

Destination Greater Victoria Circular Economy Strategy



DESTINATION GREATER
VICTORIA

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Territorial Acknowledgement

Destination Greater Victoria recognizes, with respect, that its office is located on the Territory of the Łákwəŋən 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 (W̱JOŁŁP (Tsartlip), BOŲÉĆEN (Pauquachin), S̱ÁUTW̱ (Tsawout) W̱SIKEM (Tseycum) and MÁLEXEL (Malahat)), and the Sc'ianew (Beecher Bay), T'Sou-ke, and Pacheedaht Nations.

Executive Summary

Destination Greater Victoria (DGV) has positioned itself at the forefront of sustainable tourism through the development of its first Circular Economy Strategy. Developed by Delphi, with support from the Synergy Foundation and in close collaboration with DGV, this strategy aligns directly with DGV's 2022–2026 Strategic Plan and signals the region's commitment to leading in circular, regenerative tourism.

Project Foundation and Approach

This strategy is grounded in robust foundational research, including a jurisdictional scan of global best practices and innovative models, ensuring ambition and relevance. The strategy is also shaped by focused engagement with DGV's membership, alongside input from leading circular economy experts and practitioners.

This engagement ensured that the strategy reflects local realities and sector-specific needs, while drawing on external expertise for practical and innovative solutions. A suite of pilot projects, developed by Synergy Foundation, provides actionable and context-specific models for possible implementation.

Vision and Purpose

The strategy's purpose is to chart a clear path for advancing a circular economy across Greater Victoria's visitor economy. The objectives are to foster collaboration, reduce barriers, optimize resource use, minimize waste, and reinvest savings into community and marketing initiatives.



Strategic Framework

The strategy is organized around four Action Areas, each supported by five cross-cutting themes for systemic and integrated change:

- **Transportation & Waste Management Infrastructure:** Advancing low-carbon, active transportation solutions and waste reduction initiatives, including expanded bike infrastructure, micro-mobility support, and promotion of reusable systems for food and beverage services. Supporting DGV members in adopting circular business models and using circular materials
- **Capacity Building, Business Support & Partnerships:** Empowering local member businesses through education, support for circular procurement, network activation, and partnership-building, especially with local First Nations and Indigenous tourism leaders.
- **Involving Visitors in the Circular Economy:** Engaging visitors in sustainable practices and stewardship, and promoting the local culture of reuse.
- **Internal Policies & Actions:** Demonstrating corporate leadership by embedding circularity in DGV's operations, adopting zero-waste and sustainable procurement practices, and leveraging events like the IMPACT Conference for knowledge exchange.

These action areas are infused with five cross-cutting themes: the waste hierarchy (reduction, reuse, repair, upcycle, recycle), regenerative tourism, sustainable procurement, low-carbon initiatives, and innovation/design.

Foundational Actions and Pilots

This strategy is underpinned by a best-practice jurisdictional scan and the Circular Economy Pilot Projects Brief. Pilot projects—'Looped-in Victoria' (reusable takeout container program), 'Fulfill Victoria' (refillable amenities and business recognition), and the 'Circular Catalysts' platform (matching waste streams with local upcycling opportunities)—offer tangible models for action, scalability, and sector-wide engagement.

Anticipated Impacts and Next Steps

The activation of this strategy will enable DGV to drive measurable reductions in waste, improve resource efficiency, deliver cost savings and marketing value for members, and strengthen Greater Victoria's resilience and brand leadership in sustainable tourism. The phased rollout of action areas and pilots will provide early wins, demonstrate impact, and build momentum for system-wide progress. Continuous engagement, tracking, and ongoing alignment with broader sustainability efforts will ensure long-term success and sector transformation.

Purpose, Objectives & Overarching Goals

The purpose of this Circular Economy Strategy (the "Strategy") is to identify areas of opportunity for DGV to support its members in adopting circular practices and business models. Development of the Strategy arose as a direct response to an action identified in DGV's 2022-2026 Strategic Plan.



Context

DGV is a membership based not-for-profit organization responsible for tourism marketing of the Greater Victoria region. DGV also plays an increasingly important role in destination stewardship within the local community, aiming to build a sustainable tourism industry that delivers shared community benefits and operates in alignment with local community values.

DGV's sustainability milestones include partnering to establish and launch the IMPACT Sustainability Travel and Tourism Conference, becoming one of North America's first carbon-neutral Destination Marketing/Management Organizations (DMO), and achieving the renowned Biosphere Certification for Greater Victoria from the Responsible Tourism Institute. The development of the Circular Economy Strategy builds upon this foundation for the local visitor economy, and with it the potential to show the unique role that a DMO can play in fostering the transition to a circular economy at scale.

As a DMO that exists between government and business and operates as a well-established and respected agency within a complex multi-stakeholder environment, DGV can play a key role in advancing a circular visitor economy. This role involves using a systems approach to identify leverage points and common themes that can bring together tourism businesses to create a significant collective impact.

Some examples of the role of a DMO in this area are as follows:

- **Destination stewardship to support regenerative partnerships and projects**
- **Supporting DGV members in adopting circular business models and using circular materials**
- **An invitation to visitors to join in the local culture of reuse and sustainability and engage in circular practices**
- **Telling a circular story of place**

Across Greater Victoria, local First Nations are the original and continued stewards of these lands and waters, whose traditional knowledges and practices have long exemplified regenerative and sustainable economic systems. Their principles of interconnectedness and care for the land, waters, and all living beings offer vital guidance for shaping modern sustainability strategies. As First Nations are essential economic development partners, the pursuit of circular and regenerative economies must be rooted in the practice of elevating First Nations' economic initiatives. Their leadership and contributions are critical to fostering a resilient, inclusive economy and advancing ecosystem stewardship, an essential foundation for the circular economy.

Circular Economy Strategy Purpose & Goals

The primary aim of this project is to chart a clear path for DGV in advancing a circular economy in the Greater Victoria visitor economy. This involves gaining a comprehensive understanding of the relationships between the visitor economy and regional circular economy opportunities, and identifying and prioritizing immediate actions that DGV and its partners can undertake to accelerate the transition to a circular economy.

The overarching goals of this strategy are to:

- **Foster collaboration, reduce barriers, and find efficiencies, thereby helping the sector achieve stronger social, environmental, and economic outcomes,**
- **Work with members and stakeholders to identify and implement circular practices, reduce waste, minimize resource consumption, and contribute to a healthier environment,**
- **Optimize resource use, reuse materials, and minimize waste, allowing savings to be reinvested in community initiatives or marketing efforts, and**
- **Incorporate member and stakeholder discussions, thoughts and ideas into the strategy as collaboration fosters stronger community ties, becomes a catalyst for circular discussions, and encourages collective action.**

Methodology

The Strategy development process involved engagement of DGV staff, member organizations, and other community interests through key informant interviews, two workshops, and a strategy ideation session. Outcomes of the engagement have informed the Strategy, including highlighting opportunities for collaboration, strategic alignment with common priorities, and specific actions by theme.

Engagement and secondary research revealed that a significant amount of circular economy-related activity is already underway in the community. Through an in-depth Jurisdictional Scan, examples of best practices and leadership in the circular economy within the tourism industry were highlighted and utilized to develop the strategy framework. This work was supported by stakeholder engagement, ensuring recommendations within the strategy are targeted for our unique local context. Development and implementation of the Strategy is meant to support the connection of current projects, programs, and businesses and help centralize resources.

The Circular Economy Strategy is also designed to align with and act as an effective piece of DGV's broader sustainability efforts, which are described in more detail in the Alignment section. This alignment also considers global programs and frameworks such as the Biosphere Certification, started by the Responsible Tourism Institute, and the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Overview of Circular Economy Concepts

A circular economy is a regenerative system where waste, emissions, and energy loss are minimized or avoided by extending the lifecycle of products through design, maintenance, repair, reuse, and recycling¹.

Our current economy, which is primarily linear, has resulted in the underutilization of our products and natural resources². Too many virgin resources are being extracted, most of which are destined for waste and pollution.

The first principle of the circular economy is to eliminate waste and pollution.

By focusing on the design phase to rethink product material selection and manufacturing processes, we can design durable and repairable products and reduce the need for virgin materials. This not only conserves resources but also reduces the environmental impact associated with extraction, production, and disposal.

Adapted from Ellen MacArthur Foundation

¹ Geissdoerfer et al 2016, Circular Economy: A New Sustainability Paradigm Journal of Cleaner Production 143 p.762.

² A linear economy involves extraction of finite resources to make products that are generally not used to their full potential and then thrown away. <https://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/what-is-the-linear-economy>

A circular economy is a system that minimizes waste, emissions, and energy loss by extending the lifecycle of products through design, maintenance, repair, reuse, and recycling.

In a circular economy, resources and goods are designed to remain within the system through innovation, reduction, reuse, repair, redistribution, reconditioning, and recycling, all powered by renewable energy. This approach minimizes waste and maximizes resource use. The circular economy decouples economic activity from the consumption of finite resources. It also helps tackle climate change among other global issues, such as biodiversity loss, waste, and pollution, while creating green jobs, fostering innovation, and creating new value from what was traditionally considered waste in post-industrial revolution Western economies.

The circular economy model has multiple re-entry processes for products and materials, all of which should be considered in a cascading order of system re-entry.

These include:

- **Reduce:** eliminating waste before it occurs by removing unnecessary components
- **Reuse and repair:** finding opportunities to reuse and repair items instead of buying new
- **Redistribute:** re-selling, donating, or sharing items no longer wanted that have value for others
- **Recondition/Refurbish:** Replacing parts, restoring and upgrading products like computers and tools for continued use
- **Recycle/Compost:** processing a product that has reached the end of its current use into base components, utilizing materials as valuable inputs for new products or resources



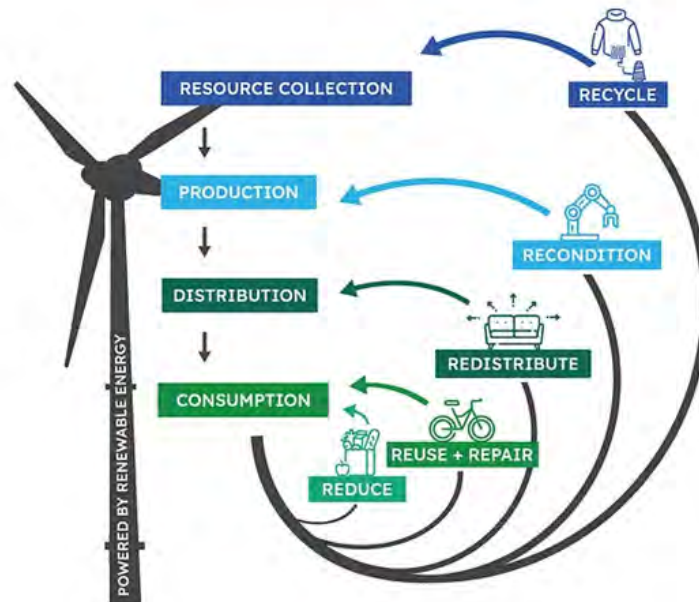


Chart courtesy of Synergy Foundation

Globally, the visitor economy is increasingly adopting circular practices, such as reducing food waste, eliminating single-use plastics, reducing energy and water consumption, and prioritizing local sourcing. This shift not only caters to the rising demand from eco-conscious travelers but is also crucial for the long-term sustainability of the tourism industry³.

