving the economic impacts of local visitor spending. Industry partners and stakeholders see opportunities in growing the number of visitors to the region sustainably, extending lengths of stay, and offering more experiences, services, and opportunities to increase the visitor expenditures.



Government partners

Government officials (both elected and administrative) seek to align tourism activities with economic development priorities and increase incremental tax benefits for the region, while also being mindful that visitors add to use of community facilities such as roads, energy, waste and sewer infrastructure, and emergency services. Government partners in Greater Victoria have long been mindful of the opportunities brought by well-managed sustainable tourism and many plans in the region include tourism elements.



Residents

Residents provide social license for tourism activities; they are seeking a positive and enriching quality of life as well as visitors who are conscientious and respectful that Greater Victoria is their home. Residents are happy and supportive that tourism brings benefits, facilities, positive economic impacts, employment, and job creation to the region, on the condition that visitors to Greater Victoria treat the environment, people, culture, and history with respect.

Approach and Methodology

The approach adopted for developing this Destination Master Plan was to (a) ensure information and insights were gathered from all segments and stakeholders in Greater Victoria's visitor economy, (b) undertake broad and open consultation, and (c) facilitate participation and feedback transparently throughout the process. In this way, the Plan would be representative and account for the interests and perspectives of a diverse range of stakeholders as far as possible. This would also build alignment among stakeholders regionally and thereby promote the 'buy in' and commitment necessary to implement the Plan effectively.

To achieve the objectives of the planning process an extensive stepwise program of desk research, data collection, stakeholder engagement, consultation, and feedback was undertaken over a year. Supported throughout by Destination Greater Victoria's team, MMGY NextFactor and FLOOR13 engaged with more than 125 stakeholders through a series of focus groups, in-depth interviews, community town halls, and a visioning workshop between January and October 2023. In addition, 505 residents of Greater Victoria provided responses to a comprehensive online survey. The primary purpose of this program of engagement was to identify and understand key opportunities and challenges for the future of Greater Victoria as a destination for visitors and a quality place for residents to live, work, and play.

Additionally, to further inform and complement stakeholder engagement, structured and quantitative assessments of the destination were undertaken with a focus on current position, trends, key attributes, strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities. These included a DestinationNEXT Assessment completed by MMGY NextFactor as well as a Victoria Conference Centre Development Analysis and Greater Victoria Hotel Inventory Analysis completed by FLOOR13.

Region of Focus

The area of focus for this Destination Master Plan is the Greater Victoria Region, which comprises the 13 municipalities of the Capital Regional District including the West Shore and Saanich Peninsula. The 2021 Canadian Census confirmed the region is home to more than 415,000 residents, indicating 8.4% population growth since 2016.



Summary of Key Planning Process Outputs

The outputs from this planning process have collectively been used to increase understanding of the destination, including strengths, challenges, gaps, and opportunities. Each of these outputs could stand alone and be used to inform specific questions or address specific issues:

- DestinationNEXT Assessment
- Victoria Conference Centre Development Analysis
- Greater Victoria Hotel Inventory Analysis
- Resident Survey Report
- Stakeholder Engagement Findings
- Strategic Goals and Initiatives of the Destination Master Plan

Regional Collaboration and Sub-Regional Tourism Planning

Greater Victoria's visitor economy operates within a complex regional ecosystem, encompassing thirteen municipalities. The "Greater Victoria" brand is recognized globally and attracts travellers who seek the quintessential Greater Victoria experience but are largely unaware and indifferent about municipal boundaries. Looking forward to the next decade, collaboration across the region will be critical to not only realizing the benefits of emerging opportunities but also addressing significant challenges on the horizon regarding transportation, climate change, housing, and infrastructure investment.

This Master Plan is designed to offer recommendations with regional scope while also delving deeper into opportunities focused on the iconic Inner Harbour and downtown Victoria as hubs for the region. Adopting a regional approach to tourism facilitates more-efficient utilization of resources, broadens market reach, and fosters a richer and more varied visitor experience. Alongside this, there is also merit in developing sub-regional tourism plans to ensure effective coordination among stakeholders, enhance visitor servicing, bridge local gaps, and capitalize on the distinct characteristics of each area within the region.

At the time of drafting this Plan, various initiatives are underway to bolster sub-regional collaboration within Greater Victoria's visitor economy. Upon completion, these sub-regional plans will serve as complementary enhancements to the Destination Master Plan. Currently, two significant sub-regional projects are in progress: creation of a Juan de Fuca Corridor Tourism Plan, covering the area from Metchosin through Sooke to Port Renfrew, and development of a Saanich Peninsula Tourism Strategy. Additionally, there are local governments within the region, including the Township of Esquimalt, that are seeking to increase tourism in their municipalities. Through implementation of this Master Plan, a collaborative regional approach can be adopted to amplify these efforts.



Renewing and Elevating the Iconic Inner Harbour and Beyond

The Inner Harbour is the jewel of our destination—a vibrant, working, and living harbour that serves as a hub for activity, transportation, recreation, and industry. Cherished by both residents and visitors, the harbour needs a clear vision and strategic investment to fully realize its potential. By enhancing connectivity, activation, and placemaking along the harbourfront, we can elevate the visitor experience and maintain the area’s status as a leading destination.

The significant projects outlined in the following pages signal a transformation on the horizon for the Inner Harbour. When implemented thoughtfully and cohesively, these developments will align the built environment and visitor experience with the harbour’s natural appeal. While these projects have informed this Destination Master Plan, the plan outlines several strategic goals and initiatives to support the activation and long-term utilization of each new development. Though these infrastructure initiatives will take years to fully materialize, it is important to recognize that they will reshape the composition and experience of downtown Victoria for both residents and visitors.

Anchored by the redeveloped Belleville Terminal, these completed projects—alongside the recommendations within this Plan—will create a vibrant, destination-defining experience, offering seamless connectivity from Fisherman’s Wharf to the Industry, Arts, and Innovation District. These developments will be further linked by a revitalized Government Street, as envisioned by the City of Victoria. Beyond the Inner Harbour, the Gorge area offers significant opportunities for sustainable and regenerative tourism development, creating a uniquely interconnected waterway experience.

Major Community Infrastructure Initiatives

Belleville International Ferry Terminal

Belleville Terminal is the gateway to Greater Victoria and Vancouver Island for visitors arriving on ferries from Seattle and Port Angeles. The terminal has been operating at or beyond the capacity of its facilities, providing a less-than-ideal visitor experience along with minimal scope for growth. The Government of BC has announced major redevelopment of Belleville Terminal to provide a state-of-the-art international gateway for passengers and goods. The upgraded facilities will not only meet Canada's obligations under the Canada-US Land, Rail, Marine, and Air Transport Preclearance Agreement (LRMA) but also open potential pathways for cruise ship home-porting in Victoria.



Rendering of entrance to redeveloped Belleville Terminal

The redeveloped Belleville Terminal will be a welcoming and efficient port of entry, significantly improving the visitor experience while enabling future growth. Redevelopment has commenced in 2024 and the new Belleville Terminal is scheduled to be operational in 2028.

Ship Point Master Plan

Planning is underway to re-envision Ship Point on Victoria's Inner Harbour as an iconic waterfront attraction, event venue, and public space for the benefit of residents and visitors. The proposed redevelopment will incorporate green spaces, areas for events and performances, and culinary and retail opportunities, which will in turn collectively enhance connectivity and activation around the Inner Harbour while adding vibrancy to Victoria's downtown.



Renderings of proposed Ship Point redevelopment

Bayview Place Roundhouse

The Bayview Place Roundhouse project is a master planned, 20-acre, urban community within a short walk from downtown Victoria. When complete, the development will include a mix of residential buildings, a public market, retail outlets, a condominium hotel and spa, a potential rail link, and restoration of the historic Roundhouse railway station. This development will connect and further activate the northern Inner Harbour from the visitor's perspective.



Extent of the Bayview Place Roundhouse development on Victoria's Inner Harbour

The Future of History

The Future of History is a bold initiative to create a world-class maritime heritage experience in the Inner Harbour. This project, a collaboration between the Xwsepsum Nation, Songhees Nation, and the Maritime Museum of BC, draws on the region's deep maritime heritage, told from two perspectives: the Lekwungen People's connection to their territory and the stories of more recent arrivals.

The Steamship Terminal Building and adjacent water lot will be transformed into a year-round cultural destination. The building will highlight recent maritime history, while a new floating structure will provide a space for the Lekwungen People to share their culture.

Together, these spaces will offer 36,000 sq/ft of exhibits and events, providing a dynamic visitor experience. The Future of History will deliver profound, authentic visitor experiences and offer a rare opportunity to witness the ongoing work of reconciliation in the heart of Lekwungen territory and BC's Capital.



Rendering of The Future of History project

Royal British Columbia Museum

Established in 1886, the Royal BC Museum has long been a critical asset and key landmark for Greater Victoria, particularly downtown and the Inner Harbour. Serving as a primary cultural and historical attraction for visitors as well as a hub for the community, the Museum is readily accessible through multiple modes of mobility. Ensuring the Royal BC Museum remains in its current location is a critical for Greater Victoria and central to growth and a range of further development opportunities. Plans for the renewal or redevelopment of the Museum should ensure it is a provincial facility worthy of the capital city through its design and programming, and that it evolves as an iconic landmark within the revitalized Inner Harbour.



Royal British Columbia Museum

Rock Bay Industry, Arts and Innovation District

The City of Victoria is developing a plan for an Industry, Arts and Innovation District in Rock Bay. This extensive project will extend and improve the design of public spaces, and provide more amenities and services. By modernizing regulations around land use, the project will encourage more activities and businesses focused on small industry, arts and innovation, increasing vibrancy in this part of Victoria's downtown. The aim is to foster a lively and collaborative hub that creates new jobs and services, strengthens the local economy, and enhances public space and facilities.



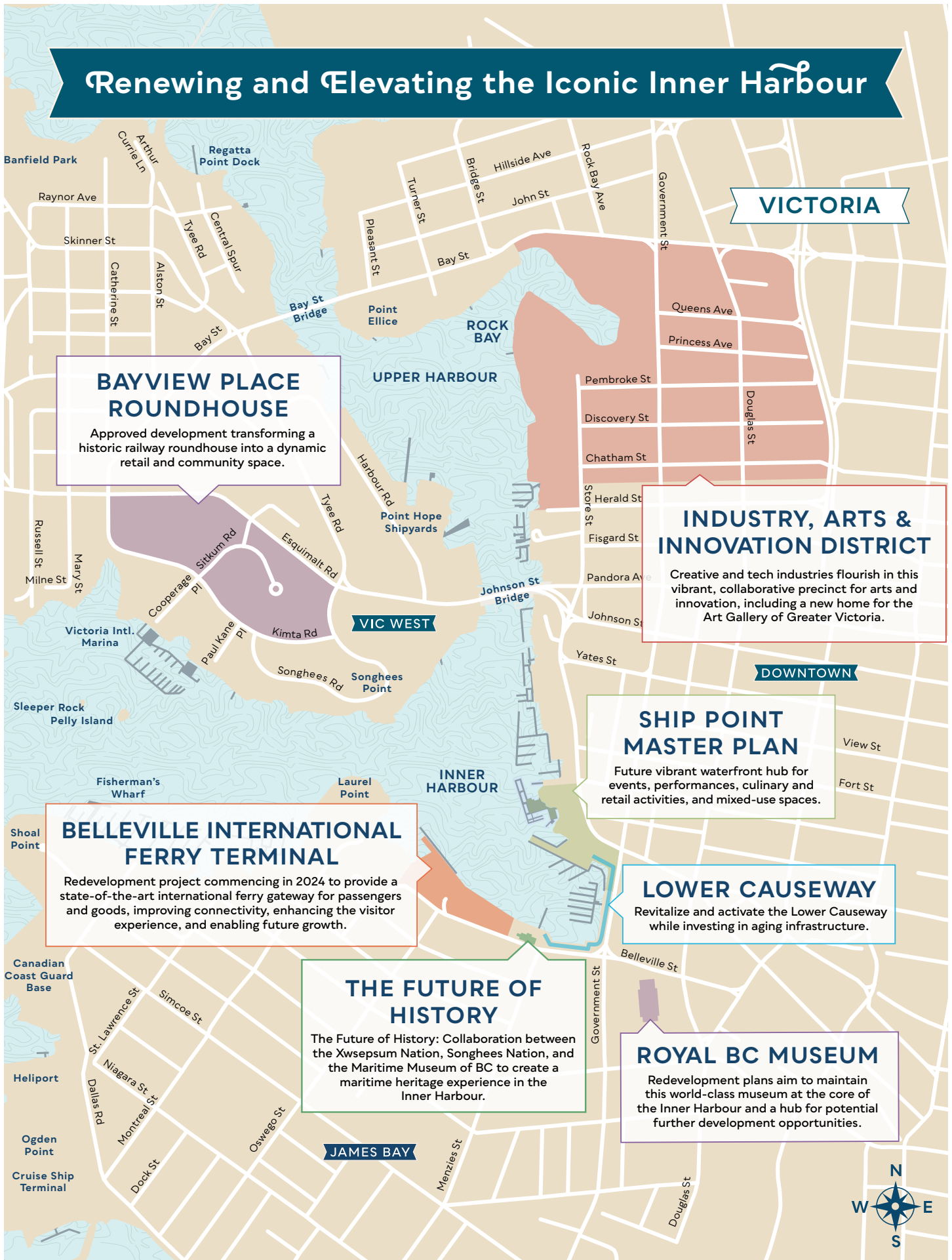
Proposed extent of the Industry, Arts and Innovation District in Victoria

The Inner Harbour and Beyond

While these important projects have informed development of this Destination Master Plan, several strategic goals and initiatives arising from the Plan will in turn support activation and long-term utilization of each development. Anchored by the redeveloped Belleville Terminal, once these projects are complete there will be a vibrant and destination-defining visitor experience due to seamlessly connected activation from Fisherman's Wharf though to the Industry, Arts and Innovation District.

Beyond the Inner Harbour, it is important to note that there are sub-regional plans guiding additional development, including on the Saanich Peninsula.

Renewing and Elevating the Iconic Inner Harbour



VICTORIA

BAYVIEW PLACE ROUNDHOUSE
 Approved development transforming a historic railway roundhouse into a dynamic retail and community space.

INDUSTRY, ARTS & INNOVATION DISTRICT
 Creative and tech industries flourish in this vibrant, collaborative precinct for arts and innovation, including a new home for the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria.

DOWNTOWN

SHIP POINT MASTER PLAN
 Future vibrant waterfront hub for events, performances, culinary and retail activities, and mixed-use spaces.

BELLEVILLE INTERNATIONAL FERRY TERMINAL
 Redevelopment project commencing in 2024 to provide a state-of-the-art international ferry gateway for passengers and goods, improving connectivity, enhancing the visitor experience, and enabling future growth.

LOWER CAUSEWAY
 Revitalize and activate the Lower Causeway while investing in aging infrastructure.

THE FUTURE OF HISTORY
 The Future of History: Collaboration between the Xwsepsum Nation, Songhees Nation, and the Maritime Museum of BC to create a maritime heritage experience in the Inner Harbour.

ROYAL BC MUSEUM
 Redevelopment plans aim to maintain this world-class museum at the core of the Inner Harbour and a hub for potential further development opportunities.

JAMES BAY



Envisioning the Gorge Area's Sustainable Tourism Potential

The Gorge Waterway is a narrow tidal channel connecting Victoria Harbour to Portage Inlet. The surrounding lands play a vital role in industry, arts, culture, housing, and parks and recreation. This area presents significant opportunities for the visitor economy, including hotel developments, restaurants, water and land-based visitor experiences, and regenerative tourism initiatives that support ecosystem restoration.

The Gorge Waterway holds deep cultural and historical significance for the Lekwungen People, who have stewarded these lands and waters for generations. It has historically provided critical food sources, including coho salmon and herring.

During the early colonial era, the Gorge Waterway was a hub of activity, hosting regattas, Indigenous canoe races, and swimming competitions. However, by the late 20th century, industrial pollution and neglect left it unsuitable for recreation. Since the mid-1990s, a remarkable community effort has restored the Gorge to its status as a beloved spot for swimming and recreation.

Current visitor economy operations include interactive experiences, historic and cultural attractions, and activities such as kayak rentals. The surrounding neighbourhoods offer a variety of hotels, restaurants, breweries, artisans, and community institutions, such as the Gorge Waterway Nature House, Victoria Scottish Community Centre, and Esquimalt Gorge Park Pavilion.

The Gorge's relatively warm, calm waters—apart from tidal influences and the reversing waterfall at Tillicum Narrows—make it ideal for aquatic recreation. It is part of the Victoria Harbour Migratory Bird Sanctuary, home to fish, sea mammals, and salmon spawning grounds.

For Destination Greater Victoria (DGV), the Gorge area is unique as it spans both MRDT partner municipalities: the City of Victoria and the District of Saanich. Additionally, the area offers opportunities in the Township of Esquimalt and the Town of View Royal, both important DGV partners. This area's potential for the visitor economy is unique and merits further exploration.

Recommendation: Designate the Gorge area as a future study area to develop specific recommendations and actions for enhancing the visitor economy. This study should engage diverse stakeholders and focus on leveraging the area's unique potential while integrating regenerative tourism and ecosystem stewardship.



The Gorge Waterway

2023 Futures Study

In 2023, MMGY NextFactor, in partnership with the Destinations International Foundation, conducted the largest global survey of tourism industry leaders, with responses from 837 tourism executives across 62 countries. This extensive process led to identification of 50 Trends and 50 Strategies.

Of the 50 Trends identified through the extensive process of the Futures Study, the consulting team identified four that are directly relevant to findings for Greater Victoria's Destination Master Plan, and which could be transformational opportunities for industry and the future of the destination:



1 Customers are increasingly seeking unique, authentic travel experiences.

Takeaway for Greater Victoria: The region has a large number of unique attributes, and there are opportunities to translate these attributes into more unique experiences for visitors. Outdoor recreation, the natural environment, voluntourism, arts & culture, sustainability leadership initiatives, the Inner Harbour, and Indigenous heritage and Reconciliation experiences are all opportunities for Greater Victoria to develop new experiences for the leisure and meetings markets.

