



Executive Summary

Under the leadership of Destination Greater Victoria (DGV), this Destination 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 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 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 Plan are:

**10
YEARS**

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

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.

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. Support First Nations' economic development, authentic Indigenous-led tourism businesses, and arts and placemaking initiatives that center local First Nations' language and culture.
- 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 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.