At a local scale, here are some examples of what the circular economy can look like in the tourism sector already in practice:

- **Ergo Eco Solutions recycles waste cooking oil from commercial kitchens into biofuel and eco-friendly products for the construction industry.**
- **Soap for Hope diverts gently used hygiene products and linens from Hotels that would otherwise end up in the landfill and provides them to community facilities serving vulnerable people.**
- **10 Acres Farm & Restaurants showcases local ingredients at four dining locations across Greater Victoria by using their own seasonal crops and sourcing from local producers. Vegetable trim and spent brewing grain return to the farm to supplement livestock feed.**
- **Salt Legacy creates backpacks and other customized textile products using repurposed sailcloth. Based in Rock Bay in the heart of Victoria, their products are showcased to visitors at local markets and through their online store.**
- **The Parkside Hotel & Spa is a carbon-neutral, Biosphere-certified hotel. They are the first urban hotel in the world to be members of Beyond Green, a signatory of the Glasgow Declaration.**

³ According to a study at Expedia group 2/3 travelers want to see more sustainable information from lodging providers.
<https://info.advertising.expedia.com/sustainability-study-2022>

In addition, a number of other businesses are already implementing elements of a circular economy within the local visitor economy, including through:

- **Procurement:** working with local businesses to source local food and products,
- **Waste Reduction:** diverting food to local shelters, using green and refillable products for cleaning and amenities, working with suppliers to reduce packaging,
- **Reuse:** repurposing used materials into new products, such as old curtains into shopping bags, and
- **Recycling:** implementing recycling and composting programs and recycling plastic collected during organized beach clean-up events.

In summary, the circular economy offers practical strategies and business solutions to achieve sustainable development goals by reducing waste, promoting economic growth, and creating opportunities to build new revenue streams. The circular economy represents a \$4.5 trillion opportunity that can also bring the following benefits⁵:

- **Increased connection to place**
- **Higher quality of products**
- **Lower costs of second-hand items**
- **Economic diversification**
- **Job creation**
- **Innovation and development**
- **Leadership, competitive advantage, recognition**
- **Climate resilience**

Alignment with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals

Circular economy initiatives present significant opportunities to advance the United Nations' (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by promoting resource efficiency, reducing waste, and fostering sustainable production and consumption practices⁶. The four action areas outlined in the Actions by Theme section provide clear pathways for advancing multiple SDGs.

⁵ Accenture Strategy: Waste to Wealth

<https://newsroom.accenture.com/news/2015/the-circular-economy-could-unlock-4-5-trillion-of-economic-growth-finds-new-book-by-accenture#:~:text=NEW%20YORK%3B%20Sept%2028%2C%202015,consumption%20while%20driving%20greater%20competitiveness>

⁶ Schroder and Barrie, 2024. [How the Circular Economy can revive the Sustainable Development Goals](#)

Opportunities for Leadership & Collaboration

Many organizations and businesses within the region share common goals around sustainability and circular economy concepts. By identifying leadership roles, prioritizing and sequencing actions, and bundling them into community-scale initiatives, we can significantly enhance the effectiveness of collaborative efforts towards these common goals.

The World Economic Forum recognizes that meaningful progress in circularity requires a collaborative ecosystem that scales up efforts to turn trash into treasure⁷. They also identify three steps for better collaboration around circular economy efforts:

1. **Cross-sector solutions that engage the full value chain of goods and services**
2. **Research and development partnerships between industry and academia**
3. **Strengthening commercial viability through incubator and accelerator programs**

"Active collaboration and co-creation of value between value chain actors is a key enabler of every successful circular and sustainability initiative. With the aim to optimise the travel ecosystem's direct and indirect value chains, value co-creation should therefore be the default relationship setting for tourism actors including amongst public and private travel actors."

- from [Circular Economy in Travel and Tourism](#), CE360 Alliance



⁷ [3 ways we can collaborate better for a circular economy | World Economic Forum](#) (weforum.org)

DGV's Role in Implementing the Circular Economy Strategy

DGV plays a crucial role in fostering a circular economy and enabling the implementation of the action areas outlined in this Strategy. As a DMO, DGV can provide leadership and guidance to members, stakeholders, and visitors and work with them to advance the opportunities identified in the Strategy. There are a number of specific roles that DGV can play, described below.

Communication & Engagement

As a DMO, DGV's roles in marketing, destination leadership, and stewardship uniquely position it to communicate the importance and benefits of a circular economy both outwardly to visitors and inwardly to members. Continuing to engage with members, visitors, and other community interests can strengthen community ties, spark meaningful discussions, highlight opportunities and challenges related to circular practices, and encourage collective action toward a circular economy.

Education & Capacity Building

Influencing members, local stakeholders, and visitors, DGV is well-positioned as a DMO to lead in education and capacity building. Through workshops, educational materials, and conferences, DGV can effectively facilitate member and community education on how to shift from linear to circular practices and the associated benefits. Additionally, DGV can assist businesses in showcasing their circularity initiatives, thereby building momentum and raising awareness within the community. DGV can also play an important role by connecting businesses with circular economy providers and alternatives to landfill disposal.

DGV can play a capacity-building role by showcasing funding and program opportunities, incentivizing members to participate in local upcycling initiatives, and supporting research on issues like hygiene poverty. Furthermore, DGV's continued support for the Biosphere Certification will promote sustainable and circular practices within the visitor economy.

Advocacy

In addition to communication, education, and capacity building, DGV can advocate on behalf of members at the provincial and federal government levels, particularly in relation to BC's Clean BC Roadmap and the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy. This advocacy can include pushing for increased funding for electrification and additional waste diversion options. By engaging with policymakers, DGV can help shape legislation and secure resources that support circular economy implementation.



The Role of Members & Stakeholders

DGV members and other organizations operating in the region play a pivotal role in enabling the adoption of a circular economy strategy within the Greater Victoria visitor economy. Their active participation and collaboration can improve the effectiveness and reach of circular economy initiatives.

Here are some of the key ways they can contribute:

- **Collaboration and networking:** connect with other local businesses and organizations to enable a community-wide approach to adopting the circular economy and share best practices and success stories,
- **Education and awareness-building events:** DGV members can engage in circular economy-related workshops, events, and training sessions designed to deepen their shared understanding of the circular economy and its pathways for implementation,
- **Participate in pilot programs:** DGV members can take part in pilot programs that test circular economy initiatives. These programs provide hands-on opportunities to implement and refine sustainable practices within their operations. By participating, members can provide feedback on what works and what doesn't, helping to shape effective strategies that can be scaled up, and
- **Engage with DGV on opportunities and challenges:** Regular engagement with DGV allows members to communicate opportunities and challenges of circular economy implementation and have a say in strategies and actions to address these.

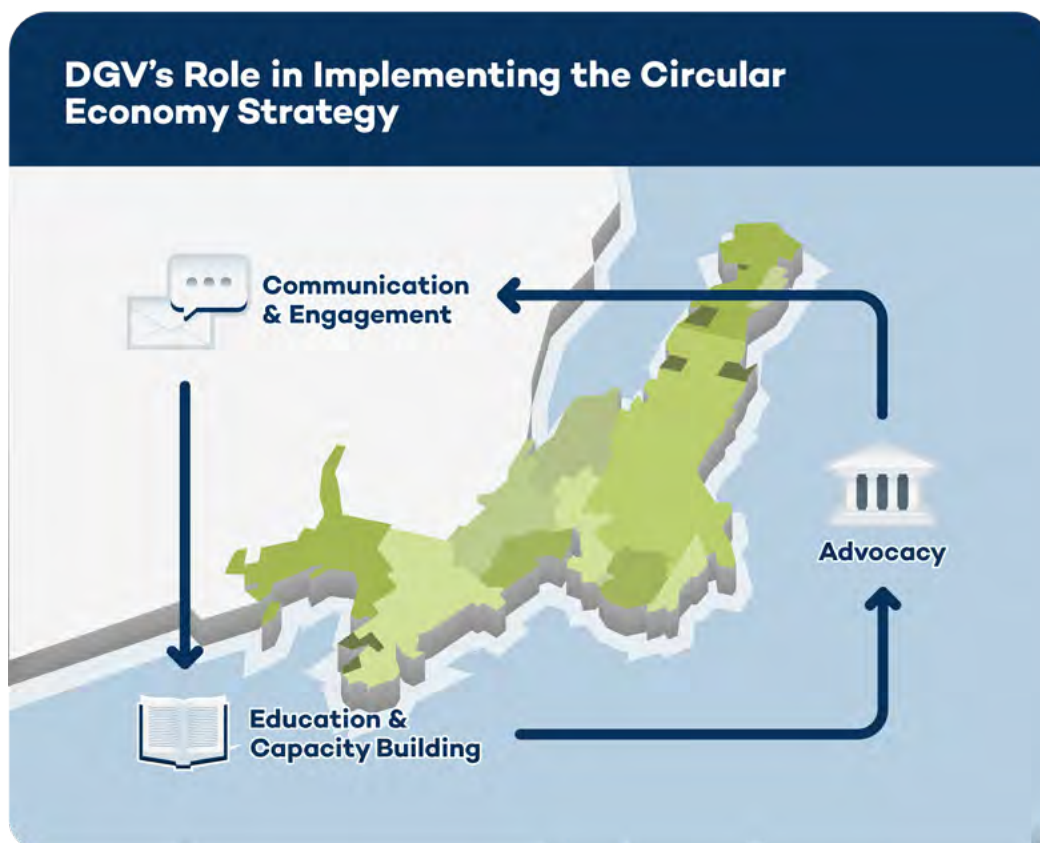


Figure 1. DGV's role in implementing the Strategy involves a mix of communication, education and advocacy across the region and beyond.

Alignment with Local Strategies and Actions

This Strategy does not exist in isolation; rather, it has been developed intentionally to align with existing strategies and actions of DGV and partner organizations. The content in this Strategy builds directly on an already strong alignment of sustainability, regenerative tourism, and circular economy-related priorities described in a number of relevant strategies and plans, including the following:

1. **DGV Strategic Plan 2022 – 2026**
2. **DGV Business Plan 2025**
3. **DGV Sustainability Strategy 2024**
4. **Existing activities of the DGV Sustainability Committee**
5. **Greater Victoria Destination Plan: Elevation & Renewal 2025-2035**
6. **District of Saanich Climate Plan**
7. **City of Victoria Climate Leadership Strategy**
8. **Victoria 3.0 Economic Action Plan**
9. **Zero Waste Victoria Action Plan**
10. **Capital Regional District Solid Waste Management Plan 2021**

The section below contains highlights and areas of alignment from a selection of other strategies and plans.