2 Communities expect to be more engaged in destination, product, and experience development for locals and visitors.

Takeaway for Greater Victoria: The broad community engagement undertaken as part of the development of this Destination Master Plan is integral to advancing this area of opportunity across the region. Further engagement with Indigenous communities is an important next step, if and when First Nations choose to build Indigenous tourism businesses.

3 Destinations are looking at sustainability/regeneration more broadly, encompassing economic, social, and environmental impacts.

Takeaway for Greater Victoria: The region is well positioned in this regard and currently leading many destinations with its approach to environmental sustainability, regeneration, and resilience. Continued focus and alignment with local organizations leading environmental, social, and economic efforts will position Greater Victoria for future success consistent with residents' values.

4 Greater industry, community, and government alignment is driving destination competitiveness and brand.

Takeaway for Greater Victoria: The most successful destinations are not built, managed, or sustained by one single entity; rather, they are successful because of the commitment, alignment, and collaboration of many towards shared visions and goals. Further alignment between Greater Victoria's tourism and hospitality industry, government partners, Indigenous communities, residents, and other stakeholders will support the region's strengths regarding quality of life, quality of experience, and quality of place for residents and visitors alike.



Market Analysis



Market Overview

Victoria, the capital of British Columbia, is located on southern Vancouver Island and serves as the air and marine gateway to the island. Accessible via various transport modes, including commercial aircraft, floatplanes, helicopters, ferries, and cruise ships, Greater Victoria is the second largest Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) in the province, encompassing 13 municipalities. The region has deep Indigenous heritage, strong connections to natural spaces and the Salish Sea, and is widely regarded as a great place to live, work, and visit. Canadian visitors from Vancouver, the Lower Mainland, Alberta, and Ontario underpin much of Greater Victoria's tourism industry, with US markets also being crucial. While short-haul markets dominate, select international markets add considerable value through visitor expenditures. Greater Victoria attracts diverse visitor segments, including leisure, business travel, meetings, conferences, festivals, events, and sport tourism, each contributing to sustainable growth in the visitor economy.

Commitment to Sustainability

Sustainability and sustainable tourism are priorities for Destination Greater Victoria and its stakeholders. The annual high-profile IMPACT Sustainability Travel & Tourism Conference was founded in Victoria in 2018, with a working vision to align the tourism industry with community values and best practices by exploring ways to address environmental, social, cultural, and economic sustainability collaboratively in multi-stakeholder contexts. IMPACT continues to be a leading forum globally for conversations and insights on tourism sustainability.

Destination Greater Victoria is certified Carbon Neutral and has established a multi-stakeholder Sustainability Advisory Committee within its governance structure to examine destination-level sustainability initiatives and opportunities while driving continuous improvement.

Destination Greater Victoria has led the process of achieving and maintaining Biosphere Certification for Greater Victoria through the Responsible Tourism Institute's (RTI) acclaimed Biosphere Program based on the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 2030 Agenda. This rigorous program focuses on continuous improvement on environmental, social, cultural, and economic initiatives aligned with the SDGs at destination level as well as for businesses and partner organizations of all sizes.

All members of Destination Greater Victoria have ongoing access to the Biosphere Program; at the time of completing this Plan, there were 70 tourism businesses actively participating on Greater Victoria's platform, including 16 fully certified.

Additionally, Destination Greater Victoria and the City of Victoria are partnering in the Global Destination Sustainability (GDS) Index, which scores and ranks cities globally in terms of the work they are doing to become more sustainable, inclusive, and accessible for residents and visitors. 2023 was Victoria's initial year of participation in the GDS Index and results were very positive, ranking as the #2 most sustainable destination in North America. Ongoing participation in this program will provide a solid foundation for future destination-level sustainability initiatives and collaborations.

Looking further ahead, Destination Greater Victoria has commenced work towards developing a circular economy strategy for Greater Victoria, aiming to be the first urban destination to implement circular best practices at scale. It is expected that this strategy will set the tone for sustainability efforts going forward and provide a framework to ensure Greater Victoria remains at the cutting edge of tourism sustainability into the future.

International Profile and Accolades

During the period of developing this Plan, Greater Victoria received significant positive international attention, which, along with many accolades received over previous years, builds strong destination profile and brand recognition. The recent accolades include:

#1 Best Small City in the World (Condé Nast)

2nd Most Sustainable Destination in North America (Global Destination Sustainability Movement)

3rd Friendliest City in the World (Condé Nast)

Top 50 Places to Visit (Travel & Leisure)

Top 5 Favourite Cities in Canada (Travel & Leisure)

These global recognitions (and others that will follow) will continue to inspire new and repeat visitation to Greater Victoria. To ensure the destination remains top-of-mind, relevant, and high on these lists, it will be important to continue innovating to provide visitor and resident experiences that exceed expectations. The recommendations in this Plan are intended to provide opportunities for Greater Victoria to maintain its high profile, international recognition, and brand status well into the future.

Source Markets

Source markets for Greater Victoria's visitor economy have predominantly been within Canada and the western United States. Short-haul markets such as Vancouver, the BC Lower Mainland, Seattle, and Calgary are primary markets because they connect quickly and directly to Victoria via multiple modes of transportation and meet key criteria for market size, customer profile, return on marketing investments, and effectiveness of digital marketing. Toronto, Montreal, Portland, and San Francisco have also shown growth as important markets.

At finer scale, the range of main source markets for Greater Victoria is:

1. Regional Getaway: Up Island, Vancouver and the BC Lower Mainland
2. Mid-haul Canada: Prairies, particularly Alberta (including off-peak season "snowbirds")
3. Long-Haul Canada: Toronto and Montreal
4. Getaway US: Primarily Seattle and western Washington
5. Mid-haul US: Oregon and California
6. Long-haul US: Rest of USA
7. International: Primarily linked to Canadian Rockies tours or two-nation vacations
8. Business Events: Association and corporate markets
9. Sport Tourism: Leveraging the mildest climate in Canada as well as the eight national sports organizations and training facilities based in Greater Victoria

Historically, as shown in the chart below, domestic travellers account for almost two thirds of visitors to Greater Victoria but less than half of visitor expenditure, confirming the critical strategic importance of US and international markets. On average (and with minor seasonal variation), visitors from the USA spend 70% more than Canadian visitors within Greater Victoria, while international visitors spend up to 133% more.



(Sources: Statistics Canada VTS and NTS 2019, DGV 2019 Visitor Survey, DGV 2022-2026 Strategic Plan).



Air Access

The legacy of the pandemic has left a few scars on Victoria's tourism industry, but the visitor economy has nonetheless regained a significant portion of its pre-pandemic levels. When analyzing DGV's main tourism partners, all report growth over the next few years.

Victoria International Airport lost 70% of its passage traffic during the pandemic as well as several direct flights into the city which have only partly returned. However, YYJ does anticipate targeted inbound destination flights both domestically and internationally will return within the next two years. YYJ is confident that by 2024 it will surpass 2018 passenger traffic volumes, its best year on record. Looking forward YYJ is projecting an annual increase of 2% from 2025 on and is aiming to welcome 2.3 million passengers by 2027 and forecasted to reach 3 million passengers by 2040. Connections to Seattle, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Denver are all targeted as potential inbound connections over the next few years. Domestic travellers will nevertheless, remain the bulk of these increases. This positive impact on travellers to Victoria will certainly contribute to an increase in demand for hotel rooms of all categories and, therefore, will continue to put a strain on the existing limited inventory.



Ferry Access

For more than 60 years BC Ferries has connected coastal communities in British Columbia. Now with 37 vessels operating on 25 routes out of 47 terminals spread over 1,600 kilometres of coastline, it is a major transportation provider to Vancouver Island and the Greater Victoria area.

BC Ferries carried 9.6 million vehicles and 22.6 million passengers in fiscal 2024 (year ending March 31, 2024), the busiest fiscal year on record. On Route 1, which provides service between Vancouver (Tsawwassen) and Victoria (Swartz Bay), more than 6.35 million passengers travelled during that period. Route 1 is the busiest of BC Ferries' routes, carrying commuters, commercial traffic, and leisure travellers.

With a growing population and a growing coastal economy, BC Ferries is transporting more passengers, vehicles, and cargo than ever. As traffic increases annually, BC Ferries is looking ahead, focusing on improving reliability and capacity. To accomplish this, the organization is planning for major capital investments in new ships and terminal upgrades, considering ways to provide customers with more advance booking opportunities and discounted prices, and reviewing all projects through the lens of climate action plans and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Victoria's international ferry services regained traffic in 2022 and achieved further growth in 2023, exceeding 2019 levels by 4% to 6%. Both the FRS Clipper and M.V. Coho ferries have been experiencing maximum capacity issues during the summer season while also noting increased demand and opportunity over the shoulder seasons. Additionally, demand for overnight packages has increased by 20% to 30%. However, recent feedback from customers is that due to higher costs of summer overnight packages, they are seeking mid-range hotel options. Both ferry companies have also noted growing interest for more off-season experiences in and around Victoria, which in turn would significantly bolster extension of the core season for all partners. Although hotel room pricing tends to decrease outside peak season, there continue to be insufficient mid-range hotel options.





Cruise

The Greater Victoria Harbour Authority (GVHA) remains one of Greater Victoria's main visitor economy partners. The Ogden Point terminal welcomed 326 ships and 966,546 passengers in 2023, which is a 38% increase in passengers compared to 2022 and equal to 2019's record number of passengers.

An assessment of the economic impacts of cruise visitation to Greater Victoria undertaken by the GVHA in 2019 showed that cruise visitors spend an average of \$86 within the destination. Over the season, total cruise visitor expenditures included approximately \$23.7 million on tours and local transportation, \$14.6 million on retail goods, and \$6.7 million on food and beverages. Additionally, crew members disembarking in Victoria spend an average of \$117 each and contribute \$11.4 million to the local economy. Overall, local spending by cruise lines amounts to \$84 million on services including transportation, warehousing, port fees, ship agents, and stevedores each season. Additionally, the cruise industry in Victoria generates positions for 807 full-time and part-time employees on an annualized basis, accounting for \$40.4 million in wages and salaries. Combining business and income taxes, direct cruise-related spending in Victoria generates \$11.2 million in tax contributions to government.

When redevelopment of Belleville Terminal is completed, the upgraded facilities will meet Canada's obligations under the Canada-US Land, Rail, Marine, and Air Transport Preclearance Agreement (LRMA) and provide home-porting opportunities. In Vancouver, home-porting is estimated to contribute an average of approximately \$3 million in economic impact per voyage (source: Economic Impact Assessment, Belleville Terminal Project Phase 3, Belleville Terminal Partnership), which indicates there could be comparable benefits should Victoria also become a home port for cruise business.

Looking to the future, the GVHA continues to work towards establishing Victoria as a home port, which would increase passenger arrivals by an estimated 3% annually. If approximately half of these additional passengers required overnight hotel stays, an estimated 10,000 additional room nights would be accounted for during the April to September season.



Situational Analysis

Destination Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT)

The research, analysis, and stakeholder and resident engagement conducted through the process of developing this Destination Master Plan resulted in the following situational analysis. The following strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats were consistent themes of all forms of engagement, including through resident town halls, the resident survey, in-depth interviews, focus groups, and sessions with Destination Greater Victoria's board and this Destination Master Plan's Steering Committee. Analyses undertaken by Destination Greater Victoria and stakeholders over recent years for strategic planning, marketing, and business development also validate these findings.

Strengths

- Excellent national and international reputation
- Excellent national and international brand reputation
- Proximity to short-haul national and international markets
- Attractive to high value travellers
- Livable city
- Diversity of population
- History of the region
- Close connections to nature and wildlife
- Outdoor recreation and experiences
- Walkability in the downtown
- Strong hospitality culture
- History of innovation as a community
- Sustainability is a shared community value that resonates with visitors
- Strong industry alignment
- Beautiful coastal destination
- Mild climate year-round

Weaknesses

- Insufficient convention and meeting space
- Insufficient hotel rooms and diversity
- Limited air access
- Sub-optimal regional transportation and mobility
- Lack of downtown experiences
- Lack of nightlife
- Lack of family experiences
- BC Ferries operating at 90% capacity

Opportunities

- Established destination for many markets (including leisure, meetings, and sport)
- Furthering Indigenous Reconciliation and engaging visitors and residents in Indigenous culture and experiences
- Inner Harbour redevelopment
- Belleville Terminal redevelopment and positive implications for pre-clearance and small cruise ship home porting
- Downtown district development
- Partnerships with diverse communities
- Partnerships with educational institutions
- Further development of sport tourism with additional and refurbished infrastructure
- Expanding and enhancing agritourism experiences
- Strong event-hosting potential
- Year-round appeal
- Arts, culture, and heritage experiences
- Furthering equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility

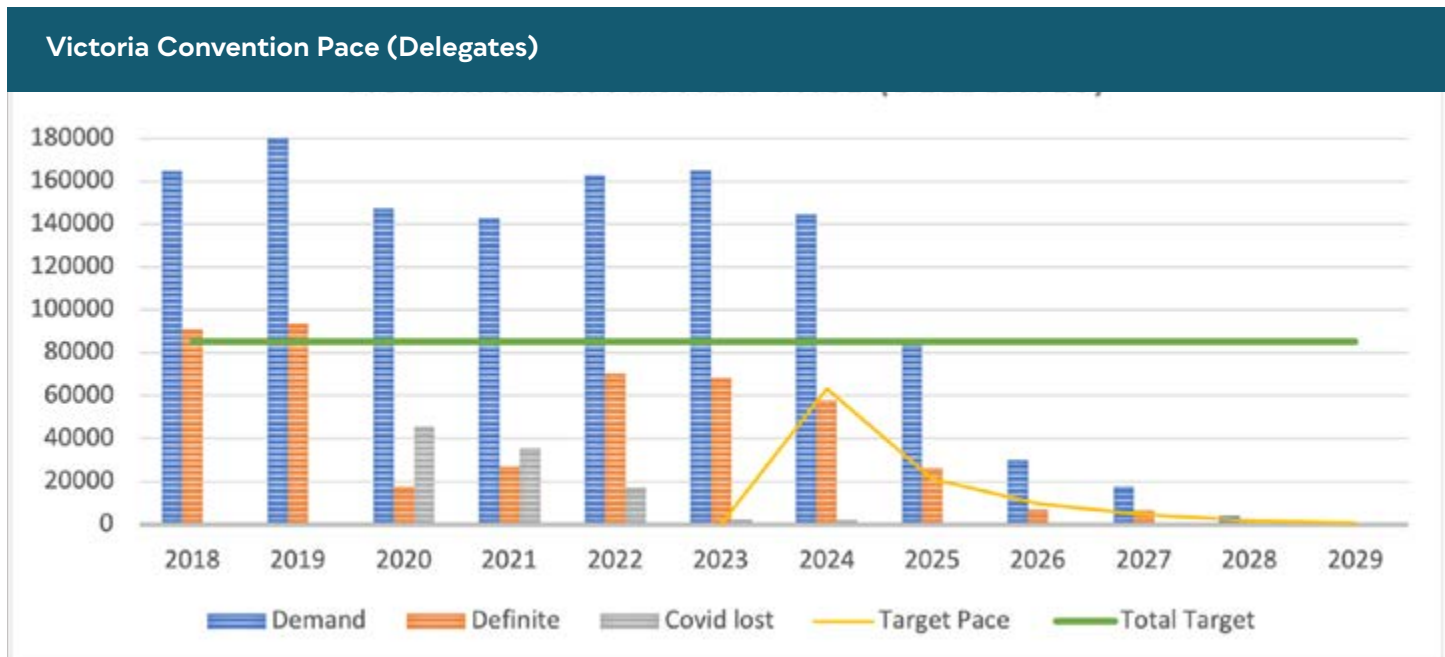
Threats

- High cost of overnight accommodations in peak season
- Increased competition in leisure and convention markets
- Workforce challenges
- High cost of living and low housing affordability
- Softening vibrancy in the downtown due to remote work
- Climate change, global warming, and rising sea levels and the impact of these on Greater Victoria's natural environments
- Lack of provincial air route development strategy

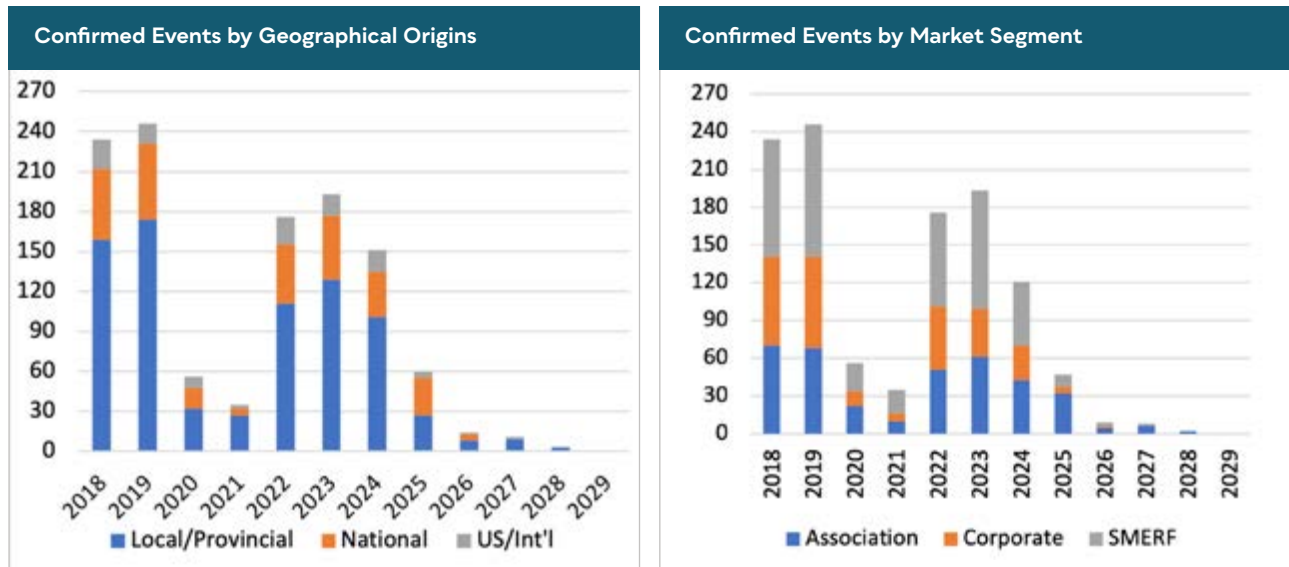
Victoria Conference Centre Development Analysis

Statistics from Meetings Mean Business Canada (MMBC) show that business events generate about 40% of overall tourism spending in Canada, which amounts to approximately \$47 billion in direct revenues annually. Business events are the most lucrative segment for many destinations in Canada because meetings and conference delegates generate a considerably higher average spend than leisure travellers, have a longer length of stay, and use a wider array of services while in the destination. MMBC reports that the average spend per delegate attending a conference in Canada in 2023 was approximately \$901, while Statistics Canada reported the average spend of a US leisure visitor in 2019 was \$445. Destination Canada reports that convention delegates are more likely to extend their stay for leisure purposes and/or are more likely to return for a leisure trip. Moreover, most business events occur in the shoulder months during spring and fall, leaving the summer high season available for predominantly leisure and cruise business.

Since 2017, Destination Greater Victoria has been responsible for sales and marketing of the Victoria Conference Centre (VCC). As part of this, DGV initiated a business events strategy through Business Events Victoria (BEV), which has been highly effective in securing bookings for meetings and conference business and popularizing Greater Victoria as one of the most desirable mid-size meetings destinations in Canada. BEV has had significant success in attracting US and international business to the city while maintaining a strong base of Canadian business despite its limited target group capacity. As indicated in the pace chart below, BEV is rebuilding its convention base post-pandemic and anticipates regaining its targeted volumes in 2024.



The following charts outline the volume of business events held and confirmed in the VCC through to 2029 by geographical origins and by market segmentation. Most business events in Victoria remain local or provincially based. The booking window for these segments is much shorter (within 6 to 12 months) than for national business events (8 to 18 months out) as well as US and international business (18 to 48 months out). As business events continue to recover post-pandemic, Canadian-origin business events have performed at a more rapid pace. Destination Canada reports that US-origin business events will return to pre-pandemic levels by 2025 and international-origin business events by 2026 or 2027. Therefore, the booking window for these two groups is underway and BEV is actively soliciting potential conventions.



Source: Destination Greater Victoria April 2024 Pace Report

In 2020, as part of the City of Victoria’s ‘Victoria 3.0 Recovery – Reinvention – Resilience’ economic action plan, DGV contracted CBRE to conduct an assessment of potential demand and growth of the business events market for Victoria in support of a proposed expanded conference centre. The analysis found that the VCC’s present size would significantly limit the ability to grow larger group business beyond its peak of 2019, particularly the amount and size of association business events. Currently, DGV is excluded from bidding on most association group business events due to the VCC’s size and configuration constraints.

Expanding the VCC or building a new facility would not only ensure Victoria remains competitive in the Canadian business events market, which is its main feeder market, but also enhance the ability to host the more lucrative US and international business events.

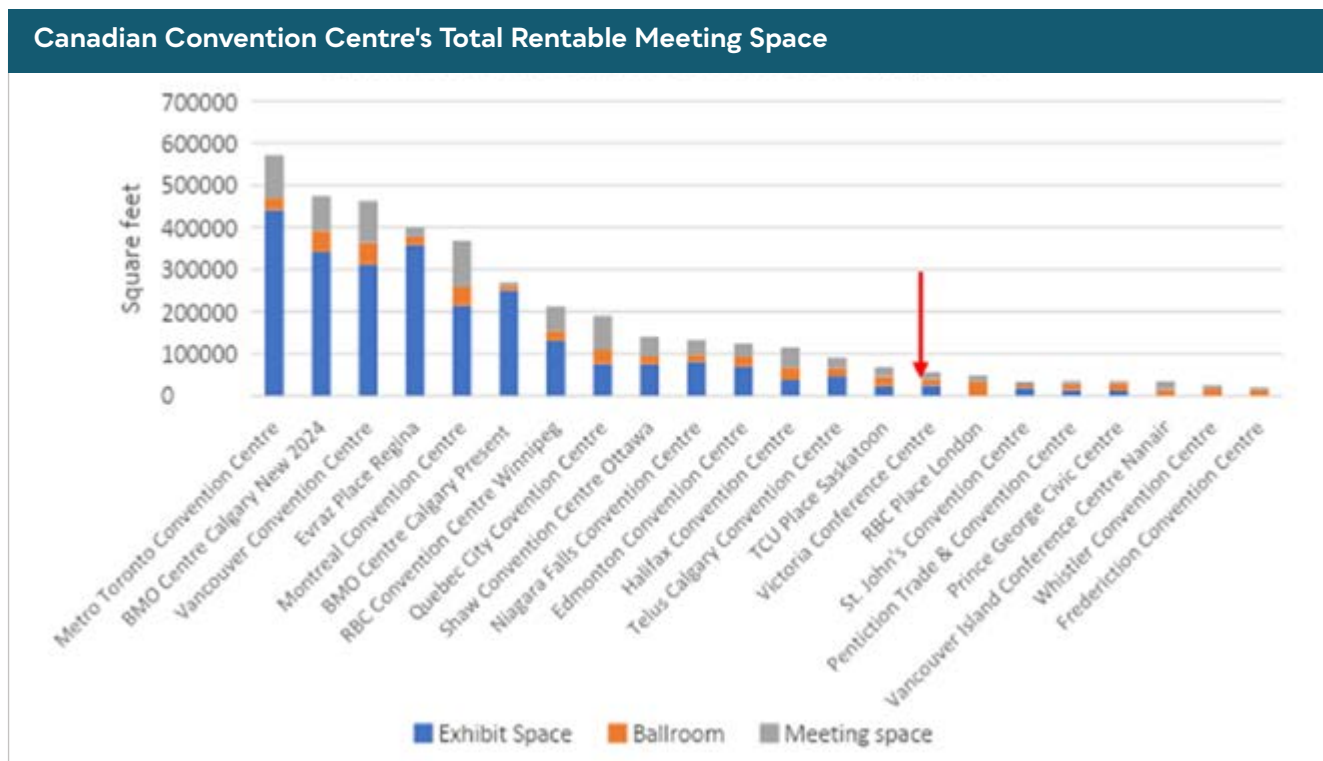
Overall, the incremental new growth, based on doubling in expansion size with 19 to 23 additional conventions hosted in a future stabilized year, is estimated to grow VCC’s economic impact to Greater Victoria’s economy by an estimated 50%.

– CBRE Convention Centre Study 2020

Presently, 600 delegates (enjoying meetings, meals, and breakouts) can be accommodated at VCC. The facility is also limited in its ability to host two mid-size conferences simultaneously as the VCC's distribution of space makes this overly complicated or impossible. This has not only constrained the BEV team's capacity to book larger events but also to book two overlapping or simultaneous groups. Built in 1989, the VCC has benefited from some cosmetic upgrades over recent years; however, these have not altered or improved the physical capabilities of the facility.

Over the last decade, competitive destinations within Canada have either expanded their convention centres, such as the new BMO Centre in Calgary, or have expansion plans on the drawing board. Several new conference centre projects are currently proposed in Canada, such as in Kingston, Saskatoon, Barrie, and Moncton. There is also renewed interest by shareholders in expansion of both the Toronto and Montreal convention centres. These proposed new centres will all be reliant on the Canadian association and corporate markets as base business, which brings them into direct competition with the VCC. Even though the VCC has historically punched well above its weight, it will continue to operate in an ever-growing highly competitive landscape.

The chart below shows the current sizes of convention centres in Canada.



Source: FLOOR13

Key Elements to Being a Competitive Conference Centre

When considering a world-class competitive conference centre, several elements beyond sheer size must be considered. Although size is an important element, bigger is not necessarily better. The square footage of a venue should be reflective of the size of the city, its hotel capacity, access, and type of business (industry sectors) it is pursuing. In the case of Victoria, BEV is clearly focused on business events within key sectors outlined in DGV's strategic plan (natural resources, green tech, life sciences, and advanced manufacturing). Also, Victoria's hotel inventory is relatively higher end when compared to other competitive destinations, which increases the costs of holding conferences in Victoria. Nevertheless, the appeal of the destination among planners remains strong, thereby enabling a premium.

Globally, modern conference centres are focused on the following attributes:

Category	Attributes	VCC Rating
Location and Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Centrally located near hotel inventory and entertainment Walkable from hotels (reduction of shuttle need) Easy access to airport Volume of direct flights into destination Flight times to destination 	Strong Strong Strong Weak Medium
Accommodations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High volume of centrally located hotels Connected or adjacent headquarter hotel Hotel inventory used to working with M&C Variety of hotel categories and price options Number of overall hotel rooms available 	Strong Strong Strong Weak Weak
Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional DMO with M&C services Locally available M&C suppliers (AV, DMC, F&B, business services, shuttle services) Array of off-site venues for events Pre and post activities options locally 	Strong Strong Medium Medium
Convention Venue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Centrally located convention centre Modern facility with up-to-date technology Large meeting space and breakout flexibility Strong F&B component (recognized culinary service) Dedicated sales and service teams geared to national and international conferences 	Strong Medium Medium Medium Strong

Convention centres in Canada are, for the most part, provincially or municipally owned and operated. In some cases, such as Nanaimo, Edmonton, and Charlottetown, convention centres are managed by a third-party entity, local DMO, or management company through a longer-term management agreement. Regardless of their organizational governance, convention centres are considered important economic impact drivers for a destination through their support of a larger business ecosystem.

Victoria Conference Centre (VCC) 2.0

As Destination Greater Victoria (DGV) continues to pursue both domestic and international conference business, consideration must now be given to the next phase of the VCC's evolution as demand for meetings and conferences continues to grow.

Following an extensive research process and stakeholder input, three possible scenarios have emerged:

1

Maintain the present facility and upgrade where possible.

2

Consider a total rebuild of the facility on the existing site.

3

Build a facility as part of a bigger 'multi-purpose hub' (including the Royal BC Museum and hosting complex).

1

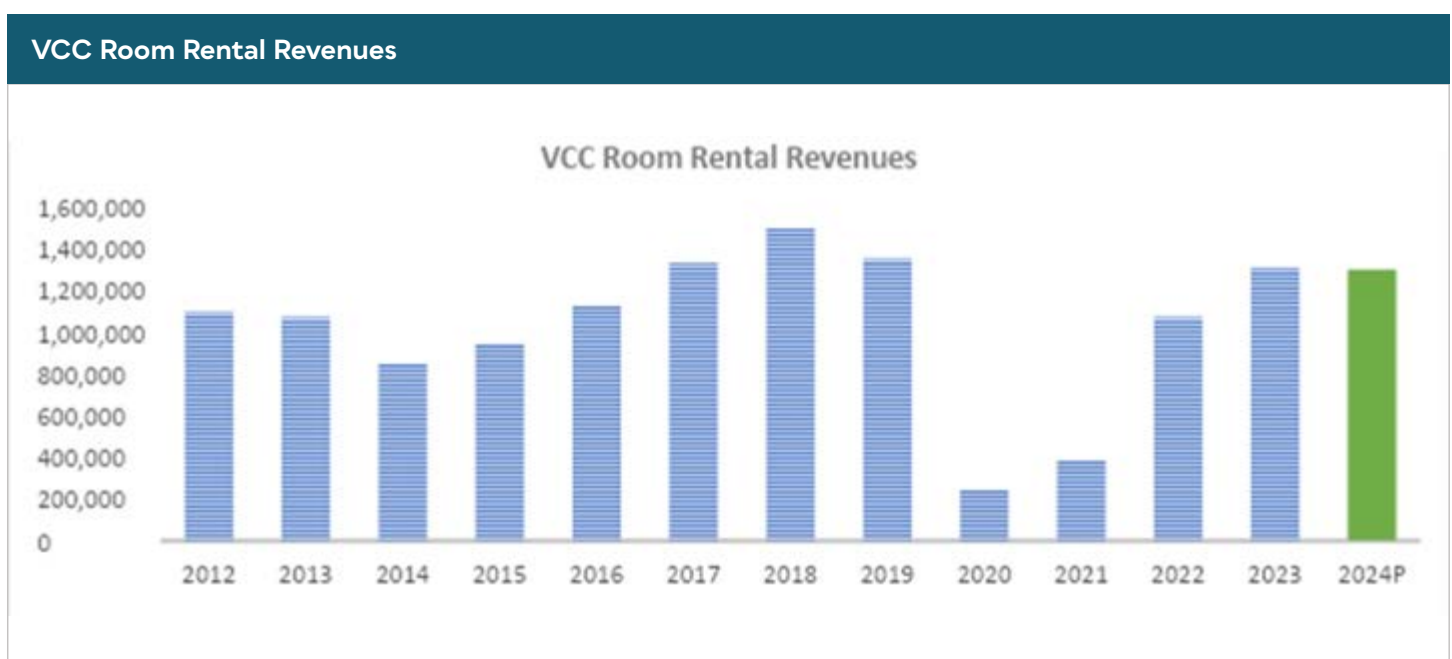
Scenario 1: Maintain the present facility and upgrade where possible.

The present facility, built in 1989, has undergone upgrades over the last decade. These upgrades have tended to be more cosmetic than structural, leaving the facility relatively unchanged. As outlined in this document, this has limited the number and size of business events DGV can solicit. Option 1 would maintain the present structure and footprint with additional cosmetic upgrades and possible additions to non-permanent space.

Advantages	Challenges
Limited capital costs short term to implement cosmetic upgrades	Limited in size of conventions that can be hosted
No disruption in booking pace	Limited potential growth beyond 2019 peak
Clients familiar with facility and no need for a specific marketing campaign	Aging facility, longer term capital costs to be anticipated
No construction disruption within city centre	Lease renewal with private sector owner who may have alternative plans for the facility and/or land Competition from newer facilities and potential soon to be built or expanded facilities Limited sustainability features due to aged infrastructure

This option would maintain the status quo but not lead to much more growth beyond the present levels and would continue to limit the amount of lucrative association and international business BEV could solicit. This alternative is by far the least favourable based on a strategy of growing the visitor economy in Greater Victoria.

The chart below illustrates annual VCC rental revenue, the centre's main revenue source, since 2012. Peak rental revenues were in 2018 due to a higher number of US and international groups. Going beyond that peak with the present VCC may be challenging.



2

Scenario 2: Consider a total rebuild of the facility on the existing site.

The present site of the VCC is ideally located adjacent to the largest hotel in the city, central to Victoria’s main downtown core and entertainment offerings, and within walking distances of the city’s main hotel inventory. Rebuilding on the existing site would maintain these advantages but also entail major disruption of business over a period of 3 to 5 years.

Advantages	Challenges
A new facility built to spec with best and latest technology	Major capital cost and investment participation from private owner and city, province, and federal governments
Expanded size, most likely multi-level due to the existing land footprint	Private owner’s possible alternate development plans for the site
Ability to solicit larger and more conventions	Lease renewal conditions with private sector owner
Still connected to the city’s major hotel	Limited size footprint to build on
Ability to add sustainable technology and LEEDS certification	3 - 5 year business interruption with loss of revenue

Rebuilding such a facility would also make it possible to incorporate other auxiliary services within the building which could also benefit residents, such as food and beverage outlets, retail outlets, and business services while also adding to overall modernization of the downtown core.



3

Scenario 3: Build a facility as part of a bigger ‘multi-purpose hub’ (including the Royal BC Museum and hosting complex).

Royal BC Museum (RBCM) is located adjacent to the existing VCC and presently undergoing a provincial review with regard to being rebuilt and remodeled. Its present location has a land footprint that could easily accommodate a much larger facility including both the new museum and a new convention centre. Incorporating these two facilities as part of a new ‘tourism campus’ could be a game changer for the city. Still centrally located, this new facility could deliver significant savings in terms of shared services such as back of the house mechanical (HVAC, energy, loading docks, maintenance, parking) as well as shared space which could be utilized seasonally. The facility could also be built with a larger footprint, the latest technology, sustainability innovations, and LEED certification.

Advantages	Challenges
Connected to RBCM as part of a tourism hub/district/campus (visitor info, entertainment tour bus parking, transit, etc)	Major capital cost and investment needed from provincial and federal governments
Built to spec facility, flexible space, shared services (mechanical, loading docks, shared space, parking, maintenance, LEEDs certification)	Longer construction phase. Two buildings
100% provincially owned with long term stability	Present provincial review of RBCM status
Central location in walking distance to hotels	Major construction site in downtown core, possible disruption of traffic
Ability to solicit larger conventions and two conventions at once	
No business interruption as the existing VCC could still be in service during the building phase	

Examples of this type of ‘hub’ or ‘campus’ can be found in destinations such as Cleveland, Nashville, and St. Louis. These hubs create a focal point for the city’s visitor economy and generate ongoing development around them, such as restaurants, hotels, and other entertainment venues that in most cases have reinvigorated the downtown core.

Additionally, building a new centre would not negate keeping the existing VCC facility as an extension to the Fairmont Empress’ meeting room inventory. If this was to be the case, both convention facilities could still work together in attracting even more business events simultaneously or solicit larger conferences to be split between the two.

The three scenario options outlined above will also define the type of ownership structure (public or private) over the long term and how this strategic choice might impact the final decision.

Private Ownership Model	Public Ownership Model
Profit-driven enterprise with an aim to maximize return on investment	Public-interest focus with an emphasis on economic impact development and contribution for the city and region
Shorter decision-making process on innovation, renovations, and governance.	Greater oversight and governance as a publicly funded organization
Limited oversight by stakeholders on strategy and priorities	Longer lead time on major facility improvements and innovations
Limited authority in any future change in scope and functionality of the facility	Inclusive stakeholder-driven strategic priorities and directions
Limited community and social initiatives interests	Guaranteed long term vocation of the facility
Less susceptible to government policy changes	More likely to consider social and community needs and not-for-profit events
	Susceptible to political changes, policy and budgets

Regardless of which of the above options are considered, discussions on the subject will need to take place within the next 36 months as the VCC's present lease ends in 2037 and planning for any of the above options will require a significant ramp-up process. Granted, option 1 will require less time to prepare, although the private owner may have alternative plans for the site which would leave little option but to find a new location for the convention centre.

Options 2 and 3 would require public consultations, inter-governmental funding agreements, design and engineering concepts, as well as feasibility projections before any confirmed approval to proceed would be provided. When considering the timeline for the latest new convention facility in Canada, The BMO Centre in Calgary, the first feasibility study was undertaken in 2014, and the facility opened in June 2024, after a ten-year process.

It is highly recommended that regardless of which option is considered, a fully developed conference centre feasibility study should be initiated in 2024 for delivery in early 2025, to be used as baseline for future discussions on the potential options.