DGV Strategic Plan 2022 – 2026

DGV's Strategic Plan contains the following elements:

- **Greater customer focus on sustainability, regenerative practices and the circular economy.** (opportunity highlighted in SWOT)
- **Ensuring sustainable practices in tourism and a positive visitor-resident interface.** (priority highlighted in resident survey results)
- **Enhancing tourism's environmental, social and cultural sustainability.** (priority highlighted in resident survey results)
- **Carbon neutrality, sustainability committee, circular economy, regenerative tourism, sustainability benefits for business.** (focus areas of Section 4.5 on Sustainability and Regenerative Tourism):

DGV Sustainability Strategy 2024

DGV's Sustainability Strategy contains the following Goals and Strategic Objectives:

- **Support DGV members in adopting sustainable business practices and circular business models, including through the Biosphere Certification program.**
- **Foster a circular economy at scale in an urban destination through the development of a circular economy strategy.**
- **Set the tone for the visitor economy to operate in line with the values of our community.**
- **Support our member businesses and communities**

Greater Victoria Destination Plan: Elevation & Renewal 2025-2035

The Greater Victoria Destination Plan contains the following relevant actions:

- **(1c) 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. (infrastructure)**
- **(3e) 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. (capacity building)**
- **(4g) Enhance sustainable, resident-sensitive access between Ogden Point cruise terminal and downtown. (infrastructure)**
- **(4i) Advocate for increased shared micro-mobility options in the region (bikes, scooters, e-bikes). (infrastructure)**
- **(5a) Leverage Biosphere Certification for Greater Victoria to further build the destination's brand and credentials.**
- **(5b) Develop and implement an industry-leading circular economy strategy for Greater Victoria's visitor economy.**
- **(5c) Support healthy and sustainable local food systems, including access to locally-grown food for visitor economy businesses.**
- **(5d) Work with industry and government partners to reduce waste and carbon emissions, in alignment with Provincial and local government policies and targets.**
- **(5e) Foster partnerships to support ecological restoration and regeneration.**
- **(5f) Extend the destination's commitment to sustainable tourism and a positive visitor-resident interface through innovative strategic planning.**

Government Partners

Strategies and plans from other levels of government contain the following supporting priorities:

- **Victoria has endorsed the circular economy through its Climate Leadership Plan**
- **Zero Waste Victoria: the City of Victoria has adopted its Zero Waste Victoria Action Plan, which has strong language and targets regarding circularity and eliminating unnecessary waste. It is founded upon 3 core strategies: eliminating unnecessary consumption and waste, reuse as the new normal, and recycling waste that is unavoidable. The strategy includes a goal of reducing landfilled waste by 50% by 2040.**
- **Victoria City Council endorsed the inclusion of the circular economy as a focus of the Victoria 3.0 economic development strategy, with a goal to be a “national leader in the circular economy”. Highlights from recommended additions:**
 - **Support the creation of a circular economy hub (capacity building)**
 - **Host and support training and information sessions**
 - **Support economic development initiatives that encourage repair, sharing and exchange, reuse and waste diversion**
 - **Launch a circular innovation grant fund to support projects**
 - **Evaluate and amend procurement and pre-procurement processes**
 - **Explore opportunities for public bodies to drive demand and expand markets for circular products through collaborative procurement**
- **The District of Saanich’s 2020 Climate Plan includes a priority action to “work with local businesses and other levels of governments on circular economy initiatives that recover and regenerate products and materials at the end of their useful lives.”**
- **The Province of BC is developing a Circular Economy Approach as part of the CleanBC Roadmap to 2030**
- **Canada is integrating circular economy principles into the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy. Specific areas of alignment include food waste, reusable products, plastic waste, zero emission vehicles, recycling targets.**
 - **Concepts, reports, funding opportunities available here:**
[Get involved in the Circular Economy - Canada.ca](#)
 - **Targets and indicators for waste management here:**
[\(page 122\) En4-136-2022-eng-1.pdf \(publications.gc.ca\)](#)

Action areas



Cross-cutting themes



Figure 2. Strategy structure: 4 Action areas supported by 5 cross-cutting themes

Key Action Areas

This section outlines the core components of the circular economy strategy, designed to drive transformative change through four key action areas, all of which contain synergies and interrelationships. The action areas are outlined below, including a brief description, relevant sub-themes, and a list of priority actions for DGV. These actions were developed in collaboration with DGV and informed by extensive stakeholder engagement:

1. **Transportation & Waste Management Infrastructure**
2. **Capacity Building, Business Support & Partnerships**
3. **Involving Visitors in the Circular Economy**
4. **Internal Policies and Actions**

The four action areas are supported by five cross-cutting themes, which integrate circularity principles throughout the strategy (Figure 2). These themes ensure that efforts are focused on all areas, promoting a balanced and holistic approach. By leveraging diverse principles, we aim to maximize impact and drive systemic change. The five cross-cutting themes are:

- **Waste hierarchy (reduction, reuse, diversion, upcycling, recycling)**
- **Regenerative tourism**
- **Sustainable procurement**
- **Low-carbon initiatives**
- **Innovation and design**

1. Transportation & Waste Management Infrastructure

This action area focuses on promoting low-carbon transportation and waste management solutions to support a circular economy.



Action Area Sub-Categories

- Low carbon and active transportation infrastructure (decarbonized transportation, shared micro-mobility platforms, bike network)
- Approaches to reduce the consumption of single-use plastics, including plastic water bottles
- Waste management infrastructure and initiatives (waste/recycling bins)
- Hospitality infrastructure that supports sustainable practices (refill systems, reusable mugs and cutlery)
- (Example: See Pilot Idea 1: Looped-In Victoria & Pilot Idea 2: Fulfill Victoria)

Priority Actions for DGV

- Support expanded bike infrastructure connectivity for hotels and attractions
- Support shared micro-mobility platforms and ensure systems are designed with visitors in mind
- Support the organization of a system for reusable food and beverage containers
- Create a map of water stations throughout the destination and other storytelling collateral to encourage visitors to drink tap water and use refillable water bottles.

Global Inspiration

Copenhagen promotes the use of refillable water bottles, with messaging on the safety of local drinking water along with a map of refill stations.

Hotels in Mallorca transform the organic waste they generate into high-quality organic compost for local farmers who are also part of their supplier network. This method of reducing environmental costs helps to reduce the carbon footprint associated with transporting organic matter and cuts down on single-use plastics.

2. Capacity Building, Business Support & Partnerships

This action area focuses on strengthening the capabilities of local businesses to transition toward a circular economy through education, tailored support, partnerships and strategic incentives.



Action Area Sub-Categories

- Education and support programs on circular concepts for DGV member businesses
- Initiatives to support local and circular procurement options for businesses
- Network activation and partnership building around circular initiatives
- Connecting sources of waste with potential users (food, textile, construction)
- (Example: See Pilot Idea 3: Circular Catalyst Program)

Priority Actions for DGV

- Include Circular Tourism as a theme at the annual IMPACT Conference and attract Circular Economy conferences to Victoria
- Develop workshops and guides for members on various CE topics (Circular Economy 101, Circular Procurement, CE marketing and communications, reducing food waste)
- Work with partners, including Indigenous Tourism BC, to actively support authentic Indigenous-led tourism development and First Nations' economic development
- Promote case studies to highlight wins and local businesses who are doing it well (especially those that focus on starting points and initial actions)
- Sponsor the Project Zero (CE Accelerator) and encourage participation from local businesses
- Create incentives for CE member businesses in the destination (ex. micro-grants for CE practices)
- Continue offering the Biosphere Certification Program while supporting and highlighting intersections with the circular economy
- Create a directory of local circular businesses to support procurement, local/sustainable gifts, local shops in ports and airports)

Global Inspiration

In December 2023, Barcelona Tourism, supported by the City Council and facilitated by the TechnoCampus Chair of Circular Economy and Sustainability, hosted a conference on the circular economy in tourism. The event, organized by the Barcelona Tourist Consortium, targeted businesses within the Consortium and the Biosphere Commitment Programme, bringing together approximately 75 businesses. The conference aimed to promote circular economy principles, guiding businesses in reducing resource consumption, using sustainable products, and maximizing waste value. Group sessions allowed participants to exchange governance and organizational experiences, setting the stage for future collaborations. Follow-up sessions explored projects in greater detail, focusing on construction and outfitting, food and supply chain management, and tourism services.

- Barcelona Tourist Consortium.

[Conference on the Circular Economy in the Tourism Industry](#)



3. Involving Visitors in the Circular Economy

This action area focuses on visitor engagement through communication, awareness building, and incentives to participate in circular activities.



Action Area Sub-Categories

- Visitor education through consistent communication and branding
- Guidance to help locate CE businesses and highlight CE initiatives
- Establish circular choices as default options for visitors
- Programs to incentivize visitor engagement in circular practices
- (Example: See Pilot Idea 1: Looped-in Victoria)

Priority Actions for DGV

- Identify points of contact with visitors and communicate a clear and consistent message around circular economy practices and active transportation options
- Work with local First Nations to craft messaging for visitors regarding stewardship, sustainability, and sense of place
- Promote circular businesses, including the Resale Capital of Canada Campaign
- Create a map to locate CE businesses (potential partnership with VIGBC)
- Educate visitors about reducing single-use items and local tap water (“it’s drinkable!”)
- Explore the possibility of setting up a Victoria equivalent to the CopenPay stewardship initiative where visitors are incentivized to participate in sustainable activities (ex. discount kayak rental if you pick up some garbage)

Global Inspiration

In Ljubljana, a map of swap shops, borrowing shops, repair and recycling facilities directs visitors and locals to local circular businesses. The map provides communication support for the promoters of circular practices in the city and strengthens their profile and involvement in the lives of citizens (Ljubljana).

Copenhagen has set up an innovative “CopenPay” initiative where participants can earn rewards at Copenhagen attractions, ranging from a free lunch or a cup of coffee to a kayak tour or free entrance to a museum. A visitor can, for instance, bike instead of drive, help maintain the city, work in an urban garden, or pledge to sustainable behaviour. Not only is this initiative likely to positively impact the community, it is also an effective marketing and awareness-building tool bringing attention to Copenhagen’s creative problem-solving. The initiative is framed primarily as a climate initiative, but the links to circularity are clear, with possibilities to expand the model to other types of activities.

[Ljubljana Toward a Circular Economy](#)

[Visit Copenhagen, CopenPay Initiative](#)



4. Internal Policies & Actions

This action area focuses on corporate leadership and how DGV can walk the talk of transitioning to circular practices.



Action Area Sub-Categories

- Corporate zero waste and circularity initiatives
- Sustainable Procurement Initiatives
- Leverage broader climate initiatives

Priority Actions for DGV

- Incorporate circularity into other departments of DGV (marketing, finance, membership)
- Move toward corporate zero-waste
- Incorporate circular practices when hosting events and workshops
- Promote and activate the sustainable procurement policy. Improve usage and awareness of the sustainable procurement policy through education/training of staff
- Endorse the Glasgow Declaration and develop a climate leadership strategy
- Use the platform of the IMPACT Conference to showcase the CE strategy and member initiatives

Global Inspiration

As seen in Copenhagen, highlighting initiatives that go to the “next level” of sustainability, for example, showcasing restaurants who have energy saving or other reuse initiatives in place in addition to local food procurement strategies could go a long way in building awareness around the circular economy.