Greater Victoria Hotel Sector Analysis

Greater Victoria is one of the leading tourism destinations in Canada and continues to grow its reputation as a must-see destination. As a result, the destination has experienced steady growth in visitor volumes both pre and post pandemic. Broadly, Greater Victoria's visitor economy has regained business to pre-pandemic levels.

Greater Victoria's major tourism partners continue to be positive about the future of the visitor economy over the coming years, with most reporting and/or forecasting year over year increases in visitor traffic and predicting demand growth will continue for the foreseeable future:

- YYJ is forecasting 3% annual increases in passenger traffic from 2025, culminating in 3 million passengers by 2040.
- Greater Victoria's international ferry services report having regained pre-pandemic traffic levels in 2023 and are forecasting 3% to 4% increases in demand over the next several years.
- BC Ferries is at 90% capacity year-round into Victoria, which limits the amount of additional traffic able to travel into the region.
- Cruise business returned to pre-pandemic levels in 2023 and is forecast to remain strong for the coming years in addition to possible establishment of small ship home-porting.
- Convention business is ahead of pace for upcoming years and remains strong beyond 2026.

With the positive impact of increased demand across most sectors, Greater Victoria now faces four significant issues likely to impede or constrain its visitor economy:

- 1. The lack of available hotel inventory to meet the growing demand,**
- 2. Continuing increases in hotel room prices, which may limit the type of visitors who can afford to come to Greater Victoria,**
- 3. Recently introduced BC legislation restricting short-term shared accommodations (Airbnb), resulting in a significant reduction of accommodations inventory, and**
- 4. The lack of capacity to significantly increase meetings and convention business due to the limited size of Victoria Convention Centre.**

Greater Victoria's hotel inventory has contracted significantly over the past decade, leaving visitors with fewer hotel options and increasing hotel rates. Client surveys and feedback from BEV's Customer Advisory Board indicate Victoria might overprice itself for convention business and leisure travellers in the coming years.

Victoria has become a preferred Tier 2 city for business events, and planners are willing to contend with delegates needing two flights to get here, given that Tier 1 cities such as Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver continue to have space availability issues and their room rates continue to increase significantly. However, this two-flight compromise may become less attractive if the costs of doing business, particularly hotel room rates, are close to those in Tier 1 cities. Greater Victoria experienced a net loss of 535 rooms between 2014 and 2018 and this decline has continued since 2018 with a further net loss of 1,047 rooms. Overall, the destination has gone from a high of 6,470 rooms in 2009 to a record low of 4,695 rooms in 2023, which is a 27% decrease over the last decade (see Chart 1). This contraction in rooms inventory has been accompanied by significant gains in average daily rate (ADR), from approximately \$150 in 2016 to more than \$240 for November YTD 2023 (see Chart 2).

This can be explained by three main factors:

- Loss of overall hotel inventory in a market with increased demand in all segments (leisure, business events, sport, cruise),
- Economy-branded hotels comprising the majority of lost inventory, leaving mostly upper scale downtown hotels as the primary option, and
- Increases in visitor traffic during shoulder seasons.

Recent provincial legislation tightening regulations and limiting accommodation options in the shared economy will compound these room availability issues.

CHART 1: Greater Victoria Hotel Rooms Inventory Change

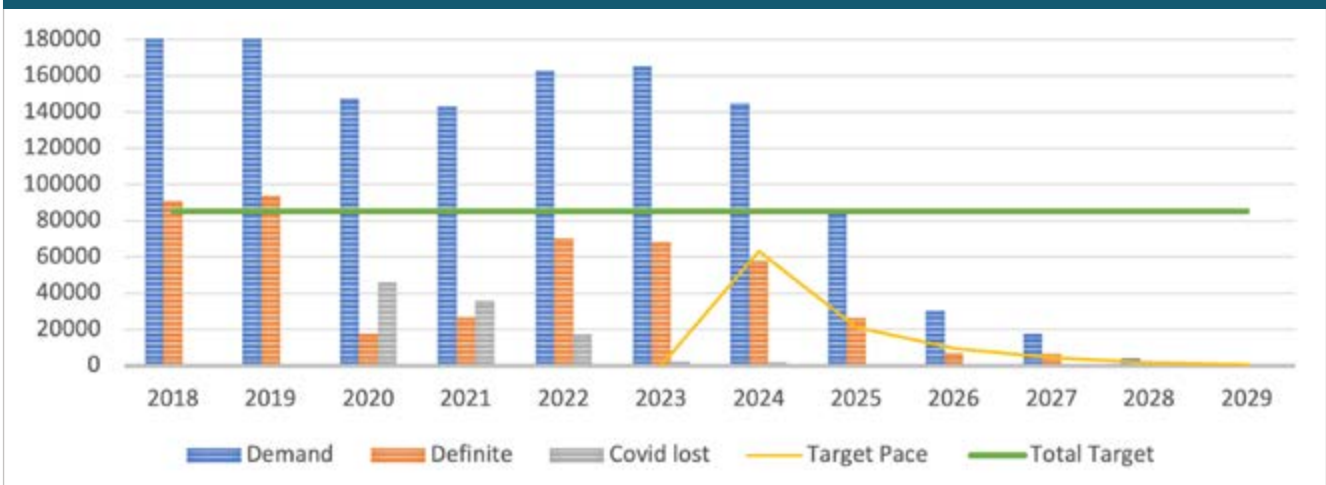


Source: Destination Greater Victoria & STR

CHART 2: Victoria Hotel Occupancy and ADR\$



CHART 3: Victoria Convention Pace (Delegates)



Source: Destination Greater Victoria Pace April 2024

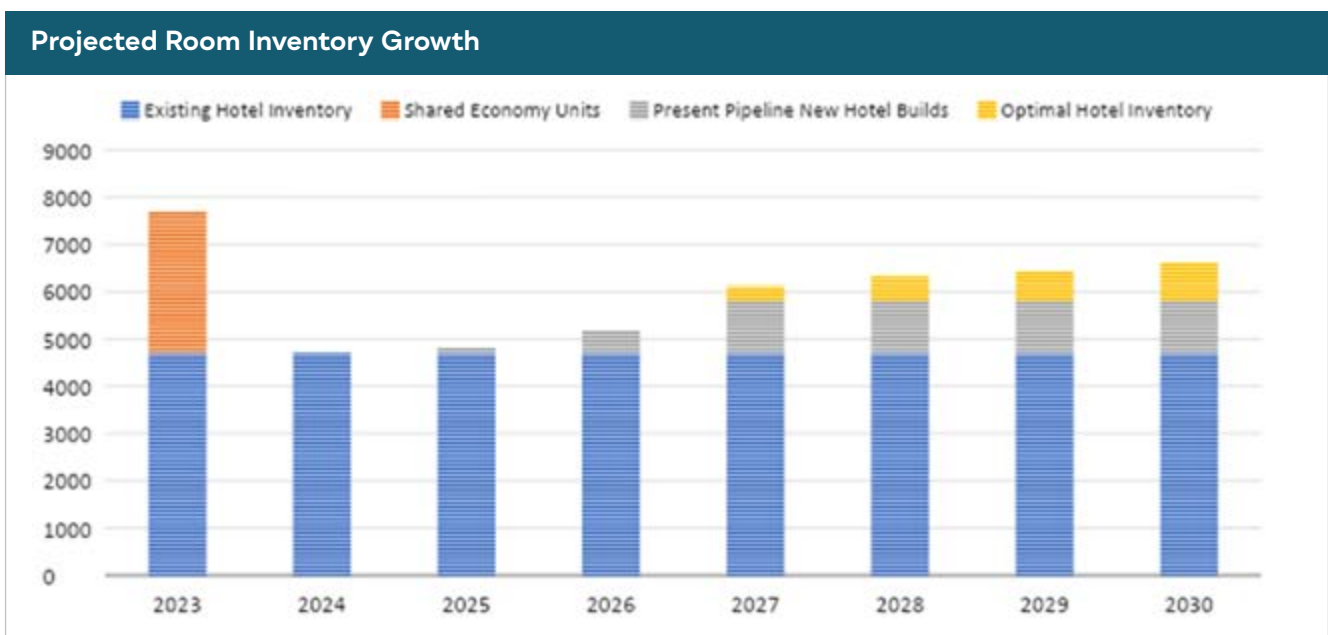
Overall, it is estimated that between 2,000 to 3,000 rooms within the Greater Victoria region have been removed from inventory. With an estimated annual occupancy rate between 60% and 70%, the loss of these rooms (amounting to 1,200 to 2,100 rooms per night) will significantly increase demand for alternative options and continue to add pressure on the remaining hotel inventory.

Looking Forward

In 2018, recognizing the decline in hotel inventory and with support from the City of Victoria, Destination Greater Victoria adopted a hotel attraction strategy to identify potential locations within the City where hotel development could be considered and encourage developers to initiate investments in the sector. Since then, and despite the complete pause due to the pandemic, several hotel projects have been put forward to the City for development:

1. **Broad Street (Duck’s Block) by Chard Development – 135 rooms**
2. **Blanshard Street (Wintergarden Hotel) by Merchant House Capital – 200 rooms**
3. **Government Street boutique hotel by Ocean Gate Developments Inc that is still under consideration for City submission – 145 to 190 rooms**
4. **Blanshard Street (BC Power Commission) by Reliance – 77 rooms**
5. **Marriott Town Suites Victoria Airport – 129 rooms**
6. **Sandman Signature Hotel – 179 rooms**

Adding these potential 1,169 hotel rooms would increase the inventory by 25% to 5,864 rooms, which is still well below the 2009 peak. Based on continued growth in demand and the currently limited hotel inventory, Greater Victoria could absorb an additional 800-1200 hotel rooms in the next five years, and 2000 hotel rooms over the next decade. To date these new hotel projects remain in the planning phase, pending municipal approvals, required zoning amendments and more favourable interest rates. Several other hotel projects are also in the exploratory phase, but to date applications have not been submitted. A new hotel could see its doors open at the earliest in late 2025. The chart below illustrates potential growth of Greater Victoria’s hotel inventory based on potential projects, loss of shared-economy accommodations and regaining past inventory levels.



As visitor demand continues to grow so will the need for more hotel rooms across all categories. The hotel community understands that fewer hotel rooms will continue to add pressure on room price, which in the long run could have the detrimental impact of Victoria pricing itself out of the market. This would make the region primarily reliant on a smaller volume of high-end traveller segments mostly aimed at the peak summer season. The consequences of a potential decline or stagnation in visitor volumes could not only adversely affect tourism stakeholders and operators dependent on greater volumes of visitors throughout the year, but also small business owners on the periphery of the visitor economy.

Ultimately, Greater Victoria would benefit from having a broad range of hotels types, from additional 3 and 4 star branded hotels and boutique hotels in the downtown area to more extended stay and economy branded hotels in the neighbouring municipalities.

Strategic Priority

To address this issue and help increase interest in hotel development in Greater Victoria, Destination Greater Victoria will work in conjunction with municipal partners and the business community to continue promoting a regional hotel development approach that incorporates the following strategies:

1. **Developing a regional inventory of potential development sites.**
2. **Considering a municipal tax deferralment incentive policy for hotel developments.**
3. **Specific hotel development strategies within municipal economic development agencies.**
4. **Policies promoting expediting zoning changes needed for hotel developments in identified areas.**
5. **Leverage existing hotel companies (Accor, Marriott, Choice, Wyndham, Hilton, Accent, and Sandman) to add secondary brands in market.**
6. **Encourage local governments to increase the speed and efficiency of hotel development applications.**





Stakeholder Engagement



Stakeholder Engagement

As previously noted, with support from DGV's team from January to October 2023 MMGY NextFactor and FLOOR13 engaged with more than 125 stakeholders through focus groups, direct interviews, community town halls, and a visioning workshop, while more than 500 residents of Greater Victoria responded to a comprehensive online survey. The primary purpose of this engagement was to identify and understand opportunities and challenges for the future of Greater Victoria as a destination for visitors and a place for residents to live, work, and play. Alongside this there were structured evaluations of the destination using the DestinationNEXT Assessment, a Victoria Conference Centre Development Analysis, and a Greater Victoria Hotel Inventory Analysis.

Two areas where the plan could have benefited from deeper engagement were with local First Nations and with youth. These are gaps rather than shortcomings of the Plan. Both of these important areas of engagement will move forward and inform further development and implementation of the Plan; however, this will occur along timelines that best suit the priorities and resources of each stakeholder group. In particular, Destination Greater Victoria will ensure its staff are trained in readiness to work effectively and appropriately with First Nations if there is a desire to engage with this Destination Master Plan.



Summary of Engagement

- **Steering Committee sessions**
- **Board of Directors meetings**
- **24 in-depth one-on-one Stakeholder Interviews**
- **10 Focus Groups**
- **3 Community Town Halls**
- **505 responses to an online Resident Survey**
- **130 responses to DestinationNEXT Assessment**

Steering Committee

A Steering Committee comprising 16 industry and community leaders in Greater Victoria was assembled to help guide the planning process, advise on key considerations, promote alignment with existing strategies and initiatives, and provide insights for the Destination Master Plan from development through to Plan completion. The Steering Committee met for several working sessions during 2023, and many Committee members participated in interviews, focus groups, surveys, and assessments. The Steering Committee also provided input and feedback during the Visioning Workshop.

Destination Greater Victoria Board of Directors

The industry and community leaders serving on Destination Greater Victoria's Board of Directors shared their input, experience, and expertise to inform this plan on multiple occasions. These included the 2023 Board Retreat, updates at quarterly Board meetings, during the Visioning Workshop, and through individual participation in interviews, focus groups, surveys, and assessments.

Stakeholder Interviews

Between January and May 2023, a total of 24 in-depth one-on-one interviews were conducted with industry experts, community leaders, and other stakeholders, who provided detailed specific insights about Greater Victoria. These interviews occurred in-person or virtually and focused on:

- The most significant opportunities for Greater Victoria.
- The most significant challenges facing Greater Victoria.
- Topics and issues that the Destination Master Plan should address to best support the long-term growth, prosperity, and sustainability of Greater Victoria's visitor economy.

Focus Groups

Between January and May 2023, the project team facilitated 10 sector-specific focus group sessions with a total of more than 70 participants. These highly interactive sessions were conducted in-person as well as virtually. In line with best practice, participants were grouped according to stakeholder segments to maximize depth of discussions:

- Accommodations (x2)
- Restaurants, Retail and Tourism Services (x2)
- Attractions, Experiences, Transportation and Sightseeing
- Meetings and Conference Planners
- Municipal, Indigenous, Sport and Infrastructure
- Civic and Education Leaders
- Westshore Communities
- Saanich Peninsula
- Resident Associations

The focus groups explored the following and related issues from sector-specific perspectives:

- The most significant opportunities for Greater Victoria.
- The most significant challenges facing Greater Victoria.
- The best aspects about working and residing in Greater Victoria.
- Where and how the sector of the tourism industry and/or community can help to drive further growth, alignment, and long-term success for Greater Victoria's visitor economy.

Community Town Halls

Three community town halls were facilitated in May 2023. To obtain input regionally, these were hosted at Royal Roads University, the Saanich Fairgrounds, and the Victoria Conference Centre, and were collectively attended by approximately 30 residents. These sessions offered residents further opportunity to share their perspectives on Greater Victoria as a destination as well as their vision for the future of tourism in the region. Each session focused on solutions-oriented exercises and discussion, including thoughts on emerging strategic themes and initiatives.



Opportunities and Challenges Identified from Interviews, Focus Groups, and Town Halls

The following key opportunities and challenges for Greater Victoria's visitor economy were identified during interviews, focus groups, and town halls.

Notably, these opportunities, challenges, and related themes emerged consistently across stakeholders involved in the engagement sessions, indicating high levels of alignment and cohesion in the destination:

Key Opportunities

Expanded Convention Facility

Major Events, Festivals, and Attractions

Addressing Seasonality

Inner Harbour Redevelopment and Activation

Additional Accommodations

Sustainability and Innovation

Key Challenges

Homelessness

Affordability

Workforce and Sourcing Labour

Connectivity and Mobility

Resident Survey

In consultation with Destination Greater Victoria, MMGY NextFactor developed and administered an online survey to understand residents' perceptions regarding tourism and quality of life in Greater Victoria. The perspective of residents about their community and how tourism affects their lives is essential when looking to the future. The visitor economy has shared community value because it contributes to the economy through job creation, visitor spending, and development of facilities, and influences the social fabric, brand, and essence of the community. To have a cohesive and aligned community, residents' expectations must be understood and considered, and the visitor economy must be contributing in positive ways to their quality of life. When you build a great place to live, you are building a great place to visit, but residents remain foundational.

The survey explored factors important to residents' quality of life, perceptions of experiences in Greater Victoria, the destination's most and least favourable attributes, opportunities for tourism, and awareness and understanding of tourism and its benefits. The survey remained open from May 15 to July 17, 2023, and a total of 505 residents responded. The sample was broadly representative of the demographics of Greater Victoria's population. Almost 40% of respondents resided in municipalities other than the City of Victoria, and almost 50% had lived in Greater Victoria for more than 20 years.

Main findings from the survey included:

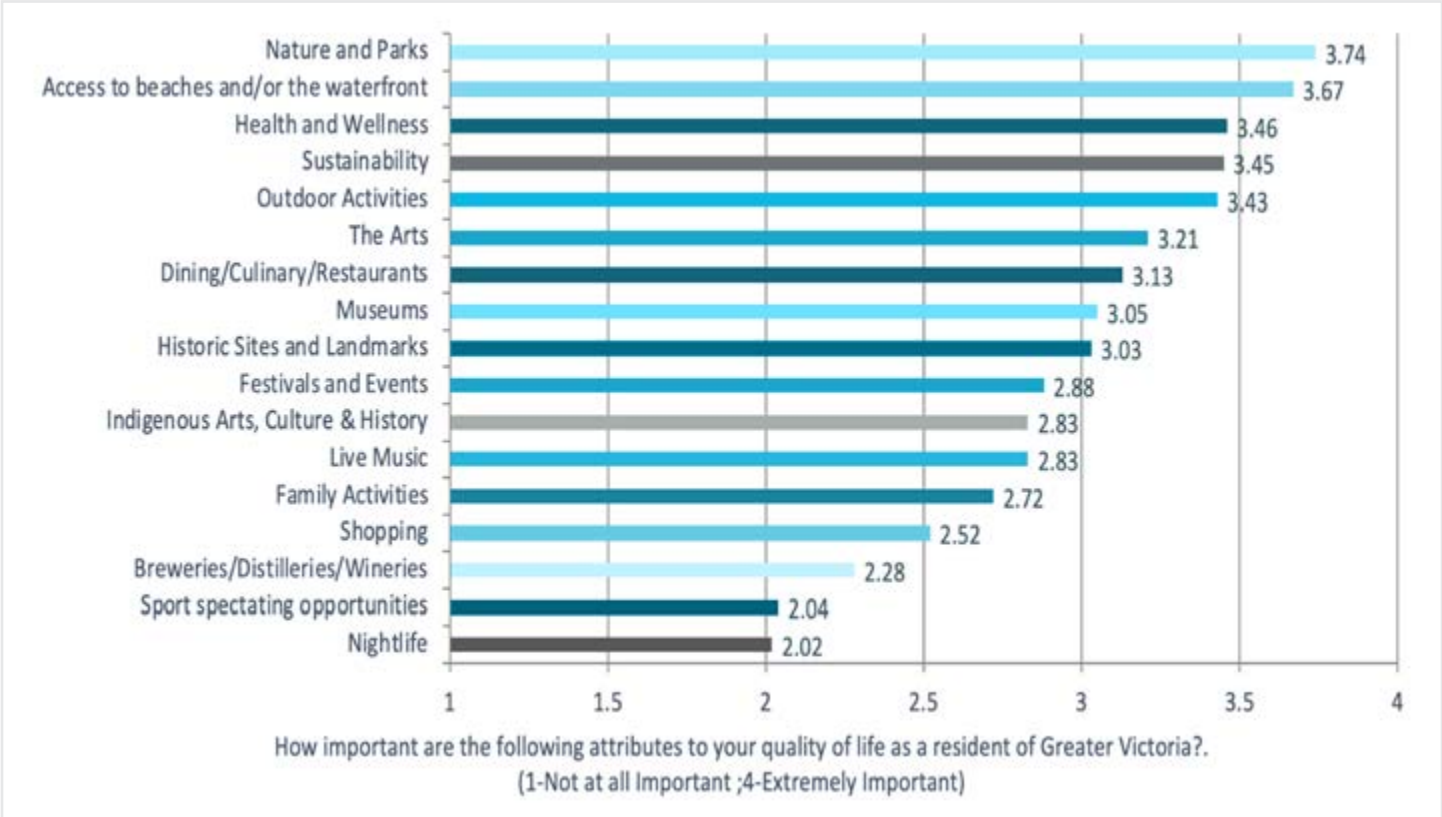
- The positive benefits of tourism outweigh potential negative impacts.
- The primary target market should be visitors who care about protecting the natural resources of Greater Victoria and are respectful of residents.
- Tourism is an important factor in making Greater Victoria a great place to live and it helps support amenities and attractions for locals to enjoy.
- Sustainability is key to future developments in the local tourism industry.
- There are opportunities to increase awareness among residents about the benefits of the visitor economy and work being done to make tourism more sustainable.

Residents have a very strong connection to the natural outdoor assets and experiences in Greater Victoria. When asked to state the first three words or phrases that come to mind when thinking of Greater Victoria, the consistently most frequent responses were "Nature, Green, Beautiful, Parks, Climate, Weather, Ocean, and Gardens".

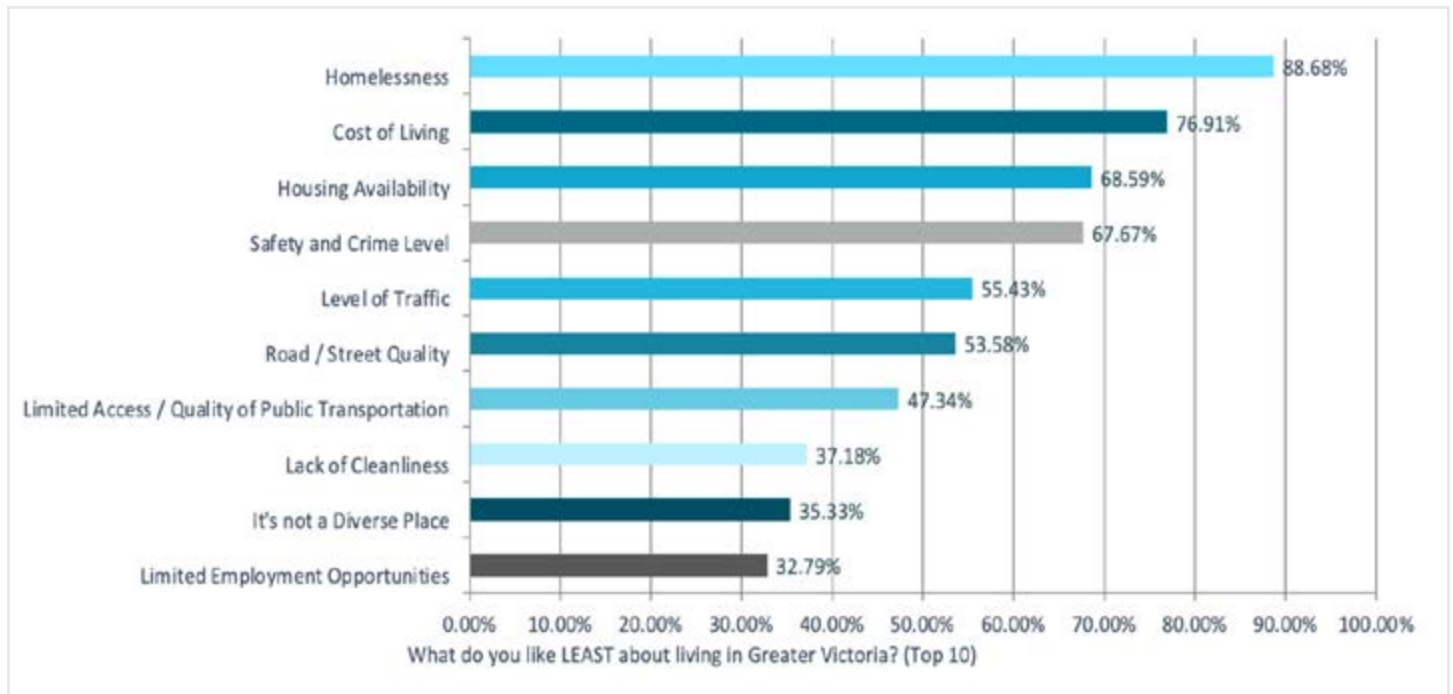




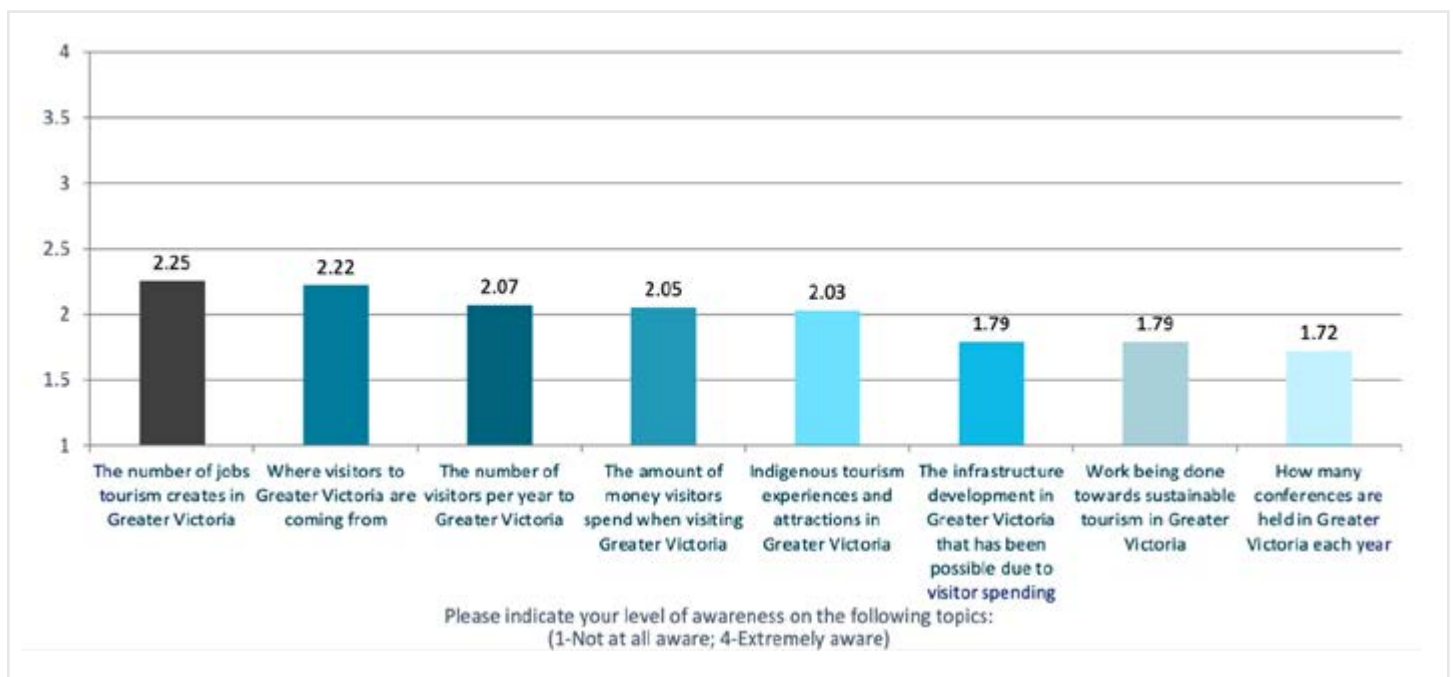
When asked about the factors and features of Greater Victoria that are most important for their quality of life, residents ranked nature, parks, beach and waterfront access, health and wellness, sustainability, and outdoor activities highest.



When asked about the least favourable attributes of living in Greater Victoria, residents identified homelessness, cost of living, housing availability, and safety issues as primary concerns.



Residents were only somewhat aware of specific details, achievements and/or metrics for tourism in Greater Victoria, as shown in the chart below. This is not unexpected given that respondents were unlikely to be tourism experts or working in the industry. These results point to opportunities to better communicate the parameters and value of Greater Victoria's visitor economy locally.



However, as illustrated in the chart below, residents showed high awareness of the impacts and benefits of tourism more broadly, notably in terms of business opportunities, employment, and contributions to taxes and community facilities. Residents also identified where tourism could have negative impacts on quality of life, highlighting issues to account for in future development of the visitor economy.



Importantly, the results of the resident survey were consistent with findings from engagement with other stakeholders through interviews, focus groups, and the DestinationNEXT Assessment. This signals a high level of alignment across the community about key core values (such as nature, outdoor assets and activities, and sustainability) as well as main areas of concern (such as transportation and mobility, costs of living and social issues). These findings have been considered in developing this Destination Master Plan and will inform the strategic goals and opportunities to amplify favourable attributes while addressing concerns.

DestinationNEXT Assessment

The DestinationNEXT Scenario Model and Assessment Tool was developed by MMGY NextFactor and Destinations International to help stakeholders strategically evaluate their destination. The diagnostic tool is founded on a comprehensive stakeholder survey that measures destination strength as well as destination alignment based on a series of 24 variables. Survey results are then used to position the destination into a scenario model, which shows specific opportunities to build upon and factors or considerations to address. This assessment is unique in the tourism and business events industries and has been recognized as one of the most significant developments in destination management in recent years for informing strategies. More than 375 detailed destination assessments have been completed globally as of the end of 2023.

The 12 variables that measure Destination Strength are:



The 12 variables that measure Destination Alignment are:



Stakeholders

MMGY NextFactor used DestinationNEXT to conduct a detailed assessment of Greater Victoria’s visitor economy.

Importantly, because the DestinationNEXT Assessment relies upon knowledge of the visitor economy and its drivers, the survey was only distributed to industry and partner stakeholders (as shown at right) rather than the general public.



Scenario Model Results

A total of 130 stakeholders from Greater Victoria’s visitor economy completed the DestinationNEXT Assessment survey. These comprised industry partners (54%), community leaders (12%), customers (12%), government leaders (9%), and Destination Greater Victoria’s Board of Directors and Staff (13%).

The survey results were then used to position Greater Victoria into the Scenario Model, which highlights relative strengths and weaknesses as well as opportunities to build upon.

Overall, stakeholders assessed Greater Victoria in the “Voyagers” category (as shown below), with above average ratings for destination alignment and opportunities to build destination strength from a visitor experience perspective.

It is important to note that ratings of Greater Victoria by customers were considerably higher than ratings by other stakeholders, placing the destination in the middle of the “Trailblazer” quadrant. This favourable rating by a key segment of stakeholders using the destination’s facilities and services may also reflect the views of Greater Victoria’s visitors.



Destination Strength and Destination Alignment

The variables for Destination Strength and Destination Alignment were scored from 1 (low) to 5 (high), with 2.5 representing a mid-point or 'average'. Statements that received the highest and lowest scores for Destination Strength and Destination Alignment are summarized in the following tables:

Destination Strength: Highest & Lowest Statement Scores

Highest-scored Statements

Statement	Performance
1. Wide variety of accessible hiking and biking trails	4.54
2. High-quality outdoor recreation experiences	4.51
3. Known as a walkable destination	4.47
4. Bicycle-friendly destination	4.29
5. Unique and high-quality dining options	4.25

Lowest-scored Statements

Statement	Performance
1. Limited issues with homelessness	1.78
2. Sufficient ride share services	1.84
3. Adequate parking facilities	2.43
4. Directional multi-language signage	2.52
5. Airport accessible with public transit	2.59

Destination Alignment: Highest & Lowest Statement Scores

Highest-scored Statements

Statement	Performance
1. DMO and tourism industry play a critical role in long-term economic development	4.39
2. Supportive industry leaders and stakeholders	4.37
3. DMO measures and tracks tourism industry performance	4.26
4. Protecting and enhancing the natural environment	4.24
5. Active and engaged partner dining options	4.21

Lowest-scored Statements

Statement	Performance
1. Adequate affordable housing for workers	1.55
2. Affordable daycare options for workers	1.96
3. Adequate workforce for frontline hospitality jobs	2.15
4. Adequate healthcare options for workers	2.54
5. Adequate workforce for management jobs	2.62

Stakeholder Comments

Notably, when stakeholders were asked the open-ended question “What one thing could Greater Victoria do to become a better visitor destination?” the comments were consistent and focused on the following themes:

Conventions, meetings, and accommodations:

Advocating for convention center expansion or redevelopment with a headquarter hotel.

“We are losing our capacity to host most national conferences due to lack of infrastructure compared to cities of similar size. A plan needs to be on the table to give hope for future conference rotation.”

Attractions and experiences:

Working to promote and develop year-round experiences.

“Promote Greater Victoria as a year-round destination with great attractions/ activities for groups outside of the peak summer season.”

Local mobility and access:

Supporting enhanced transportation infrastructure for visitors and residents.

“We need to streamline transportation across the region.”

Conclusion

As for other aspects of information gathering undertaken for this Plan, the attributes, opportunities, and considerations highlighted through the DestinationNEXT Assessment were consistent with and validated by stakeholders throughout the engagement phase. By focusing on further developing the visitor experience in Greater Victoria, including connectivity, mobility, Inner Harbour activation, accommodation options, and expanding or redeveloping the Convention Centre, Greater Victoria will move into the “Trailblazer” quadrant.



Visioning Workshop

Findings and insights derived from the engagement and assessment activities were brought together as the foundation for a Visioning Workshop conducted in October 2023.

The workshop had a diverse range of more than 50 participants, including members of the Steering Committee, DGV's Board of Directors, industry and community leaders, and other stakeholders. The event opened with a summary of research completed and key findings as well as case studies of other destinations addressing similar opportunities and issues. Participants then moved into groups to envision an ideal future for Greater Victoria's visitor economy and explore priority areas of focus and opportunities.

The workshop generated robust discussion about the long-term options and vision for the destination, brainstorming proposed initiatives, what could be possible in Greater Victoria, and where efforts should be focused. There was also informative discussion about opportunities and issues for the destination, including sustainability and stewardship, convention and hotel infrastructure, mobility and connectivity, Inner Harbour redevelopment, and attractions and experiences.

Participants supported further refinement of the vision, strategic goals and initiatives developed during the planning process, and engaged in thoughtful debates about the benefits, consequences and opportunities arising from proposed initiatives. Insights and feedback from the Visioning Workshop were used to validate and round-out the recommendations provided in the Destination Master Plan.





Overarching Key Findings



Overarching Key Findings

The following key findings emerged from the extensive research, analyses, engagements, assessments, and consultations undertaken during the Plan development process:

1. Victoria is a strong tourism destination and is punching above its weight in many aspects.
2. Lost hotel inventory should be replaced, and new accommodations should be considered throughout Greater Victoria.
3. Action should be taken to determine the future of conventions and convention hosting in Victoria.
4. The Inner Harbour has tremendous potential as a hub for vibrancy and event hosting. Redevelopment and activation of the Inner Harbour should prioritize placemaking and quality of experience for all.
5. Agritourism offerings should be expanded throughout Greater Victoria.
6. Year-round tourism to Greater Victoria could be stronger, and events, attractions, and experiences targeting the shoulder seasons should be considered to address seasonality.
7. Some public policies, particularly those related to hosting events within parks and similar public spaces, are limiting tourism opportunities and event activation.
8. Respect for Indigenous peoples, their history, and the environment are core values in Greater Victoria. This is a differentiator from a visitor perspective and could be further celebrated and highlighted.



Destination Vision

Destination Vision

Greater Victoria is a mature destination, and this Plan presents a vision for rejuvenation over the next 10 years, in alignment with community values. When the Steering Committee and other key stakeholders discussed and developed the shared vision for the future of Greater Victoria's visitor economy, they were aspirational in their approach to addressing some of Greater Victoria's key opportunities. This includes the tremendous opportunity to revitalize Victoria's iconic Inner Harbour – as a premier hosting destination, in a way that aligns with the destination's values of innovation, stewardship and sustainability, and inclusivity of all people.

The result is a vision that is a desired future state for Greater Victoria. It is not a marketing statement; rather, it is due north for people in the community to come together and collaboratively implement the initiatives in the plan.

In developing the vision, five unique destination signatures emerged during community engagement across Greater Victoria.