In Barcelona, labeling the circular economy as a “Golden opportunity for tourism”, the province has embraced collaboration to facilitate progress in this area. Academic institutions are actively promoting the circular economy. The Chair of Circular Economy and Sustainability at the Tecnocampus in Mataró has initiated the Compass project, which, in partnership with the Barcelona City Council, examines the unique characteristics of the region's sector to encourage this model shift. As part of this initiative, several awareness-raising sessions and training events have been conducted for tourism stakeholders. These events featured content focusing on value chains and key aspects of the industry such as Governance and Communication and other elements common across all businesses in the sector. This collaborative effort between companies and the public sector has initiated a transformative movement in Barcelona's tourism industry.

Barcelona's beach clean ups that were pitched not only as a way to help clean up beaches, but also as an activity to raise awareness among business owners and other participants in the tourism industry is also an interesting example.

[Turisme de Barcelona, 2023. Barcelona Embraces Tourism Based on the Circular Economy](#)
[Agència de Residus de Catalunya, 2024. Let's Clean up Europe](#)



Pilot Project Ideas

As part of the DGV Circular Economy Strategy development process, a selection of circular economy pilot project ideas were explored. These concepts are intended to spark conversation and encourage thinking about circular practices and the benefits they can offer DGV members, as well as how they can collectively position Greater Victoria as a leading circular economy destination.

The pilot project ideas were chosen based on a broad range of criteria, including direct member benefits, scalability, measurable impact, local partnerships, marketing potential, and alignment with the UN Sustainable Development Goals. These pilot concepts can offer high visibility and impact, while remaining low barrier, low cost, and implementable by DGV members. They also consider the shared benefits for members, residents, local businesses, and visitors alike and alignment with key government partners, policies, and local community values.

Some of the direct DGV member benefits that were identified through these pilot concepts are:

- **Cost savings on packaging and disposal fees**
- **Measurably reducing waste**
- **The potential for marketing opportunities and spotlights for participating members**
- **Appealing to sustainably minded visitors, attracting new visitors and promoting a sustainable image for participating businesses**
- **Facilitating collaborative problem-solving and connections among members, promoting unique sustainable initiatives**

For full descriptions of the pilot projects identified, please see Appendix A.



Implementation & Tracking Progress

To successfully implement and track progress on the Strategy, partnerships will be crucial. By collaborating with member businesses, government agencies, and community organizations, DGV can not only enhance the effectiveness of the strategy but also create a sense of shared responsibility and commitment towards the adoption of circular practices. Progress could be tracked by counting the number of engagements and active collaborations.

One goal of this strategy is to begin implementation of at least one of the identified pilot projects in 2025. To build momentum, DGV aims to make progress within each Action Area in 2025, as each area includes achievable, near-term opportunities.

It is also essential to maintain ongoing alignment between the Strategy and DGV's business priorities, particularly as the organization develops its next 5-year Strategic Plan. This alignment will ensure that circular economy efforts are integrated into the core business operations and strategic objectives.

Targets and goals outlined in a strategy such as this are often relatively high-level and connect to broader sustainability objectives. Targets can be primarily process-oriented rather than output-focused, emphasizing actions such as engaging X number of businesses in circular initiatives over specific quantitative outcomes like reducing waste by Y amount. However, as DGV continues to engage with stakeholders and identify common priorities, more specific KPIs can be developed and tracked. These KPIs should be informed by further engagement and prioritization efforts, ensuring they are relevant and actionable.

Additionally, DGV can consider leveraging existing member surveys and aligning with other sustainability reporting initiatives, such as Biosphere Certification, to enhance the robustness of its KPIs.

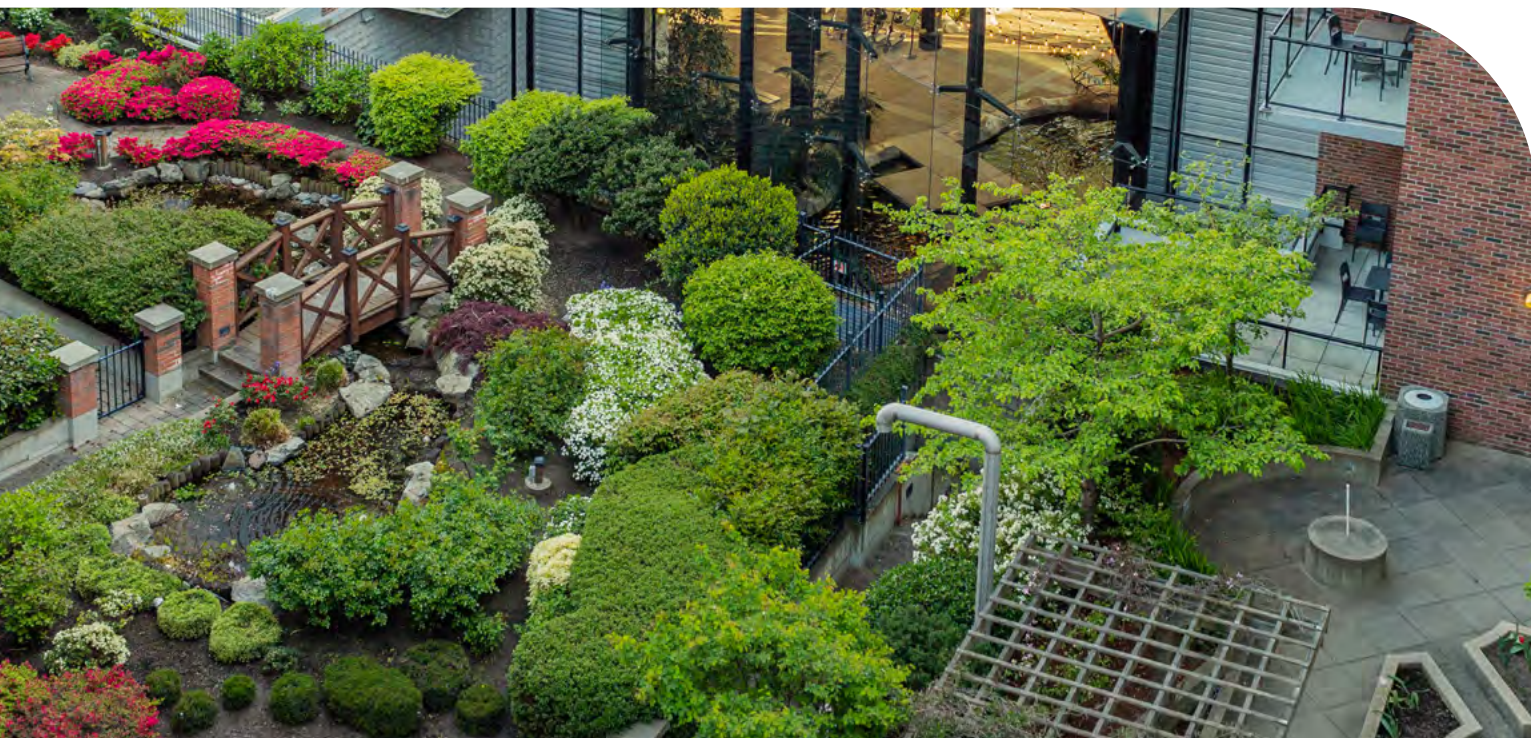
Finally, DGV should remain engaged in other regional circular economy initiatives. By monitoring these developments, DGV can identify opportunities to support and align with the targets and KPIs set by local governments and other organizations within the ecosystem. This will not only strengthen DGV's strategy but also contribute to a more cohesive and collaborative regional effort towards a circular economy.



Potential KPIs by Action Area

Some of the potential KPIs that DGV could consider developing in the future are listed below.

Action Area	Potential KPIs to Track Progress
Transportation & Waste Management Infrastructure	• Number of visitors using shared micro-mobility platforms • Number of visitors participating in reusable container program • Known gaps in active transportation infrastructure near hotels and attractions
Capacity Building, Business Support & Partnerships	• Number of members participating in reusable container programs • Number of businesses participating in Circular Catalyst, Sponsored Project Zero programs • Access / downloads of guidance materials on CE topics • Percentage of Indigenous owned member-businesses
Internal Policies & Actions Involving Visitors in the Circular Economy	• Metrics incorporated into staff performance appraisals • Corporate waste reduction volume and avoided emissions • Number of events and workshops incorporating circular practices • DGV sponsored and/or hosted events aligned with CE work (domestic and global)





DESTINATION GREATER VICTORIA

CIRCULAR DESTINATION PILOT PROJECTS

SYNERGY
FOUNDATION

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report outlines three suggested pilot projects that will position Destination Greater Victoria as a circular destination, known for sustainability and innovation, as part of its Circular Economy Strategy.

The proposed pilots are:

PILOT 1. REUSABLE TAKEOUT CONTAINER PROGRAM ('LOOPED-IN VICTORIA')

A locally branded cup and container share program aimed at making reuse the default option and reducing the estimated 220,000 takeout containers thrown away every day in Victoria. Led by DGV this pilot will offer a coordinated and highly visible reuse opportunity for members that is easily accessed by visitors.

PILOT 2. REFILLABLE AMENITY PROGRAM ('FULFILL VICTORIA')

A member-wide sustainability recognition program for accommodations and businesses that transition from single use to reuse for amenities and cleaning products. Studies show visitors want to travel more sustainably and are seeking ways to have more meaningful and conscientious travel experiences with less impact on the places they visit. 'Fulfill Victoria' will enhance visitor recognition of participating members taking sustainable action.

PILOT 3. CIRCULAR CATALYSTS PROGRAM

A directory allowing DGV members to match their waste streams with local solutions providers ("circular catalysts") who can reuse and upcycle it into new products. Paired with matchmaking/networking events and strong branding campaign, this project will result in unique, high-impact, and high-visibility partnerships that enhance Victoria's reputation as a sustainable destination.

The pilots were selected based on a broad range of criteria including member benefit, scalability, measurable impact, marketing potential, and UN SDG alignment. Additionally, we prioritized the three pilots based on their high visibility and impact while also being low barrier, low cost and readily implementable by DGV members, including hotels. Another priority was to ensure we identified local providers already in place that could be engaged. There is opportunity for high impact story telling through building and promoting these local initiatives.

The proposed pilot projects align with DGV's role in fostering a circular visitor economy and supporting members to adopt circular business models. Adoption of the pilot programs will help DGV deliver local circular economy solutions that offer shared benefit for members, residents, local businesses and visitors alike. There is opportunity with all 3 pilots to build local resilience through building and fostering diverse partnerships across the tourism sector.

PROJECT 1: REUSABLE TAKEOUT CONTAINER PROGRAM



This branded pilot (“Looped-in Victoria”) is a high visibility, high impact opportunity to grow the local circular economy and showcase Greater Victoria’s readily available reusable cup and container programs, offering scalable, convenient, and permanent solutions to reduce single use items with cost saving benefits to businesses, residents, and visitors alike.

With this pilot, DGV can align with and reinforce existing zero waste and single use reduction policies and regulations, and accelerate the reuse movement, support local businesses, promote sustainable opportunities to members, and cater to sustainably minded visitors.

Success Story: [Banff Borrows](#)



The Town of Banff, Banff and Lake Louise Tourism, Banff & Lake Louise Hospitality Association, and the Biosphere Institute of the Bow Valley partnered with MUUSE to launch a reusable cup program called [Banff Borrows](#). Banff Borrows allows visitors and residents to borrow reusable cups from participating locations for up to 30 days at no cost. The project’s goal is to reduce the 1000+ single-use cups found daily in Banff’s downtown core at peak season.