1. Caring for the natural environment is a source of pride and identity.
2. The community is committed to Reconciliation and inclusion for all and sees the value in local First Nations and Indigenous Peoples sharing their culture through tourism and placemaking.
3. A community that provides opportunities to foster innovative ideas.
4. An expanded convention centre and additional accommodation options are central to growing the economic impact of the visitor economy in the region.
5. The Inner Harbour serves as the “front porch” for Greater Victoria; it is the nucleus of experiences, ideas, and innovative ideas and experiences.

From those five signatures, the vision for the future of Greater Victoria's visitor economy is:

Greater Victoria is recognized as a global leader in sustainable tourism and events, delivering world-class experiences while thriving in alignment with local community values and the natural environment.





**Destination Master Plan
Strategic Goals
& Objectives**

Strategic Goals

Emerging from this process are five strategic goals that offer guidance regarding how Greater Victoria will achieve its shared vision. Each goal is supported by initiatives that, in order to be successful, must be contributed to by multiple partners and stakeholders throughout Greater Victoria. When successfully implemented, these goals and initiatives will have a positive impact on the quality of life, quality of experience, and quality of economy in Greater Victoria. It will also have a positive impact on the municipalities around Victoria. When there is compression in Victoria, where hotels are close to or at capacity, it forces visitors to seek accommodations outside downtown and into regional municipalities, increasing the economic impact and vibrancy of the visitor economy for the region.

In combination, these priorities have a synergistic effect by supporting each other to contribute to overall destination development and success. For example, enhanced tourism infrastructure supports the efficient implementation of new attractions and experiences, which leads to economic vitality for businesses, the workforce, and the community, while placemaking, stewardship, and sustainability efforts ensure the destination remains attractive, inclusive, accessible and environmentally responsible.

The five strategic goals are:

- 1 Enhance Tourism Infrastructure**
- 2 Create New Attractions, Events, and Experiences**
- 3 Emphasize Stewardship and Placemaking**
- 4 Augment Connectivity and Mobility**
- 5 Ensure Continued Sustainability & Innovation**

Enhance Tourism Infrastructure

What it means

Tourism infrastructure refers to the physical and organizational structures, facilities, and systems that support and enable tourism activities within a destination. These elements are essential for smooth and positive experiences and encompass a wide range of components that contribute to the overall experience of visitors and the efficient management of tourist flows.

Why it's important

While referred to as tourism infrastructure, these elements also support positive resident experiences and quality of life through job creation, increased impact of visitor spending, and the development of assets the community wouldn't otherwise have.

How it will benefit Greater Victoria's visitor economy

In Greater Victoria, enhanced tourism infrastructure will serve visitors and residents year-round, with the goal of creating a less seasonal visitor economy, rather than the significant peaks of summer and less business over winter. Importantly, it will also address aging infrastructure in the community that is vital to the visitor economy, the destination's brand and reputation, and residents. The most significant tourism infrastructure opportunities in Greater Victoria relate to the conference centre and hotel inventory.

How it will be achieved

Expanding or developing a new conference facility would not only ensure the destination remains competitive in the Canadian business events market, which is its main feeder market, but also aid in increasing its market share in the U.S. and international business events sectors. Over the past decade, competitive destinations within Canada have responded to the increased demand for business events by expanding their existing convention facilities, constructing new ones, or actively planning such developments. As Greater Victoria continues to pursue both domestic and international conference business, consideration must also be given to the next phase of the Victoria Conference Centre's evolution as demand for meetings and conferences continues to grow.

With regard to hotel inventory, based on continued demand growth as well as recognition of the lack of inventory by the hotel community, Greater Victoria could readily absorb an additional 1,200 to 2,000 hotel rooms over the next decade.

Other infrastructure opportunities for Greater Victoria include adding event hosting venues, supporting redevelopment and further activation of the Inner Harbour, and investing in sport infrastructure upgrades or redevelopments to facilitate more year-round sports event visitation.

Key initiatives

- a. Revitalize and activate the Inner Harbour, invest in aging harbour infrastructure, and support the redevelopment of Ship Point, including an amphitheatre for event hosting.
- b. Incorporate more seating areas and multi-purpose gathering spaces, particularly downtown and at the Inner Harbour.
- c. Develop and action a plan to ensure meetings and conference facilities align with the needs of our dynamic region and are future-proof to ensure Greater Victoria remains competitive in this key market.
- d. Develop more meeting and hosting spaces throughout the downtown and adjoining areas.
- e. Develop hotel options for a diverse range of traveller types and price points, including family-friendly and extended stay options.
- f. Develop full-service hotel options downtown and across the region.
- g. Develop local accommodations (bed & breakfasts, small independent hotels, inns, farm stays, and retreats) to complement regional attractions.
- h. Actively engage in efforts to ensure the Royal BC Museum stays in the Inner Harbour.

Create New Attractions, Events, and Experiences

What it means

New events, attractions and experiences can contribute significantly to Greater Victoria in various ways, fostering economic, social and cultural development. Attractions, events and experiences also enhance quality of life, provide opportunities to develop and build brand awareness, and drive new and repeat visitation.

Why it's important

New attractions, events, and experiences become drivers that support year-round visitation and generate overnight stays in off-peak periods. They can also serve as additional incentives for meetings and conference delegates to extend their stays. They can also be an important opportunity to ensure the local visitor economy benefits local First Nations, reflecting a desire to include the Nations as key participants and helping to promote Indigenous owned businesses. Some local Nations have developed tourism offerings while others have shown interest in exploring opportunities.

How it will benefit Greater Victoria's visitor economy

The successful integration of new events, attractions, and experiences into a destination requires careful planning, community involvement, and sustainable practices to ensure long-term viability and positive impacts.

How it will be achieved

The Greater Victoria region has tremendous opportunity to build on its natural strengths with additional attractions, events, and experiences to create vibrancy, further options for visitors, and increased draws for visitors and residents with niche interests.

Key initiatives

- a. Develop a regional event strategy that builds alignment and collaboration between events in Greater Victoria to create stronger draws for visitors.
- b. Attract or develop a signature annual winter event that extends to neighbouring municipalities and showcases the people, history, and talent of residents (such as festivals based on music, Indigenous history and/or art).
- c. Develop and promote activations in downtown Victoria, including lighting shows, pop-up concerts, artwork displays or similar events.
- d. Support in principle the shared vision of the Xwsepsum Nation, Songhees Nation, and the Maritime Museum of BC to establish the Future of History Project in the Inner Harbour.
- e. Support performing arts companies with promotion, pop-up performances, cruise excursion performances, packaging, and advocacy.
- f. Advocate to provincial and federal governments for competitive bid funds.
- g. Add or enhance all-season outdoor hiking, biking, and kayaking trails.
- h. The Greater Victoria Sport Tourism Commission will collaborate with local governments and other partners to conduct a regional sports infrastructure gap analysis and develop a targeted action plan.



Emphasize Stewardship and Placemaking

What it means

Placemaking is a multi-faceted approach to planning, designing, and managing public spaces. It focuses on highlighting and enhancing the quality and character of a place, and making it more vibrant, engaging, and inclusive for the people who use and inhabit it.

Why it's important

Placemaking goes beyond traditional urban planning by emphasizing the importance of community involvement, cultural identity, and the overall experience of a space. Done correctly, placemaking can contribute to economic vitality by attracting businesses, visitors, and investment. Well designed and vibrant public spaces can be economic drivers for a community. Looking to the future, placemaking needs to respond to the realities of climate change, global warming, and rising water levels. Ensuring the sustainability and resiliency of our places through effective design, adoption of circular economies, decarbonization of the transportation network, and resilient food systems will support effective responses to the changing environment.

How it will benefit Greater Victoria's visitor economy

Improving placemaking brings opportunities for community engagement and regional collaboration. In Greater Victoria, significant opportunities in placemaking include ensuring Indigenous culture and place is reflected, that social challenges are addressed in partnership with the agencies who champion those efforts, and that agritourism opportunities are developed to celebrate and highlight the capabilities of the land and place.

How it will be achieved

Partnership is critical for successful placemaking and typically involves collaboration between multiple stakeholders, including government agencies, local businesses, community organizations, and residents. Partnerships can also help fund and implement placemaking initiatives.

Key initiatives

- a. Activate regional trails by creating a public art trail that links downtown Victoria with neighbouring municipalities.
- b. Partner with local Indigenous artists to lead or support placemaking initiatives.
- c. Continue to support initiatives related to social issues, safety, and homelessness, particularly in downtown Victoria.
- d. Develop and promote unique neighbourhoods and their identities throughout the region with tourism demand generators (art and cultural offerings, events, local restaurants, craft beverages, local markets).
- e. Support local farmers to build capacity and foster circular and resilient local food systems which help achieve overall sustainability goals and speak to the region's brand.
- f. Support accommodation providers in partnering with local agritourism experiences to develop integrated overnight culinary experiences.
- g. Collaborate with experience owners to understand parameters and opportunities to develop unique, boutique accommodations at agritourism experiences.



Augment Connectivity and Mobility

What it means

Enhancing connectivity and mobility is a multifaceted strategy that positively influences tourism, economic development, and the overall livability of a destination. It requires coordinated efforts from government authorities, private stakeholders, and the community to plan, implement, and maintain effective transportation infrastructure.

Why it's important

Enhancing connectivity and mobility in a destination can have numerous positive impacts, contributing to its advancement as well as overall resident satisfaction and support. Improved transportation infrastructure and mobility options play a crucial role in addressing climate change and global warming by decarbonizing the transportation network, shaping the visitor experience, fostering economic development, and encouraging longer and/or repeat visitation.

How it will benefit Greater Victoria's visitor economy

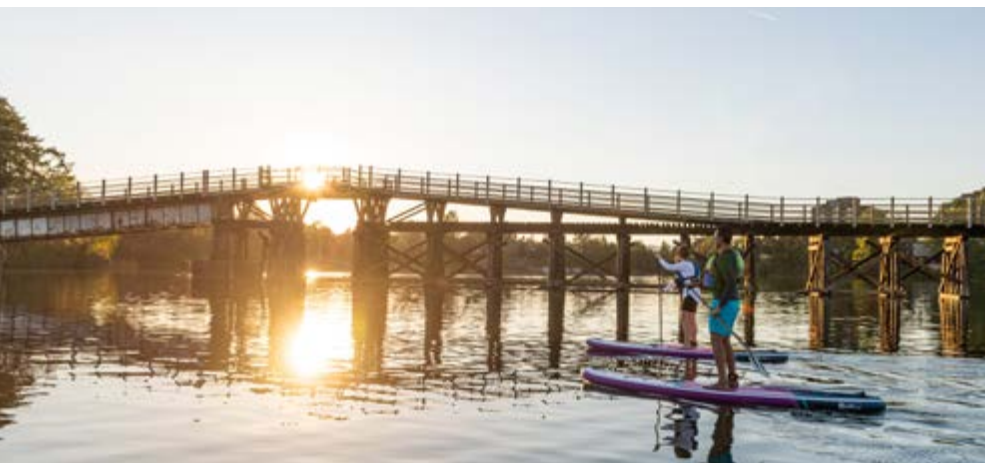
Improved transportation and mobility options not only benefit visitors but enhance the quality of life for residents, which contributes to social license for the visitor economy. Efficient transportation systems make it easier for residents to commute, access services, and participate in cultural and recreational activities.

How it will be achieved

Transportation and mobility options must align with and support community values, sustainability goals, decarbonization efforts, and visitor expectations in order to ensure positive visitor experiences while also being effective for residents. This includes addressing access to downtown Victoria as well as ensuring a variety of mobility options throughout the region.

Key initiatives

- a. Develop an integrated regional transportation strategy.
- b. Support expansion of rapid transit throughout the region, including from downtown to Victoria International Airport and Swartz Bay Ferry Terminal.
- c. Support BC Ferries in advancing and optimizing Swartz Bay terminal expansion plans.
- d. Develop a coach bus parking strategy for downtown Victoria, including dedicated space.
- e. Increase direct air access from Canadian and U.S. destinations by continuing to invest in air route development.
- f. Optimize intermodal connections at Belleville Terminal to leverage the new pre-clearance facilities towards potential small-ship cruise home porting at Ogden Point.
- g. Enhance sustainable, resident-sensitive access between Ogden Point cruise terminal and downtown.
- h. Support further activation and upkeep of scenic pathways and trails, including David Foster Harbour Pathway.
- i. Advocate for increased shared micro-mobility options in the region (bikes, scooters, e-bikes).



Ensure Continued Sustainability & Innovation

What it means

Sustainability and innovation play crucial roles in supporting and enhancing destinations. By integrating sustainable practices and embracing innovative solutions, destinations can create positive economic, social and environmental impacts while ensuring long-term viability.

Why it's important

In Greater Victoria, sustainability is already a valued area of focus. By continuing to adopt eco-friendly initiatives such as waste reduction, energy conservation, and responsible land and resource use, the natural environment will be protected, ensuring Greater Victoria's primary attributes of natural beauty and environment remain intact.

How it will benefit Greater Victoria's visitor economy

Importantly, a focus on sustainability and innovation emphasizes the preservation of Indigenous cultural heritage and local traditions. By respecting and promoting local cultures, Greater Victoria can offer meaningful experiences to visitors and attract conscientious travellers who are willing to spend on authentic and responsible experiences.

Building a sustainable and regenerative tourism economy also aligns with local values, helps to ensure the visitor economy delivers shared community benefits, contributes to the positive social, economic and environmental outcomes, and delivers on Greater Victoria's brand promise. Sustainable destinations are typically built on collaboration between government agencies, businesses, local communities and not-for-profit organizations. Partnerships can lead to shared resources, knowledge exchange, and collective efforts to address sustainability challenges.

How it will be achieved

Integrating technology into visitor management can facilitate more efficient resource use, improved visitor experiences, and better monitoring of environmental impacts. Mobile apps, data analytics, and other technological innovations can enhance and nuance destination management. Sustainability and innovation are integral to the success and resilience of Greater Victoria's visitor economy. By prioritizing responsible practices and embracing new and creative solutions, Greater Victoria's visitor economy will engender positive and lasting impacts on the region, its residents, the environment, and the overall visitor experience.

Key initiatives

- a. Leverage Biosphere Certification for Greater Victoria to further build the destination's brand and credentials and to attract funding to support emerging sustainability initiatives, including with industry partners.
- b. Develop and implement an industry-leading circular economy strategy for Greater Victoria's visitor economy.
- c. Support healthy and sustainable local food systems, including access to locally-grown food for visitor economy businesses.
- d. Work with industry and government partners to reduce waste and carbon emissions, in alignment with provincial and local government policies and targets.
- e. Foster partnerships to support ecological restoration and regeneration.
- f. Extend the destination's commitment to sustainable tourism and a positive visitor-resident interface through innovative strategic planning.



Next Steps

Destination Greater Victoria's Role in Implementing the Destination Master Plan

The strategic goals and recommendations in this Plan are the result of a collaborative and consultative process, and represent the ideas and aspirations of the people who live in and contribute to Greater Victoria.

Achieving the shared vision articulated in this Plan will require a collective, community-wide implementation effort across multiple organizations as well as Destination Greater Victoria, the tourism industry, and community stakeholders.

Destination Greater Victoria does not own the assets and experiences of the local visitor economy, and hence cannot single-handedly move this Destination Master Plan forward. Destination Greater Victoria therefore looks forward to continuing to partner and collaborate with stakeholders across the region to advance the important initiatives in this Plan.

Destination Greater Victoria's roles in implementing this Plan will include:

Advocate:

There will be instances where Destination Greater Victoria advocates for advancement of strategic initiatives for the benefit of Greater Victoria's visitors and residents.

Convene:

Destination Greater Victoria may be conveners or facilitators of groups and those in positions to advance initiatives.

Lead:

There will be instances where Destination Greater Victoria takes the lead as the organization to advance initiatives.

Support:

Finally, Destination Greater Victoria will be the supporting or partnering organization to assist other organizations leading initiatives.





Next Steps and Monitoring & Measuring Success

To be successful, long-term strategic planning requires significant focus and energy on implementation. It is recommended that, as steward of the Destination Master Plan, Destination Greater Victoria, appoints one or more champions responsible for the implementation and ongoing work on the Plan.

Destination Greater Victoria (DGV) may choose to develop an implementation guide or plan to help focus their efforts over the next three to five years. That plan may articulate which partner organizations should be included and also outline roles, responsibilities, and target measures of success, which could be developed in collaboration with implementation partners.

To move forward with meaningful implementation, further stakeholder engagement is recommended. DGV is committed to ongoing engagement with the Indigenous community. DGV will train its staff to ensure readiness to work effectively and appropriately with the First Nations if or when they opt to engage. DGV will also work to ensure the local visitor economy benefits local First Nations, reflecting a desire to include Indigenous communities as key participants in the visitor economy and helping to promote Indigenous businesses. Additionally, youth and young professionals should be engaged in the Plan and its implementation.

It is further recommended there is regular public reporting on the progress of the Plan, to demonstrate accountability and highlight the efforts and organizations involved. Finally, it is recommended that stakeholders consider potential funding sources to enable implementation of the initiatives outlined in this plan.

Greater Victoria is approaching this project from a position of strength that is enviable for many other destinations. The shared efforts in this plan will support continued prosperity within the visitor economy for years to come.

Together, we will continue to advance our destination for the benefit of our residents and visitors. You are invited to join us!



Imagine It's 2035 in Greater Victoria

Imagine it's 2035 in Greater Victoria.

A new conference facility is nearing completion, with great anticipation from the meetings industry in Canada and globally. The facility has extremely strong bookings well into the future thanks to its innovative design, sustainable elements, and accompanying supportive infrastructure, including additional accommodations, secondary event facilities, a redeveloped Inner Harbour, and associated authentic experiences for conference delegates. An additional benefit of this facility and the partnerships, events, and people it attracts is that Greater Victoria has become a hub for sustainable technologies and innovation, attracting forward-thinking entrepreneurs, start-ups, and research collaborations for the region's universities.

The Inner Harbour, including Ship Point, has been redeveloped with a focus on activation and experiences for residents as well as visitors. Boasting an amphitheater, gathering spaces, attractions, water access and engaging experiences, the Inner Harbour has become the envy of waterfront communities because of thoughtful design that has ensured the space is vibrant and a key component of driving visitation and destination marketing. The Inner Harbour hosts a variety of events throughout the year, including a signature event every January that drives visitation in a month when, 10 years ago, there were fewer visitors.