Program Highlights:

- **Six businesses** participating in the pilot, including restaurants, cafés, hotels, and the conference centre, with a target of expanding within Banff and the surrounding area.
- Banff Borrows branded cups can be returned at **any participating business**.
- Members find the program **convenient** and **cost effective**.
- Town of Banff **incentivized businesses** to participate by paying subscription fees until the end of the pilot phase (Dec 2024).

“By offering high-quality reusable cups, the resort aims to align its luxury hospitality with conscious consumption, making it simpler for guests to adopt eco-conscious habits..... the program is a natural extension of the resort’s ongoing efforts to pioneer sustainable practices that not only preserve the natural beauty of Banff National Park, but also foster a culture of sustainability.”

- **Claire Edwards, Director of Special Events and Brand Partnerships at Fairmont Banff Springs**



ALSO TO WATCH: [Petaluma Reusable Cup Project](#)

Reusable Program Partners

PARTNER	OVERVIEW	CURRENT OFFERINGS	MEMBER COST	VISITOR COST	LOCATION
The Nulla Project	Looking to scale up within Victoria. 25 partners currently onboarded & offers event services Considerations: no cup tracking, plastic cups are less desirable by cafes, limited cup/container size varieties, no central washing for businesses	16 oz plastic coffee cups 2 plastic container types - clamshell and soup cup with lid. Made from 50% recycled content	\$5.50 one-time charge per reusable item	\$5 refundable deposit	Victoria
Bread and Butter Collective	Offers reusable plastic containers to restaurants and businesses. Uses QR codes. Considerations: only offers plastic containers no cups. No central washing for businesses.	Plastic clamshell food container	\$8 per container for non-members \$100 annual membership fee	\$8 one-time fee	Victoria
MUUSE	Offers inventory, universal drop off locations, pick up service, centralized washing and technology platform for tracking and reporting with integrated app.	Variety of metal cups and plastic containers	Varies	Free <i>\$20 penalty if not returned in 30 days</i>	National
Sharewares	Offers inventory, collection service and bins with QR codes to track returns and deposits, washing and redistribution. Has centralized washing facility. Offers technology platform for tracking and reporting with integrated app. Technology can be licenced. Considerations: only offers plastic options	Variety of plastic cups and containers	Deposit and service fee per container (varies) Rent or purchase charge for return bin	\$.90-2.50 refundable deposit	Vancouver
Reusables	Offers inventory, universal drop off locations, pick up service, centralized washing and technology platform for tracking and reporting with integrated app.	Variety of metal cups and containers with lids	Varies	Free <i>\$20 penalty if not returned in 14 days</i>	Vancouver

Key delivery partners / stakeholders:

- City of Victoria -supportive policy, branding campaign
- Victoria Conference Center -include cup share sign up in conference registration package
- Victoria Hotel Association –networking and sharing program information
- Local hotels and accommodation providers –pilot a reusable service delivery method by providing containers in the hotel room and include deposit fee if applicable in hotel stay
- Local business organizations

Timeline

Focus on a downtown Victoria core rollout within the next 18-24 months.



DGV Member Benefits

- ✓ Save money on packaging costs
- ✓ Measurably reduce waste
- ✓ Marketing spotlights for members participating in the reusable container program
- ✓ Support through a common reuse system and messaging
- ✓ Appeal to sustainably minded visitors and attract new visitors



MUUSE can track the original location of a cup (i.e., a hotel) and the return location. This would allow DGV members to calculate how many containers were put into use from their location.

Measurable Impact

KPI	Metric	How
Reduced costs	\$x/ year	Reduced purchasing of single use containers, and reduced disposal fees
Reduced single use items	#/ year	Single use cups avoided through reuse
Business uptake across sectors	#/year	Diverse member businesses joining the reuse program
Visitor participation	#registered/ year	Reusable cup and container usage at visitor locations tracked through technology platform

Key Success Factors for Scalability

- Expanded locations for convenient pick up and drop off at participating businesses and public locations throughout downtown. [Sharewares](#) offers a comprehensive map of all return locations including bins, depots, home pick-up, and retailers.
- Establishment of shared washing facilities. There is currently no centralized washing facility in Greater Victoria. Existing partners working with Nulla and Bread and Butter Collective wash containers in-house. [Kitchen Connect](#) has existing dishwashing facilities for rent.
- Large inventory, including a variety of sizes and materials.
- Data tracking software to measure impact.
- Simple sign up with QR code and no deposit.
- Provide incentives - offer perks or financial assistance to new participating businesses and to visitors when they sign up for the program. Consider covering business subscription fee for first year of the pilot, invest in reusable inventory, or support the development of collection and washing infrastructure.

Marketing Potential

- Program branding on reusable containers
- Signage at participating businesses and collection sites, including hotel lobbies
- Educational information in hotel rooms along with reusable containers
- Promotion to visitors through website, social media, visitor maps, events, and conference registration

PROJECT 2: REFILLABLE AMENITY PROGRAM



In the hospitality industry, sustainability and cost-efficiency are becoming increasingly important. One effective way to address both concerns is by adopting and expanding bulk refilling systems for cleaning products and amenities. A refill program designs out waste from the start by eliminating single use plastics. By making the switch to refillables, accommodation providers can showcase their commitment to circularity, save costs and have a significant impact on plastic waste reduction. A 'Fulfill Victoria' program that recognizes members participating in refill practices is a simple way for guests to identify and support sustainable accommodations. Refill products can be procured through local refillery partners.

Success Story: [THE DEN](#)



The Den in Ucluelet, BC offers a Sustainable and Circular Accommodation Program to make refilling more accessible for new or existing accommodations and to provide transparent and responsible systems for their guests.

Program Highlights

- Participating businesses receive **templates and guides** to support their circular transition
- Partners with **over 100** resorts, hotels, vacation rentals, and cleaners in BC
- Provides **free** pick up, refill, and delivery services
- Offers **3 tiers** of certification to recognize businesses commitment

"Having The Den in our community is a game changer, for all of us in hospitality. We all want to make the right decisions for the environment, often the only thing holding us back is accessibility to supply and services that support these initiatives."

- Black Rock Oceanfront Resort



Photo credit: The Den



Reusable Program Partners

PARTNER	OVERVIEW	CURRENT OFFERINGS	MEMBER COST	LOCATION
The Soap Exchange	Supplies bulk front and back of house all natural products to hotels and restaurants in Victoria Has large capacity and in the process of growing customer base	Offers refill, delivery and pick up of empty container service	Varies. No extra cost for delivery Cost competitive with single use of similar quality.	Victoria
Ash Refillery	Offers large selection of bulk front and back of house all natural products	Refill offered inhouse only Small container size	Varies. Cost competitive with single use of similar quality.	Victoria
Zero Waste Emporium	Offers small selection of all natural cleaning products and soaps	Pick up or delivery	Varies. Cost competitive with single use of similar quality. Small fee for packing and delivery	Victoria

Key delivery partners / stakeholders:

- City of Victoria - supportive single use and waste reduction policy
- Victoria Hotel Association – networking, education, resource sharing and providing a platform to learn from other members who transitioned to refill
- Local hotels and accommodation providers who are already implementing sustainable practices (i.e., [The Parkside](#)) – support others to do so
- The Den - work with a local refillery to create a Sustainable and Circular Accommodation Program for Victoria accommodations and other businesses
- Restaurants and other member businesses - switch cleaning products to refill in front and back of house
- BC Green Business – inspire others to follow suit

Timeline

Initial rollout within the next 18-24 months. Focus on accommodation providers, restaurants and businesses serving the visitor economy that are implementing sustainable practices or are ready to transition to refillables. Spotlight businesses using or transitioning to refill to launch sustainability recognition program. Create a buzz to onboard more businesses.



DGV Member Benefits

- ✓ Cost comparable to single use
- ✓ Measurably reduce waste
- ✓ Streamline operations and lower operational costs by reducing time and effort required to restock individual amenities
- ✓ Allows housekeeping staff to focus more on guest satisfaction and less on inventory management
- ✓ Products are better quality, made with natural ingredients to enhance the visitor experience
- ✓ Appeal to sustainably minded visitors and attract new visitors
- ✓ Promotes a sustainable image for recognized businesses in program

Measurable Impact

KPI	METRIC	HOW
Reduced Costs	\$x/ year	Reduced single use amenity and packaging costs and reduced disposal fees
Reduced single use items	#/ year	Single use product containers avoided through reuse
Business uptake across sectors	#/year	Diverse member businesses joining the refill recognition program
Enhanced visitor experience	#/yes replies	Provide visitor survey to ask if refillable amenities and sustainable practices positively impacted their stay

Key Success Factors for Scalability

- Willing accommodation partners to make the switch and share experience
- Make cost comparable to single use
- Refill partner with a wide range of products suited to the visitor economy's needs and preferences, growth capacity, and timely delivery service
- Online bulk refill ordering
- Staff training for system change
- Education and outreach to members
- Visible promotion of refill practices on member websites to attract sustainably minded visitors

Marketing Potential

- Launch and promotion of 'Fulfill' Victoria' sustainability recognition program
- DGV spotlight on participating businesses
- Promotional signage and program information at participating businesses in public facing spaces including hotel rooms and lobbies
- Promotion to visitors through website, social media, conferences (speakers/vendors)

PROJECT 3: CIRCULAR CATALYSTS



Partnerships are a key component of a resilient, local, circular economy but can take time to develop, posing a barrier to businesses who tend to be limited by time and resources. In this pilot, DGV has the opportunity to lean into its strengths of partnership development and marketing and promotion as well as its position as a local economic leader to create a database where DGV members can list waste streams they hope to divert and peruse a list of businesses in Victoria that provide innovative approaches to waste diversion. Alongside the database, DGV can host an event series for members and circular catalyst businesses to facilitate matchmaking, spark inspiration, and showcase partnership results; and a microgrant program offering financial support to increase capacity and execute projects.

This project will create a permanent and dynamic centralized database of solutions that can grow beyond into a movement featuring bespoke, innovative collaborations, engaging matchmaking events, and unique visitor experiences and public showcases.

Success Story: [Partners in Project Green](#)



Partners in Project Green's Material Exchange program facilitates the exchange of material generated within their stakeholder community (businesses and non-profit groups) to divert waste from landfill and move towards a circular economy. Donors specify the material they have available, and recipients specify the material they are seeking. They are matched by Partners in Project Green staff and connected by email to negotiate terms of agreement.

Pilot Highlights

- Diverted over **18,500 tonnes** of waste material away from landfill, valued at \$3,530,835 (2013-2023)
- Facilitated **400+** circular economy exchanges between businesses and non-profit groups (2021-2023)
- Air Canada [donated 10,000 duvets](#) to 8+ non-profits supporting people in need
- If donors result in no matches, Partners in Project Green identifies another non-profit group that may take the material and, if unsuccessful, recommends a recycler.
- Once a match is made, participants report the amount of material diverted, where the material was sent, and photos. Partners in Project Green features exchanges as news stories, case studies, and social media posts.

Circular Catalyst Partners

PARTNER	"WASTE" MATERIAL	GOODS CREATED	EXAMPLE
House of Wildwood	Textiles (drapes, bed linens, etc.)	Clothing, accessories, pillowcases, fine art	Parkside Hotel Phillips Brewery
Soap for Hope	Hygiene products, linens, lost and found items	Soap pebbles, hygiene products, 3D printer filament, washcloths	Inn at Laurel Point
Salt Legacy	Sails. Opportunities to include other materials from tour operators (e.g., survivor suits, hardware)	Outdoor bags and accessories	Evian
Ergo Eco Solutions	Cooking oil	Biodiesel, concrete/asphalt release agent	Big Wheel Burger
Food Security Distribution Centre	Pre-consumer food waste	Fruit salad, fruit puree, fruit leather, dehydrated fruit	Sysco/Thrifty's
Ocean Legacy	Used marine gear, shoreline plastic, ocean-recovered plastic waste	Plastic resins	Full Circle Plastics lumber
Too Good to Go	Post-consumer food redistribution platform Businesses pay an annual fee (~\$89USD) and a small fee per order	Surprise bags of surplus food	Discovery Coffee/Yonni's Doughnuts
ReWood	Lumber, pallets	Garden infrastructure for non-profits	Serenity Farm
SUPPLY Victoria Creative Reuse Centre	Office and art supplies	Creative reuse art packages & workshops	Bottle Depot

Key delivery partners / stakeholders:

- Key DGV members (e.g., The Parkside Hotel, Inn at Laurel Point, Big Wheel Burger) who can act as proof of concept and inspire others
- Accommodation providers, restaurants, and other member businesses
- Victoria Hotel Association – consider collaborating on a partnership (e.g., hotels develop custom soap pebbles with Soap for Hope)
- Synergy Foundation – promotional partner to network circular and green businesses



[Rheaply](#) is a B2B resource exchange platform where businesses can post surplus items and resources, browse listings from other organizations, and track cost savings or sales from every resource transaction.

Timeline

Initial rollout within the next 12-18 months. Focus first on building up a database of DGV members and circular catalysts. Strong branding, promotion, and matchmaking events will increase buy-in, attract new solutions providers, and spark inspiration.



DGV Member Benefits

- ✓ Measurably reduce waste and associated disposal costs
- ✓ Marketing spotlights for members
- ✓ Saves time on finding solutions providers and creating partnerships
- ✓ Appealing to sustainably minded visitors and attracting new visitors
- ✓ Promote unique sustainable initiatives of members for visitors
- ✓ Create tangible examples of the circular economy in action (upcycled goods)
- ✓ Provides opportunities for members to connect with each other and collaboratively problem-solve

Measurable Impact

KPI	METRIC	HOW
Waste diverted	kgs/year	Waste diverted from landfill – could divide into individual waste streams (e.g., textiles, food waste, cooking oil)
Matches made	#/ year	Track using surveys sent to members and businesses (or build into database)
Businesses engaged	#/year	Number of businesses that have engaged with the database and/or attended an event
Jobs created	#/year	Based on scaling circular catalyst businesses
Funding invested	\$/year	Microgrants awarded to members and circular catalysts

Key Success Factors for Scalability

- Participation from DGV members – needs to be enough buy-in to be worth using.
- Capacity and willingness of circular catalyst partners to engage in these special projects – opportunity for DGV to collaborate with local non-profits to support relationship-building and become the conduit between DGV members and community partners.
- Funding for businesses to carry out projects and circular catalysts to add capacity. To support the scale up of this pilot project, DGV may choose to create a microgrant program to help DGV members create or upgrade waste collection areas, market their partnerships, cover initial investment in partnership, or increase capacity of circular catalyst businesses to take on larger-scale partnerships.
- User-friendly database – whether it starts with a simple browsable spreadsheet tied to a Google Form or a platform like [Rheaply](#) - will be necessary to ensure low-barrier participation and matchmaking.



According to Soap for Hope's [2023 Impact Report](#), they were unable to fulfill requests nearly 25% of the time due to insufficient funding or product availability.

Marketing Potential

- Storytelling-centred marketing campaign framing partnerships as innovative, sustainable, hyperlocal, and community-driven
- Event series for DGV members and circular catalysts. Consider increasing engagement with:
 - Networking events (structured and unstructured),
 - Doses of Innovation-style short presentations showcasing innovative partnerships and inspiring new ideas
 - Reverse pitch events where members can present a waste stream and attendees can brainstorm uses
 - “Speed dating” between members and solutions providers
 - A final showcase presenting key partnerships rolled out during the year – this could be creative and public-facing, for example, a fashion show featuring upcycled linens
- Promotion of available resources and solutions providers among members (in newsletters, etc.)
- Promotion of upcycled products to visitors and residents – consider selling products at the Visitors Centre, member businesses, and gift shops.
- On-site activation at partnership locations (e.g., hotel lobby display)
- Digital promotion to visitors through website, social media, conference registration and events
- Possibility of integration into Sustainable Business Map as part of DGV Circular Strategy.

FUNDING SOURCES

To fund these initiatives, consider the following grant programs:

FUNDING PROGRAM	DESCRIPTION
<u>CleanBC Plastics Action Fund</u>	This fund supports novel plastic waste reduction projects across BC. The Circular Economy Innovation (CEI) stream funds up to 66% of project costs with expected project ranges of \$150K-\$750K. This stream is focused on growing the reuse economy in BC and includes pilots and trial projects. The next round of funding decisions will be made in early 2025. Consider applying in conjunction with the Victoria Hotel Association or other local partners.
<u>CRD Rethink Waste Community Grant</u>	This grant provides funding for the development and implementation of community-based projects that align with the CRD's goals of moving waste materials out of landfills to their highest and best next use. There is \$50,000 worth of grant funding available annually, with a maximum of \$3,000 per project. Applications are processed on a first come first serve basis.
<u>Pacific Institute for Climate Solutions'</u> Climate Action Events Program	This grant supports events that share knowledge and ways of knowing, build skills and/or foster meaningful conversations to advance climate action within BC. Funding opens in September 2024. Available funds range from \$2,000 to \$5,000.

Destination Greater Victoria

Destination Greater Victoria Circular Economy Strategy

| Jurisdictional Scan

July 26, 2024

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Executive Summary

The objective of this report is to highlight some examples and best practices of circular tourism initiatives that can be used as inspiration to help guide the development of DGVs circular tourism strategy. Three jurisdictions, identified as leaders in the circular economy and sustainable tourism space, were evaluated: Copenhagen, Barcelona and Ljubljana (Summarized in Table 1). Given that much of the activity in this space is in the EU, the research team also conducted a brief scan to provide some examples of circular tourism practices in North America.

Publicly available information, focusing on Circular Economy Strategies and Sustainable Tourism Strategies, where available, were reviewed. Tourism websites were also scanned to identify examples of actions and initiatives in each jurisdiction.

Key Themes: Circularity is a broad topic that intersects with many areas of sustainability. Key topic themes that emerged across the jurisdictions in the context of the visitor economy were actions that focused on:

- Transportation
- Plastic waste reduction
- Food (local, but also organic and focused on waste reduction)
- Water (but mostly linked to plastic bottles)
- Textiles/Retail

"Circularity" and Tourism: While many jurisdictions are taking action that could be categorized as 'circular', those actions are often more broadly framed under the umbrella of regenerative or sustainable tourism. Barcelona and Edmonton were examples of jurisdictions where circularity was specifically mentioned in the context of tourism. Circular Economy strategies often referenced tourism-related initiatives, in particular Ljubljana's strategy which called out the connection to the tourism industry in their Circular Economy Strategy.

Circularity and Climate: Climate action plans are often focused on Scope 1 and 2 emissions, with consumption-based emissions being overlooked, even though these emissions account for over half of all emissions in many large cities. Several cities, identified as frontrunners in circularity by the Circular Cities Declaration report¹, are setting more specific, measurable upstream emission goals with a more concrete link to circularity principles, i.e. goals for reducing use of virgin material or increasing secondary raw materials, goals on product re-use.

Frameworks for Assessing Circularity: Signatories to the Circular Cities Declaration indicated limited use of these, with no clear alignment or emergence of best practice on external measurement frameworks.² However, alignment with regional and national strategies was a strategy that was

¹ [Circular Cities Declaration, 2024](#)

² [Circular Cities Declaration, 2024](#)

commonly employed to encourage consistency of indicators and facilitate coordination. This reinforces the importance of DGV's alignment with other regional strategies in the context of the visitor economy.

Transparency: Circularity is a complex topic. Providing transparent communication is especially critical for success and buy-in given the increased risk of greenwashing.

Education and Awareness Building: As with any effort in regenerative tourism, initiatives related to the circular economy require education and capacity building, which continues to be a key focus in the jurisdictions identified. Workshops, educational materials, and conferences to help participants understand how they can shift from linear to circular practices are key. Educating both locals and visitors is important. Helping businesses communicate and showcase their circularity initiatives will also help build momentum and raise awareness in the community.

Collaboration: Setting the foundations for relationships and synergies up and down the supply chain, similar to the upcoming engagement initiatives being led by DGV will clearly bring value to the ecosystem. Many jurisdictions stated mechanisms to gather ideas and opportunities for participants to provide feedback as a key aspect of their strategies.

Targets and KPIs: Targets and goals are often high-level and relate to sustainability strategy more generally. They are a mix of process rather than output goals ("i.e. engage businesses" vs "reduce x amount of waste"). More specific KPIs can be developed once alignment on key themes is reached after further engagement and prioritization efforts take place. DGV should watch developing local and regional circular economy initiatives and look for opportunities to support targets and KPIs set by other organizations in the ecosystem.

Summary of Circularity Activity in Leading Jurisdictions

Table 1. Summary of Leading Jurisdictions

	Copenhagen	Barcelona	Ljubljana
Population	600,000M	1.6M	280 000
Regional Circular Economy Strategy	Yes Key Themes - Climate - Food - Transportation - Waste Circular Copenhagen Website Circular Copenhagen Waste and Resource Management Plan, 2019	No, but active in this space with a Zero Waste Strategy Key Themes from CE sector research report - Waste - Renewable Energy - Energy Efficiency	Yes Key Themes - Plastics (single-use) - Wasted food - Textiles - Electronic and electrical equipment Strategy specifically references intersection with the Tourism strategy (among others) and the impact of visitors Circular Economy Strategy for the City of Ljubljana
Sustainable Tourism Strategy	Yes More focused on sustainability generally, but touches on actions for: - Procurement - Food waste - Packaging Wonderful Copenhagen, Tourism for Good, an Invitation to Sustainable Tourism by 2030 Wonderful Copenhagen, 2017, The end of tourism as we know it, towards a new beginning of Localhood	Yes Key Themes - Decarbonization - Local food - Raise awareness of visitors about the impact of tourism - Transportation - Reducing single use plastic No specific mention of Circular Economy, but many circularity-related themes included Turisme de Barcelona, 2023, Sustainable Tourism Strategy,	Yes Sustainability is a priority for Ljubljana Tourism, but a key document outlining a strategy was not found. Information is found on their website: Ljubljana Tourism Vision and Strategy
Global Destination Sustainability Index^{3 4}	Global Destination Sustainability Index Rating #3	Global Destination Sustainability Index Rating #34	In 2022, 2021, 2020, 2019, 2018, 2017, 2016 and 2014, Ljubljana was included in the Sustainable Destinations Top 100 list.