Beyond the Inner Harbour, the Industry, Arts & Innovation District in Rock Bay has transformed the area, creating a destination for performing and visual arts that links easily to the rest of downtown. The Belleville Terminal redevelopment has ensured the visitor experience – as well as access to downtown, the Inner Harbour, trails, and the Industry, Arts & Innovation District – is seamless, safe and welcoming. The ease with which visitors can now access all areas of Victoria is increasing their spending in the community and supporting repeat visitation.

Over the last decade it has become much easier to get to and around Greater Victoria. In addition to the new Belleville Terminal, air access into YYJ has grown, and access to and from the airport to downtown and around the south island has improved thanks to efficient public transportation and consistent shuttles. Enhanced bike-friendly infrastructure is reducing use of vehicles, reducing congestion and carbon emissions, and promoting sustainable mobility.

Greater Victoria has solidified its global reputation as a leader in sustainability and innovation, by hosting international conferences, forums, events and agritourism experiences that highlight its commitment to, and leadership in, environmental stewardship. Events are fully circular, decarbonized and regenerative by design, leaving a lasting positive impact in the community. Residents actively participate in community-driven sustainability initiatives, fostering a sense of pride and ownership in the region's global brand, while visitors have also taken notice and are voluntarily contributing to the care of the community. Festivals in the region have been designed with sustainability in mind, featuring eco-friendly practices such as waste reduction, recycling programs and carbon offset initiatives.

The visitor economy benefits local First Nations and they share their culture with visitors in ways that they desire, including through Indigenous-owned tourism businesses. New world-class experiences, including interactive exhibits, immersive storytelling technologies and personalized tours engage and educate visitors about the history of the area, its traditions and people, and importantly, Reconciliation.

Thanks to resident support and strong alignment of the tourism industry and its partners, Greater Victoria has struck a healthy balance with tourism that is founded in principles of environmental stewardship, sustainability, innovation, and community care. Many of the accomplishments over the past decade can be attributed to the Destination Master Plan, the industry and community leaders who championed its adoption and implementation, and the collaborations that began back in 2024.



Acknowledgements

Destination Master Plan Contributors

Destination Greater Victoria would like to thank the regional community leaders who gave their time and expertise as they served on the Steering Committee, as well as members of DGV's 2023 and 2024 Board of Directors, for providing guidance, leadership, and support throughout the process of developing the Destination Master Plan.

Steering Committee

Jeff Bray

CEO Downtown Victoria Business Association

Britt Burnham

Manager, Community Engagement, District of Central Saanich

Mitchell Edgar

Economic Development Manager, District of Saanich

Terése Finegan

Manager of Economic Development, Township of Esquimalt

Nathan Gauld

Assistant Director, Sales & Events, Victoria Conference Centre

Lindsay Gaunt

Director, Cruise Development, Greater Victoria Harbour Authority

Greg Greene

Chair, Attractions Victoria and General Manager Royal Scot Hotel & Suites

Winnie Lee

Interim CEO, Intercultural Association of Greater Victoria

Bill Lewis

Chair, Hotel Association of Greater Victoria and General Manager, Magnolia Hotel & Spa

Rob Mackay

Director, Customer Experience & Public Affairs, BC Transit

Sandra Richardson

CEO, Victoria Foundation

Kerry Slavens

Director of PR & Engagement, South Island Prosperity Partnership

Spencer Walker

Director and Team Lead, Commercial Banking, CIBC Commercial Banking

Kathy Whitcher

Executive Director, Urban Development Institute, Capital Region

Destination Greater Victoria's Board of Directors

Chris Watson

Chair and General Manager, Best Western Carlton Plaza Hotel

David Gudgel

First Vice Chair and Chief Operating Officer, Kenmore Air

Trina White

Vice Chair and General Manager, The Parkside Hotel & Spa

Brett Soberg

Vice Chair and Co-Owner/Operator, Eagle Wing Whale & Wildlife Tours

Darlene Hollstein

Past Chair and General Manager, The Bay Centre, JLL

Eda Koot

General Manager, Inn at Laurel Point

Kimberley Hughes

General Manager, Delta Hotels by Marriott Victoria Ocean Pointe Resort

Daniel McGowan

General Manager, Fairmont Empress

Madone Pelan

General Manager, The Oak Bay Beach Hotel

Theresa Ito

Principal, Blue Mountain Solutions

Samantha Wilson-Newton

Brand Manager, The Wilson's Group of Companies

Allison Fairhurst

General Manager, Abigail's Hotel

Robert Bettauer

CEO Pacific Institute for Sport Education (PISE), Greater Victoria Sport Tourism Commission Appointee

Spencer Walker

Commercial Banking Director and Team Lead, CIBC, Greater Victoria Chamber of Commerce Appointee

Councillor Stephen

Hammond

Councillor, City of Victoria, City of Victoria Appointee

Councillor Susan Brice

Councillor, District of Saanich, District of Saanich Appointee

Destination Greater Victoria

Paul Nursey, President & CEO

Graham Wallace, VP Strategy, Governance & Stakeholder Engagement

Jeremy Loveday, Director of Public Affairs, Destination Stewardship & Sustainability

Many members of Destination Greater Victoria supported development of this Plan, and all their contributions are recognized and appreciated.

Project Team

We would like to thank the dedicated project team members who worked diligently to move this project forward, from concept to completion. We want to acknowledge the partnership with our project partner, MMGY NextFactor, the lead agency on the project, and FLOOR13. The depth of knowledge and focus this team brought to the planning process was appreciated.

MMGY NextFactor

Paul Ouimet, Founder & President

Cassandra McAuley, Managing Director

Teresa Allan, Senior Manager, Client Success

FLOOR13

John Dunn, President

Contributing Stakeholders

This long-term Destination Master Plan was developed with extensive input and support from many Greater Victoria stakeholders, industry and partner organizations, government partners, Indigenous communities, and residents. Insights gained from representatives of the following organizations were instrumental in shaping the vision and strategy for the future of Victoria's visitor economy articulated in this Plan. We extend our sincere appreciation to everyone who shared their time, insights, and expertise with the project team.

Stakeholders and Partners

10 Acres Group

Accent Inns Victoria

Art Gallery of Victoria

Aryze Development

BC Transit

Bear Mountain

Big Wheel Burger / Zambris

Black Ball Ferry Line

Best Western Plus Carlton Plaza Hotel

Chateau Victoria Hotel & Suites

CIBC Commercial Banking

Church & State Wines

CFB Esquimalt

ConnectSeven

Craigdarroch Castle Historic House Museum

CRFair

Days Inn Victoria Uptown

Downtown Victoria Business Association

Eagle Wing Whale & Wildlife Tours

Experience Victoria

Fairmont Empress

FRS Clipper

Greater Victoria Chamber of Commerce

Greater Victoria Harbour Authority

Greater Victoria Hotel Association

Hotel Grand Pacific

Huntingdon Manor Hotel and Pendray Inn

Inbound West

Indigenous Prosperity Centre

Jawl Properties

Kenmore Air

KWENCH

Little Jumbo Restaurant Corp

Macaloney Brewers & Distillers

Magnolia Hotel & Spa

Maritime Museum of BC

Oscar & Libby's

Pacific FC

Pacific Institute for Sport Education (PISE)

Pacific NorthWest Transportation Services

Quality Inn Downtown Inner Harbour

Rifflandia

Royal BC Museum

Royal Roads University

Rugby Canada

Saanich Peninsula Chamber of Commerce

Spinnakers

SpringTide Whale Watching

Starrboard Enterprises

The Bay Centre

The Bateman Foundation and Gallery

The Butchart Gardens

The Oak Bay Beach Hotel

The Oswego Hotel

The Parkside Hotel & Spa

Victoria Airport Authority

Victoria Conference Centre

Victoria Film Commission

Victoria Waterways Loop

Wildplay Element Parks

Wilson's Group of Companies

Westshore Chamber of Commerce

YYJ Victoria International Airport

Government

Capital Regional District

City of Langford

City of Victoria

District of Central Saanich

District of Saanich

Township of Esquimalt

First Nations

Esquimalt Nation and Ratcliff & Company LLP

Explore Songhees

Appendix 1

Destination Master Plan

Regional Context

Existing city, township, district, and regional plans, policies, and regulations were used to inform Greater Victoria's Destination Master Plan. The project team recognizes and respects the work that has already been done in this region and considers it a solid foundation to build upon.

- Victoria 3.0 Recovery – Reinvention – Resilience 2020-2041
- Capital Region District Strategic Priorities & Plans
- City of Victoria 2023-2026 Strategic Plan
- City of Victoria Climate Leadership Plan
- District of Saanich 2019-2023 Strategic Plan
- Township of Esquimalt 2023-2026 Strategic Plans and Priorities
- District of Oak Bay 2014 Official Community Plan
- North Saanich Official Community Plan Review
- Central Saanich Strategic Plan 2021-2022
- Sidney Official Community Plan
- Songhees Nation Strategic Plan 2017-2027
- Colwood Draft 2024-2027 Strategic Priorities
- District of Highlands 2023-2026 Strategic Plan
- Town of View Royal 2019-2022 Strategic Plan
- City of Langford Official Community Plan
- District of Sooke Official Community Plan
- District of Metchosin Official Community Plan
- Connecting Destinations, Moving People: A Passenger Gateway Strategy for Greater Victoria 2013
- Greater Victoria Destination Development Plan 2017
- Destination Greater Victoria Stakeholder Membership Survey Report August 2022
- Greater Victoria Harbour Authority “A Sail Through Our Organization”

Destination Greater Victoria also acknowledges its many partners who lead efforts that support the community, industry, and safety and vibrancy of the destination. DGV looks forward to further collaboration with these and many other entities through the duration of this plan and beyond.

- Downtown Victoria Business Association (DVBA)
- go2HR
- WorkSafeBC
- Greater Victoria Harbour Authority (GVHA)
- Victoria Airport Authority (YYJ)
- Greater Victoria Chamber of Commerce

Appendix 2

FUTURE PLANNING - VICTORIA CONFERENCE CENTRE OPTIONS

Destination Greater Victoria’s soon-to-be-released, industry-driven, Tourism Master Plan has identified a series of strategic priorities aimed at growing the region’s visitor economy over the next 10 years. These priorities include:

- **Enhance the city’s tourism infrastructure**
- **Create new attractions, events, and experiences**
- **Emphasize stewardship and placemaking**
- **Augment connectivity and mobility**
- **Ensure continued sustainability and innovation**

The TMP identifies several key infrastructures vital to the visitor economy, such as the Inner Harbour, Victoria International Airport (YYJ), and the Victoria Convention Centre (VCC). Among these, the VCC is pivotal in attracting the lucrative business events market to the city, benefiting local hotels, shops, and the airport, thereby driving the visitor economy’s growth.

In operation since 1987, the VCC has reached its capacity as a competitive convention facility. The City’s “Victoria 3.0” Economic Development Plan also emphasizes the VCC as a redevelopment priority. Destinations across Canada have made significant investments in building or expanding their conference facilities to maintain a competitive edge. The VCC’s lease agreement is set to expire in 2037, necessitating timely discussions on future options. The Master Tourism Plan outlines three potential solutions for the VCC’s future.

1. Maintain the present facility and **renovate** and upgrade where possible
2. **Rebuild** a new facility on the existing site
3. **Build a new facility** as part of a great tourism campus in conjunction with the Royal BC Museum project

The above are all viable options but should be considered and evaluated in the greater context of destination building and visitor growth.

Renovate

Rebuild

Build New

Advantages

- Limited capital costs short term to implement cosmetic upgrades
- No disruption in booking pace
- Clients familiar with the facility and no need for a specific marketing campaign
- No construction disruption within the city center

- A new facility built to spec with the newest and greatest technology
- Expanded size, most likely multi-level due to the existing land footprint
- Ability to solicit larger and more conventions
- Still connected to the city’s major hotel
- Ability to add sustainable technology and LEEDS certification

- Connected to RBCM as part of a tourism campus (visitor info, entertainment tour bus parking, transit, etc.)
- Built to spec facility, flexible space, shared services (mechanical, loading docks, shared space, parking, maintenance, LEEDs)
- 100% provincially owned, long term stability
- Central location in walking distance to hotels
- Ability to solicit larger conventions and/or consecutive events at once
- No business interruption as the existing VCC could still be in service during the building phase

Challenges

- Limited in size of conventions that can be hosted
- Limited potential growth beyond 2019 peak
- Aging facility, longer term capital costs to be anticipated
- Lease renewal with private sector owner which may have alternative plans for the facility and/or land
- Competition from newer facilities and potential soon to be built or expanded facilities
- Limited ability to meet sustainability requirements due to aged infrastructure

- Major capital cost and investment participation from private owner and city, provincial, and federal governments
- Private owner’s possible alternate development plans for the site
- Lease renewal conditions with private sector owner
- Limited sized of footprint to build on 3 - 5 year business interruption with loss of revenue

- Major capital cost and investment needed from provincial and federal governments
- Longer construction phase for two buildings
- Present provincial review of RBCM status
- Major construction site in downtown core, possible disruption of traffic

THE IMPACT OF BUSINESS EVENTS IN VICTORIA

68,000 Delegates



62,000 Delegates



6,000 Delegates

193 Events



177 Events



16 Events



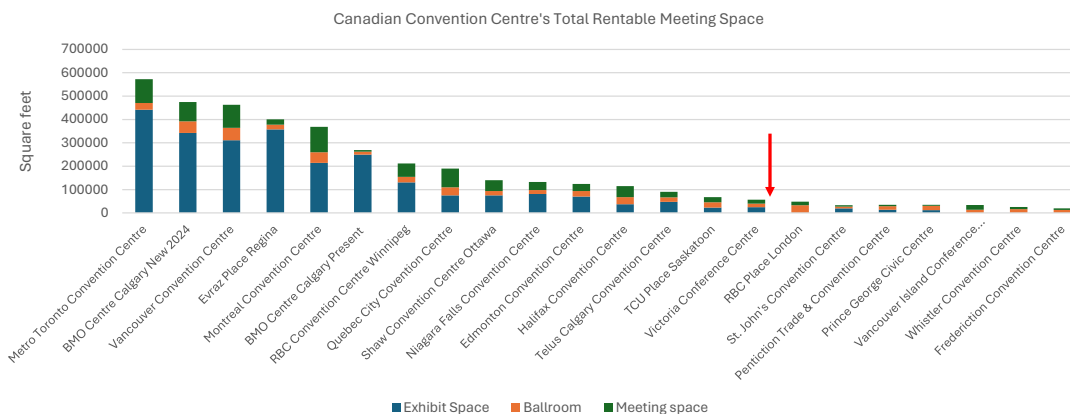
52,000 Room nights



\$26.7M in direct sales impact



7818 direct jobs supported



“The VCC has the potential to be a greater economic generator through hosting larger conferences and attracting more international audiences. Our current facility only allows us to host one conference at a time. We want to be able to host two, mid-sized conferences concurrently or one large meeting. A significant renovation or rebuild is necessary.” City of Victoria, Victoria 3.0 - Economic Development Plan 2020-2041

“Overall, the incremental new growth, based on doubling in expansion size and with 19 to 23 additional conventions hosted in a future stabilized year, is estimated to grow VCC’s economic impact to Greater Victoria’s economy by an estimated 50%.” CBRE convention centre study 2020

Appendix 3

Infrastructure and Experience Examples & Best Practices from the United States

The following examples of infrastructure developments are presented as best practices that have been successful in other destinations and options for what is possible. These are potentially helpful for generating ideas and not necessarily recommendations for Greater Victoria.

Waterfront Developments

St. Pete Pier (St. Petersburg, Florida)

In 2020, the remodeled St. Pete Pier opened in St. Petersburg, Florida. The \$92 million project includes an upgrade of an aging pier into a dynamic open space and vibrant 26-acre district with five restaurants, a playground, art installations, and an environmental education center. It has become a catalyst for economic development and environmental resilience. The Pier boasts a striking design, including a large sculpture, "Bending Arc" by Janet Echelman.



St. Pete Pier



San Diego Symphony Bayside Performance Park

San Diego Symphony Bayside Performance Park (San Diego, California)

Opened in 2021, the San Diego Symphony Bayside Performance Park is an open-air music venue operated by the San Diego Symphony on grounds leased from the Port of San Diego. It features enhanced public spaces, free events, open rehearsals, and reduced-price ticket options with an emphasis on community activation and environmental sustainability. The Rady Shell, an acoustically engineered stage, features an illuminated concert shell complementing San Diego's downtown development.

Tampa Riverwalk (Tampa, Florida)

The Tampa Riverwalk is a 2.6-mile pedestrian trail along the Hillsborough River, connecting downtown's attractions, parks and cultural landmarks. Visitors and residents can walk, bike or scooter down the Riverwalk where they can stop at the many attractions, bars or restaurants. There is also a RiverWalk Hotel. At night, colorful lights bring the Riverwalk to life. The Riverwalk serves as a venue for diverse community events, including festivals at Curtis Hixon Park and the annual Gasparilla Pirate Festival.



Tampa Riverwalk



Downtown Greenville

Downtown Greenville Redevelopment (Greenville, South Carolina)

This major downtown revitalization began in 1995 with an emphasis on downtown placemaking and pedestrian traffic by including a \$16.4 million development of Falls Park and the Liberty Bridge, which opened in 2004. The downtown includes a 32-acre greenspace with riverside trails and a pedestrian bridge, including 20 acres of gardens and amphitheaters for summer events. Today, the downtown averages 300 event days per year with weekly concerts, farmers markets, art festivals and moonlight movies.

River Arts District (Asheville, North Carolina)

The River Arts District (RAD) is a purpose-built creative hub. This redevelopment of 22 former industrial and historical buildings along the French Broad River now hosts an eclectic array of more than 200 artists in working studios in the River Arts District. It has become a buzzing dining and nightlife district with hip cafes, BBQ restaurants, craft breweries and music venues.

Experiences

Marine Sanctuary Exploration Center

(Santa Cruz, California)

Opened in 2012 at the Santa Cruz Wharf, the \$15.9 million facility features state-of-the-art exhibits and interactive displays highlighting the marine ecosystem as well as education about how to protect underwater environments. The center welcomes more than 150,000 visitors per year.