³ The [Global Destination Sustainability Index](#) The GDS-Index is a destination-level programme that measures, benchmarks, and improves the sustainability strategy and performance of tourism and events destinations. The GDS-Index is aligned with international standards, UN SDGs, GSTC Destination Criteria, UNWTO.

⁴ Global Destination Sustainability Index: [Top 40 Cities](#)

	Copenhagen	Barcelona	Ljubljana
Key frameworks and standards referenced	- UN SDGs - Operates with the definition of sustainable tourism as defined by the UN World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) - Green Michelin Star rated restaurants	- UN SDGs - Biosphere - Glasgow declaration (signed in 2021) Many others cited as part of their network (listed in this report)	- Sustainable Top 100 list produced by non-profit organisation Green Destinations - Slovenia Green Destination Gold label (and several other regional Slovenian awards/certifications) - UN SDGs (for GDS index)
Examples of actions/initiatives	- Earth to table: "Next level" Sustainable gastronomy - Volume of Eco-certified hotel rooms - Promotion of refillable water bottles - Innovative CopenPay initiative	- Collaboration with Academia - Circular Economy in Tourism Conference - Waste reduction efforts in hotels - Beach clean up initiatives as an awareness building activity for tourism industry participants	- Largest vehicle-free zone in the EU - Green Supply Chains project for local food (including Ljubljana Breakfast) - Destination map of circular shopping and businesses - Promotion of reusable water bottles - Reducing Plastic at events - Breakfast 2Go program

Introduction

The objective of this report is to highlight some examples and best practices of circular tourism that can be used as inspiration to help guide the development of DGV's circular tourism strategy. Three jurisdictions, identified as leaders in the circular economy and sustainable tourism space, were evaluated: Copenhagen, Barcelona and Ljubljana. A scan of activities in North America was also conducted to highlight some initiatives taking place.

The results of the jurisdictional scan are summarized in Table 1 and described in detail below. Descriptions of each region's Sustainable Tourism Strategy, Circular Economy Strategy, and examples of actions/initiatives are presented. Key takeaways and insights for DGV have also been summarized in the final section of the report.

Methods

In selecting jurisdictions for the scan, the research team looked for sustainable tourism destinations that had circular economy strategies, and ideally some mention of crossover between those two elements (circularity and tourism). A long-list of jurisdictions was initially developed using various resources such as reports by the Circular Cities Declaration⁵, and UN Tourism⁶. Based on case study relevance and similarities with the Greater Victoria region (size, brand, target market, etc.), 3 jurisdictions from the long-list (Copenhagen, Barcelona and Ljubljana) were identified as leaders in the circular economy and sustainable tourism space and selected as most relevant. Given that much of the activity in this space is in the EU, the research team also conducted a brief scan of North American activities to provide some examples of regenerative and circular tourism practices in the region.

Publicly available information was reviewed, focusing on Circular Economy Strategies and Sustainable Tourism Strategies, where available. Tourism websites were also scanned to identify examples of actions and initiatives in each jurisdiction.

Circularity is a broad topic that intersects with many (most!) other sustainability issues. For example, circularity objectives are often mentioned in the context of climate-related initiatives. This scan will focus on key circularity factors and will not provide a detailed overview of actions and initiatives related to climate and nature.

⁵ [Circular Cities Declaration](#), 2024

⁶ [UN Tourism](#)

Leading Jurisdictions

Copenhagen, Denmark

Sustainable Tourism Strategy

Copenhagen is known as a sustainable city with ambitious carbon reduction targets, a unique bicycle culture, clean water for both drinking and swimming, organic food, acceptance of diversities and as a safe city for visitors. Copenhagen's vision for the visitor economy is embedded in the concept of "Localhood"⁷ in "Wonderful Copenhagen's 2020 Localhood Strategy" which also declares the "End of Tourism as we know it". This statement is the driving force behind Wonderful Copenhagen's sustainability work. The key idea is that tourism is not a goal in itself; tourism is a means to a sustainable end – a reality where tourism contributes positively to society, to building better cities and destinations for locals and visitors alike and where tourism is a driver of positive change."⁸ Their long term ambition is "to make tourism part of the solution, instead of the problem."⁹

Collaboration up and down the value chain is a key focus¹⁰. They specifically state that the strategy is relevant to anyone involved in the tourism development of Greater Copenhagen, and it specifically reaches out to attractions, hotels, conference organisers and venues, cruise companies, transport and tour operators, the public sector, industry organisations, NGOs, universities and others with an interest in the tourism value chains.

"Co-innovation at heart" is one of their key focus areas in their "Localhood" strategy.¹¹ "To match our fast-paced surroundings, we need to ensure sufficient agility within our existing networks to think in new ways and adapt to our new competitive landscape. This includes initiatives to launch a platform for co-innovation, crowdsource ideas from many parties, and cultivate a culture of shared innovation and fast failures."¹²

Focus areas of the strategy are listed below, with key components related to circularity highlighted. While the strategy presents a host of actions related to sustainability more generally (e.g., develop a manual for hosting sustainable events, stay up to date on current best practices on sustainability by attending conferences, etc.), actions specifically geared towards circularity in this document are limited.

- **Focus Area 1:** Broadening tourism
- **Focus Area 2:** Tourism Choices Matter
 - By focusing on consumption, tourism can contribute to more efficient resource consumption and reduce water and fossil fuel usage, food waste, general waste and

⁷ Wonderful Copenhagen, 2017, [The end of tourism as we know it](#), towards a new beginning of Localhood

⁸ Wonderful Copenhagen, [Tourism for Good](#), an Invitation to Sustainable Tourism by 2030

⁹ Wonderful Copenhagen, 2017, [The end of tourism as we know it](#), towards a new beginning of Localhood

¹⁰ Wonderful Copenhagen, [Tourism for Good](#), an Invitation to Sustainable Tourism by 2030

¹¹ Wonderful Copenhagen, 2017, [The end of tourism as we know it](#), towards a new beginning of Localhood

¹² Wonderful Copenhagen, [Tourism for Good](#), an Invitation to Sustainable Tourism by 2030

other environmental impacts. As a tourism organisation Wonderful Copenhagen can include sustainability information in its reporting cycles.

- A key goal is prioritising communication about the sustainable choices visitors can make and the sustainable experiences they can have.
- **Actions** in this area include:
 - Strengthen existing communication and develop new points of contact for travellers, such as hotel receptionists, guides, attraction staff who act as ambassadors for the destination and should possess the relevant knowledge to inspire travellers to a sustainable visit.
 - Support and encourage the tourism sector to develop experiences and products which make positive impacts on a sustainable transition by developing tools and showcasing best practices.
 - Take an active part in the ongoing initiatives on tourism and traffic in general and specifically on tourism and bicycle culture.
 - Develop a tool kit for hotels and venues enabling them to tell the destination's story on sustainability.
- **Focus Area 3: Partnerships for good**
 - With the right knowledge about tourism and sharing this knowledge in partnerships, the tourism industry can improve positive economic, social and environmental links between urban, peri-urban and rural areas
- **Focus Area 4: Leading by example**
 - Focusing on its own operations, Wonderful Copenhagen can contribute to more efficient resource consumption and reduce water and fossil fuel usage, food waste, general waste and other environmental impacts
 - **Actions** in this area include:
 - Develop a procurement policy for Wonderful Copenhagen which incorporates sustainability considerations, with a target to concert in-house food and beverage procurement: 30 per cent in 2019, 60 per cent in 2020 and 90 per cent in 2021
 - Measure and take actions to reduce food waste and increase the use of organic produce.

Circular Economy Strategy

Circular Copenhagen describes key initiatives in the city's journey toward a circular economy.¹³ As described in their Circular Cities Declaration¹⁴, Copenhagen's initiative to become a circular city is primarily driven by its Waste and Resource Management Plan¹⁵ 2018-2024, which aims to triple the amount of reuse and achieve a 70% recycling rate for household waste. A new waste and resource management plan is being developed and will take effect in 2025. Copenhagen has strategies for sustainable procurement (in Danish) and a City of Copenhagen Food Strategy¹⁶ that will also support

¹³ [Circular Copenhagen Website](#)

¹⁴ [Circular Cities Declaration](#), 2024

¹⁵ Circular Copenhagen [Waste and Resource Management Plan](#), 2019

¹⁶ City of Copenhagen, 2022. [Food Strategy](#)

the city's efforts to become more circular. Copenhagen is one of few cities to have conducted a city material flow analysis using the CityLoop framework.¹⁷

Key circularity targets include:¹⁸

- Capital Region Denmark has set a goal for secondary raw materials to cover 20% of material consumption in 2030.
- Setting goals on the reuse of products and materials, e.g. Copenhagen aims to triple reuse by 2024

A new climate plan focused on consumption-based targets is in the works which can be directly linked to circular initiatives. This plan will follow the current 2025 Climate Plan¹⁹, which aims for Copenhagen to be climate neutral by 2025. Copenhagen is looking to include a Scope 3 emissions target in their forthcoming climate action plan.

Examples of Initiatives

Earth to Table: "Next level" Sustainable gastronomy

- In 2021, three new restaurants were awarded a Michelin Green Star.²⁰ These initiatives feature prominently on the Visit Copenhagen website, which showcases sustainable restaurants. It includes organic farm-to-table initiatives as well as "Restaurants that take sustainability to the next level"²¹ which highlight re-use initiatives and practices that reduce energy in addition to local produce.

Volume of Eco-certified Hotel Rooms

- The majority of the hotel rooms in the city are Eco-certified, making it easy for visitors to select a sustainable option.

Promoting Refillable Water Bottles

- Copenhagen promotes the use of refillable water bottles, with messaging on the safety of local drinking water along with a map of refill stations.

Innovative CopenPay²² Initiative

- **How it works:** Earn rewards at Copenhagen attractions ranging from a free lunch or a cup of coffee to a kayak tour or even a free entrance to a museum. All a participant needs to do is, for instance, bike instead of drive, help maintain the city, work in an urban garden, or pledge to sustainable behaviour.
- Very transparent about the impacts expected, the website states: "Recognizing that the environmental burden of transportation to and from Copenhagen is much more significant than

¹⁷ [Circular Cities Declaration, 2024](#)

¹⁸ [Circular Cities Declaration, 2024](#)

¹⁹ [CPH Climate Action Plan 2025](#)

²⁰ Michelin Green Star: [What is a Michelin Green Star and how do you earn one?](#)

²¹ Visit Copenhagen: Restaurants that take sustainability to another level

²² Visit Copenhagen, [CopenPay](#) Initiative

that of local transportation. Consequently, CopenPay is marketed only in Copenhagen to encourage both visitors and locals to make more sustainable choices.”

- CopenPay is a pilot project launched on July 15 (2024) and runs until August 11. Based on the evaluation, CopenPay may be introduced as a year-round, green payment experience within the economy and broaden the concept to other parts of Denmark and the rest of the world.
- Participants can show proof, such as train tickets or photos of themselves biking or participating in cleanup efforts, but generally, CopenPay is built on trust, just as Danish society is the most trusting in the world, according to PEW Research.
- The website hosts an interactive map that describes options for participation (Figure 1)
- Not only is this initiative likely to have a positive impact on the community, but it is also an effective marketing and awareness building tool (a Google search revealed many articles that outlined the initiative including Forbes, Conde Naste Traveler, Fortune, CNN, BBC) bringing attention to Copenhagen's creative problem solving. The initiative is framed primarily as a climate initiative, but the links to circularity are clear, and there are possibilities to expand the model to other types of activities.