Marine Sanctuary Exploration Center

Events



Providence WaterFire

Providence WaterFire (Providence, Rhode Island)

WaterFire was created in 1996 along three rivers in Providence, Rhode Island. It is an art installation event in the evenings and consists of eighty-six burning fires, each with approximately 33 pieces of wood, with some floating just above the surface of the rivers and in the middle of downtown Providence. WaterFire is held May through November, with lightings once or twice a month. Average attendance is 40,000 people per night. This event has been used in other destinations including Columbus, Kansas City, Rome and Singapore.

Art Prize (Grand Rapids, Michigan)

Art Prize is an annual international art competition and cultural event that celebrates ideas, conversations, experimentations, inclusiveness and sense of place. Anyone over the age of 18 can display their art and any space within the three-square-mile ArtPrize district can be a venue. There are typically over 160 venues including museums, galleries, bars, restaurants, hotels, public parks, bridges, laundromats and auto body shops. ArtPrize takes place over 19 days beginning in late September and attracts over 440,000 attendees each year.



Art Prize

Appendix 4

ExperienceNext:

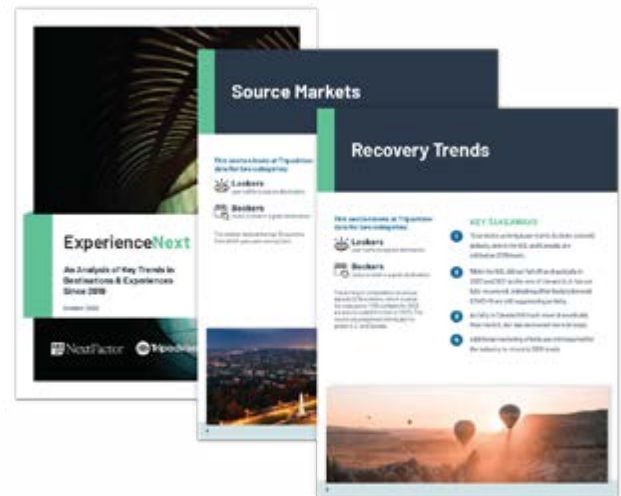
An analysis of trends, interests and demand for experiences

MMGY NextFactor and Tripadvisor have partnered to produce ExperienceNext, an analysis of key trends, interests, and demand for experiences in a post-pandemic world. We offer this information as an extract of the full report to add additional context to current market trends.

Globally, the last few years will be remembered as the most challenging ones yet for the visitor economy.

Our industry was rocked by several developments, including:

- The COVID-19 global pandemic, with over 767 million confirmed cases and 7 million deaths around the world;
- Socio-political turmoil causing widespread riots and protests in several countries and cities;
- Unprecedented natural disasters including forest fires, floods, hurricanes and earthquakes;
- Many communities struggling with public safety, gun violence and homelessness; and
- Conflicts in Ukraine, Israel and Gaza are destabilizing Europe and the Middle East.



The following analysis looks at Tripadvisor data from 2019 to the end of 2023, and separates it into two categories:



LOOKERS

User traffic to a given destination



BOOKERS

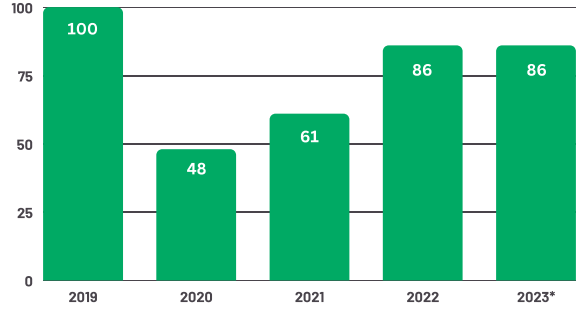
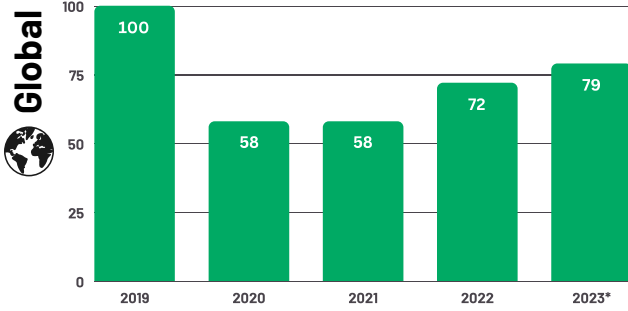
Clicks to book experiences within a given destination

Recovery Trends

- Total visitor activity (user traffic & clicks to book) globally, and in the U.S. and Canada, are still below 2019 levels.
- Activity in Canada fell much more dramatically than the U.S. but has recovered more strongly.
- While the U.S. did not fall off as drastically in 2020 and 2021 as the rest of the world, it has not fully recovered, indicating other factors beyond COVID-19 are still suppressing activity.
- Additional marketing efforts are still required for the industry to return to 2019 levels.

Lookers

Bookers

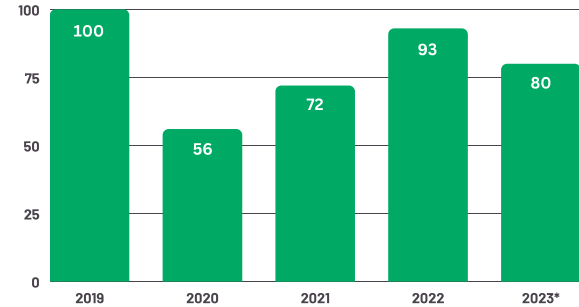
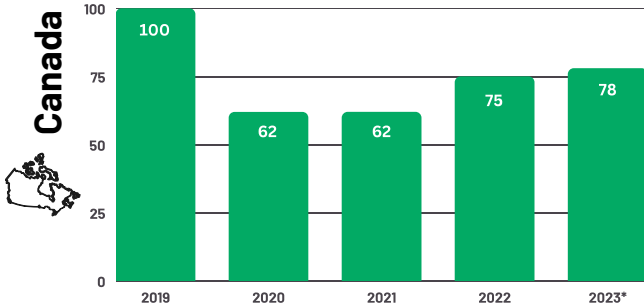


For lookers, overall user traffic to destinations:

- Activity dropped dramatically by 42 points in 2020 and 2021
- Activity now back to 79% of 2019

For bookers, clicks to book in a destination:

- Activity dropped even more significantly, by 52 points, in 2020
- Bookings have rebounded to 86% of 2019 levels



For lookers, overall user traffic to destinations:

- Activity dropped dramatically by 38 points in 2020 and 2021
- Activity now back to 78% of 2019

For bookers, clicks to book in a destination:

- Activity dropped even more significantly, by 44 points, in 2020
- Bookings have rebounded to 80% of 2019 levels

Source Markets

- Globally, the two largest source markets have remained constant as the U.S. and the United Kingdom.
- Canada, after falling in 2020, has recovered to be the largest international market for the U.S.
- There have been several shifts in the relative positions of other countries.



Canada - Lookers				
Rank	2019	2020	2021	2022
1	Canada	Canada	Canada	Canada
2	United States	United States	United States	United States
3	United Kingdom	United Kingdom	United Kingdom	United Kingdom
4	France	France	France	France
5	Australia	India	India	Germany
6	Germany	Germany	Germany	India
7	Japan	Australia	Mexico	Australia
8	Mexico	Mexico	Australia	Mexico
9	India	Japan	Brazil	Brazil
10	Italy	Brazil	Japan	Japan

For lookers, visiting the sites of Canadian destinations:

- The top three international source markets (U.S., United Kingdom and France) have remained constant
- India and Brazil have moved up
- Australia has fallen off



Canada - Bookers				
Rank	2019	2020	2021	2022
1	Canada	Canada	Canada	Canada
2	United States	United States	United States	United States
3	United Kingdom	United Kingdom	United Kingdom	United Kingdom
4	France	France	France	Mexico
5	Australia	Australia	Mexico	France
6	Germany	Germany	Germany	Australia
7	Mexico	Mexico	Brazil	Germany
8	Japan	Japan	India	Brazil
9	Brazil	The Netherlands	Australia	Singapore
10	Switzerland	Switzerland	Hong Kong	The Netherlands

For bookers, clicking to book in a Canadian destination:

- The top two source markets (U.S. and United Kingdom) have remained constant
- Mexico has moved up significantly
- Lots of movement in the lower half of list with Hong Kong, Netherlands, and Singapore appearing on list



Global - Lookers				
Rank	2019	2020	2021	2022
1	United States	United States	United States	United States
2	United Kingdom	United Kingdom	United Kingdom	United Kingdom
3	Japan	France	Italy	France
4	Italy	Italy	France	Italy
5	France	Japan	Spain	Spain
6	Spain	Spain	India	India
7	Germany	Germany	Japan	Germany
8	India	Brazil	Germany	Japan
9	Canada	India	Brazil	Canada
10	Australia	Australia	Canada	Australia

For lookers, visiting the sites of destinations:

- The top two source markets (U.S. and United Kingdom) have remained constant
- Japan has fallen from 3rd to 8th place
- France and India have both moved up in the rankings



Global - Bookers				
Rank	2019	2020	2021	2022
1	United States	United States	United States	United States
2	United Kingdom	United Kingdom	United Kingdom	United Kingdom
3	Japan	Japan	Japan	Japan
4	France	France	India	India
5	Australia	Australia	South Korea	South Korea
6	Canada	Germany	France	Canada
7	Spain	Spain	Canada	France
8	Germany	Brazil	Brazil	Australia
9	Italy	Canada	Australia	Spain
10	India	India	Spain	Thailand

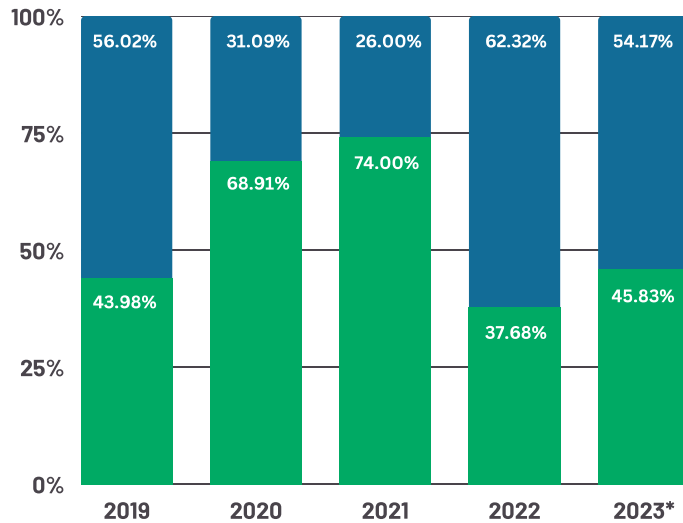
For bookers, clicking to book a destination:

- The top three source markets (U.S., United Kingdom, and Japan) have remained constant
- India and South Korea have moved up significantly
- Spain, Brazil, and Italy have fallen off

Domestic & International

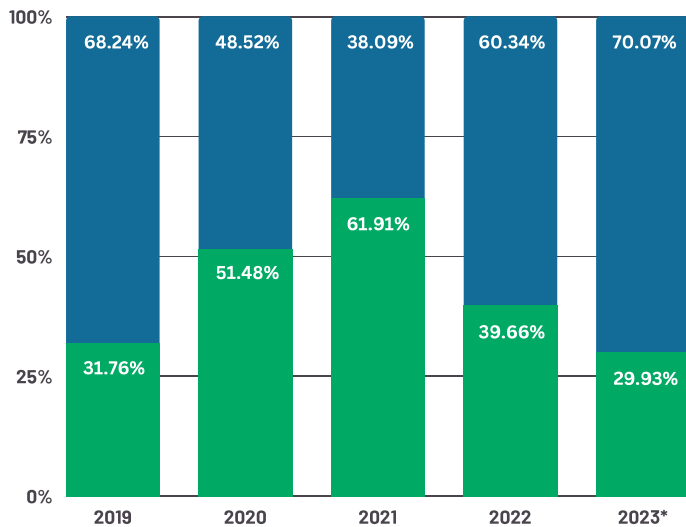
- International travel, as a percentage of the total, fell dramatically in 2020 and 2021. There was strong recovery in 2022 and the first half of 2023 due to pent-up demand and "revenge travel".
- International travel is above 2019 levels globally, for the U.S. and Canada.
- International is much more significant for Canada.

Global



International traffic, as a percentage of the total, has increased to 45.8%, up from 44%. It has demonstrated strong recovery since 2022.

Canada



International traffic is much more important for Canada, with over 68% of traffic coming from outside Canada. International traffic fell off dramatically in 2020 and 2021, before fully recovering to 70.1% of total traffic in the first half of 2023.

Attraction Types

- Outdoor, nature & parks were by far the largest attraction types in 2019. That number surged in 2020 and 2021 before falling back in 2022, but still higher than in 2019.
- Some other attraction types (sights & landmarks; museums; and shopping) have remained steady.
- Some attraction types have fallen off including performances, theatres & concerts.
- Outdoor activities are increasing in overall popularity.



Canada - Lookers				
Attraction Type	2019 % Share	2020 % Share	2021 % Share	2022 % Share
Outdoors, Nature & Parks	34.95%	46.47%	44.81%	35.80%
Sights & Landmarks	12.34%	10.16%	10.88%	12.43%
Shopping	8.04%	7.66%	8.00%	8.19%
Museums	7.68%	5.34%	6.40%	8.02%
Tours	6.42%	5.78%	3.75%	4.38%
Amusement*	5.26%	3.53%	4.14%	4.95%
Food & Drink	3.54%	4.04%	4.05%	3.73%
Performances, Theatre & Concerts	3.19%	-		3.16%
Spas, Wellness & Health	3.14%	3.09%	2.89%	-
Transportation & Traveller Resources	2.98%	1.96%	2.23%	2.91%
Adventure	--	2.08%	-	-
Amusement Parks	-	-	2.72%	3.11%

*Examples of Amusement attractions include bowling alleys, mini golf courses, arcades, etc.



Canada - Bookers				
Attraction Type	2019 % Share	2020 % Share	2021 % Share	2022 % Share
Tours	20.57%	21.39%	21.61%	21.93%
Sights & Landmarks	18.83%	17.06%	17.89%	18.00%
Nature & Parks	16.12%	16.87%	16.08%	14.96%
Outdoor Activities	13.89%	13.54%	13.73%	14.04%
Boat Tours & Water Sports	5.96%	4.76%	6.40%	6.08%
Museums	5.48%	4.26%	5.17%	5.34%
Shopping	4.76%	2.71%	2.51%	3.86%
Traveller Resources	2.98%	2.34%	2.26%	2.94%
Transportation	2.78%	5.13%	3.49%	3.46%
Food & Drink	2.53%	5.47%	4.50%	3.64%

- Outdoor, nature & parks was the dominant attraction type as well in Canada, at 35% out of all attractions in 2019. That number increased in 2020 and 2021 before falling back to a more normal level in 2022, but still ahead of 2019 at 35.8%.
- Three other attraction types have stayed steady during the period: sights & landmarks; shopping; and museums.

Points of Interest

- Major points of interest are varied, including: iconic historic attractions; theme/amusement parks; resort/entertainment complexes; and outdoor parks & experiences.
- There are several changes each year indicating the potential to increase interest in new, emerging attractions/experiences.

Key Trend Takeaways

The following is summary of key trend takeaways:

Recovery

- Total visitor activity (user traffic & clicks to book) globally, and in the U.S. and Canada are still below 2019 levels.
- Activity in Canada fell much more dramatically than the U.S. but has recovered more strongly.
- Additional marketing efforts are still required for the industry to return to 2019 levels.

Source Markets

- Globally, the two largest source markets have remained constant - the U.S. and the United Kingdom.
- Canada, after falling in 2020, has recovered to be the largest international market for the U.S.
- There have been several shifts in the relative positions of other countries.

Domestic & International

- International travel, as a percentage of the total, fell dramatically in 2020 and 2021. There was strong recovery in 2022 and the first half of 2023 due to pent-up demand and "revenge travel".
- International travel is above 2019 levels globally, for the U.S. and Canada.
- International is much more significant for Canada.

Market Share

- The U.S., more than twice the size of any of the other markets, has increased its global market share.

Attraction Types

- Outdoor, nature and parks were by far the largest attraction types in 2019. That number surged in 2020 and 2021 before falling back in 2022, but still higher than in 2019.
- Some other attraction types (sights & landmarks; museums; and shopping) have remained steady.
- Some attraction types have fallen off including performances, theatres, & concerts.
- Outdoor activities are increasing in overall popularity.

Points of Interest

- Major points of interest are varied, including: iconic historic attractions; theme/amusement parks; resort/entertainment complexes; and outdoor parks & experiences.
- There are several changes each year indicating the potential to increase.





Conclusion

The ExperienceNext 2023 data shows shifts in how consumers are searching and booking visitor experiences in destinations globally since before COVID. Aside from the pandemic itself, and the near decimation of the industry resulting from it, there have been many other factors disrupting global travel ranging from wars to environmental disasters.

Overall, “looker and booker” volumes are still below 2019 aggregate numbers, but there are wide variances for individual countries, visitor segments, and types of experiences.

There are three major takeaways from ExperienceNext 2023:

Marketing is critical

The travel and tourism industry has enjoyed a healthy, sustained recovery since the pandemic, and many destinations are showing strong financial results across various visitor segments. But with overall search and booking data still below 2019 numbers, this is no time for DMOs to take their foot off the gas when it comes to marketing. Destination leaders have significant opportunities to capitalize on the industry’s projected growth over the next decade, but that requires smart, long-term promotional strategy to be competitive.

Outdoor recreation is booming

Many destinations located in beautiful outdoor environments saw exceedingly high-compression visitor volumes during the pandemic. Visitor interest in nature and outdoor experiences is remaining high post-pandemic, and there are no signs that the robust demand will go back to pre-2020 levels. This provides DMOs with many opportunities to capitalize on their outdoor recreation assets by expanding and diversifying the range of experience options.

The performing arts need some love

The visitor experience segment that is underperforming the most since COVID is the performing arts. The people, organizations, and venues that make up the performing arts community are a big part of the soul of our towns and cities. They breathe life into how residents and visitors identify with a community and what they remember long after a trip is over. The performing arts are a critical part of the global visitor economy and how we learn about other cultures. DMOs can play a significant role in their destinations by increasing their support for these types of visitor experiences, and likewise, an important role in enhancing local quality of life.



DESTINATION GREATER
VICTORIA

www.tourismvictoria.com