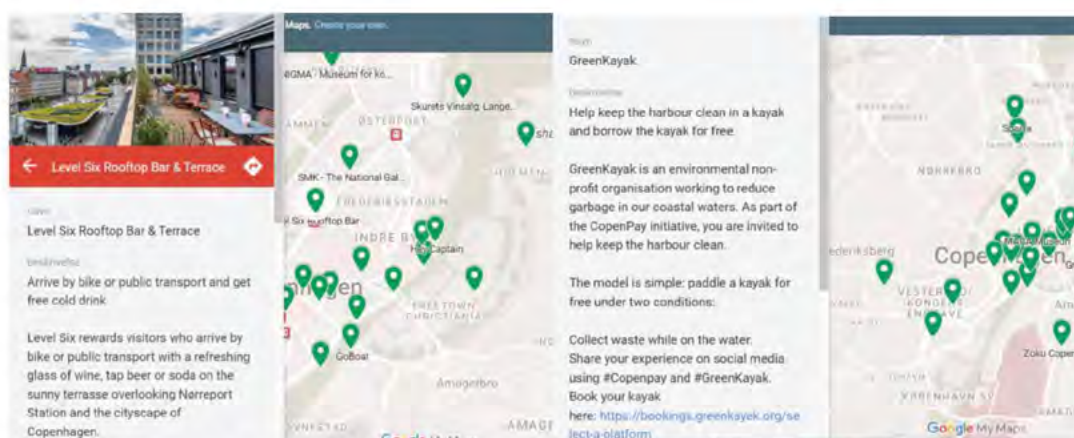


Figure 1: Examples from Copenhagen's innovative CopenPay website²³

²³ Visit Copenhagen, [CopenPay Initiative](#)

Barcelona, Spain

Sustainable Tourism Strategy

As part of its mission, Turisme de Barcelona aims to boost the visitor economy as a destination committed to sustainable development goals. The aim is to bring the benefits of the visitor economy to the community as a whole and the city's economy and its surrounding ecosystem.²⁴

While Barcelona's sustainable tourism strategy document does not explicitly reference the circular economy, many of the initiatives are relevant, and the city clearly sees the opportunity to link these two topics (for example, the Circular Economy in Tourism described below under examples of actions/initiatives). In 2011, Barcelona became the first city in the world to be awarded Biosphere World Class Destination certification by the Responsible Tourism Institute, in accordance with the criteria of the Global Sustainable Tourism Council. Barcelona's was the first destination in the world to be awarded Biosphere Platinum certification in 2022.²⁵

The Sustainability Plan has 16 goals which are the focus of the city's actions. The Environmental (EN-01 to EN-02) goals are listed below, along with relevant actions and indicators (Figure 2). Goals EN-01 and EN-02 are listed as the priority goals. A number of the actions and indicators relate to the circular economy including:

- Public transportation (for all visitors, including conference delegates)
- Dissemination and creation of urban nature trails in Barcelona to be explored on foot or by bike
- Reduction of single-use plastic and paper, specifically in-house at the tourism offices
- Water use (raising awareness about water footprint with information at tourist offices, including the impact of plastic water bottles)
- Food (actions associated with okm produce)
- Education and guidance related to sustainability more generally

A number of other relevant initiatives are also listed under their Economic and Social goals, including goals and suggestions about new practices to improve the consortium's sustainability.²⁶

²⁴ Turisme de Barcelona, 2023. [Sustainable Tourism Strategy](#).

²⁵ Turisme de Barcelona, 2023. [Sustainable Tourism Strategy](#).

²⁶ Turisme de Barcelona, 2023. [Sustainable Tourism Strategy](#).

Actions	Indicator	2023	2024	2025
EN-01. To secure a commitment to environmental sustainability from businesses in Barcelona's tourism sector				
Barcelona Sustainable Tourism awards to incentivise good practices in the sector	Candidatures presented for the Turisme de Barcelona good practice awards	x	x	x
Attracting and providing advice for the businesses that have signed up to the Barcelona Biosphere Commitment to Sustainable Tourism (BBCST), rewarding good practices in the efficient use of resources and minimising environmental impact.	Tourism enterprises with sustainability certification	x	x	x
Incentivising businesses to obtain the Safe Travels stamp	Tourism enterprises that have obtained the Safe Travels stamp	x		
EN-02. To make the Barcelona brand known around the world as a sustainable destination				
Links to the Global Destination Sustainable Index: the annual benchmark for MICE destinations.	Evolution of the sustainability performance of destinations in the GDS index	x	x	x
Active participation in international networks and entities: UNWTO, GSTC, City Destination Alliance	Projects under development for each work group associated with sustainability	x	x	x
Fam trips for agents promoting sustainable tourism	Satisfaction of participants in fam trips about sustainability	x		
EN-03. To offset and reduce the carbon footprint of visitors and the Turisme de Barcelona Consortium				
Specific MICE actions to encourage congress delegates to use public transport to get around the city	Professionals who use public transport to travel around the destination	x	x	x
Dissemination and creation of urban nature trails in Barcelona to be explored on foot or by bike	Searches on the respective sections of the website visitbarcelona.com	x		
Drawing up the guidelines for a master plan for decarbonising the tourism sector by 2050	Completion of drawing up the plan	x	x	x
Creation of content, products and campaigns to promote longer stays (e.g. workation)	Tourist's average length of stay	x	x	x
EN-04. To encourage visitors to sample local food, the Mediterranean diet and locally sourced produce				
Marketing actions for the Spanish and neighbouring markets (e.g. Barcelona is Back to Europe)	Average distance covered by tourists from place of origin to destination	x		
Promoting public transport on the Visit Barcelona website	Tourists who get around the destination on public transport	x	x	x
Offsetting Turisme de Barcelona's CO ₂ emissions resulting from its business activities and including promotional and marketing actions in the calculation	Tonnes of CO ₂ offset by Turisme de Barcelona in the total number of trips made	x	x	x
Eliminating single-use plastics, reducing the use of paper and encouraging responsible purchasing practices at Turisme de Barcelona	Actions focusing on improving in-house sustainability at Turisme de Barcelona	x	x	x
EN-05. To ensure visitors adopt sustainability criteria				
Drawing up and implementing the guiding principles as part of the legacy (compendium of good practices in the MICE sector)	Compilation of good practices for congresses and conventions	x	x	x
Disseminating responsible tourism guidelines specifically for destination Barcelona	Views of the guidelines	x		
Raising awareness among visitors about the water footprint and the reduction of plastic bottles at the information office in Plaça Catalunya (information and drinking fountain)	Litres of water consumed	x		

Figure 2. Environmental goals, actions and indicators from Barcelona's Sustainable Tourism Strategy

Key themes in the strategy include:

- Decarbonization
- Local food

- Raising awareness of visitors about the impact of tourism
- Transportation
- Reducing single use plastic

Frameworks

In addition to certifications from Biosphere, signing the Glasgow declaration (2021), and participation in the Global Destination Sustainable Index (GDS), the strategy references the following organizations as being part of Barcelona's network:

- Global Sustainable Tourist Council (GSTC)
- UNWTO International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories (INSTO)
- Responsible Tourism Institute
- International Social Tourism Organization
- European Network for Accessible Tourism ENAT)
- Plataforma Representativa Estatal de Personas con Discapacidad Física (PREDIF)
- Xarxa Barcelona + Sostenible Taula Compromís Barcelona Plàstic Zero
- Red Española de Ciudades AVE
- Universities and academic institutions (e.g. CETT – Barcelona School of Tourism , Hospitality and Gastronomy , Institut Químic de Sarrià, TechnoCampus)

Circular Economy Strategy

Barcelona has an active circular economy (even in the absence of a dedicated circular economy strategy). A map of the green and circular economy sector's ecosystem²⁷ in the region highlights activities in the sector. Much of the activity is focused on renewable energy and energy efficiency²⁸, however there are many initiatives across many different industries.

The city has a Zero Waste strategy²⁹, including a section on food waste, with messaging and tips for restaurant owners and restaurants alike.³⁰ The waste prevention and zero waste strategy is based on:

- Waste reduction (prevention)
- The reuse of waste (giving it a second life by means of exchange or repair)
- Improving selective collection, especially in terms of organic matter
- Citizen co-responsibility, so that the general public gets involved in the optimal management of waste

Examples of Actions/Initiatives

Collaboration with Academia (and others)

- Labeling the circular economy as a "Golden opportunity for tourism", Barcelona has embraced collaboration to facilitate progress in this area. Academic institutions are actively promoting the circular economy in the province of Barcelona.³¹ The Chair of Circular Economy and Sustainability at the Tecnocampus in Mataró has initiated the Compass project, which, in

²⁷ [Green and Circular Economy Sector Ecosystem Map](#)

²⁸ Barcelona, 2023. [Green and Circular Economy Sector Report](#)

²⁹ [Zero Waste](#) Barcelona, Urban Planning, Ecological Transition, Urban Services and Housing

³⁰ Zero Waste Barcelona, [Food Utilization](#)

³¹ Turisme de Barcelona, 2023. [Barcelona Embraces Tourism Based on the Circular Economy](#)

partnership with the Barcelona City Council, examines the unique characteristics of the region's sector to encourage this model shift.³²

- As part of this initiative, several awareness-raising sessions and training events have been conducted for tourism stakeholders (see below). These events featured content focusing on value chains and key aspects of the industry such as Governance and Communication and other elements common across all businesses in the sector. This collaborative effort between companies and the public sector has initiated a transformative movement in Barcelona's tourism industry.³³

Circular Economy Tourism Conference

- In December of 2023, Barcelona Tourism hosted a conference on the circular economy in tourism.³⁴ Organized by the Barcelona Tourist Consortium with the support of the City Council, (and facilitated by the TechnoCampus Chair of Circular Economy and Sustainability, see above) the event targeted businesses, specifically members of the Consortium and the Biosphere Commitment Programme. The conference brought together approximately 75 businesses. The event aimed to promote the core principles and practical experiences of the circular economy, guiding businesses in reducing resource consumption, using sustainable products, and maximizing the value extracted from waste. The event featured group sessions, allowing participating businesses to exchange experiences in governance and organization, and setting the stage for future collaborations. Following the conference, additional sessions were held which explored the projects discussed during the conference in greater detail. The sessions will serve as workspaces for action in areas including construction and outfitting, food and supply chain management, and tourism services.³⁵

Waste Reduction Actions in Hotels

- In addition to many efforts to procure local food, other examples of initiatives in the region include Garden Hotels in Mallorca. They are pioneers in transforming the organic waste they generate into high-quality organic compost for local farmers who are also part of their supplier network. This method of reducing environmental costs helps to reduce the carbon footprint associated with transporting organic matter and also cuts down on single-use plastics.³⁶

Beach Clean up Initiatives

- Beach clean-ups to raise awareness among the city's tourism stakeholders were listed as an action in the Sustainable Tourism Plan (part of the Let's Clean Europe programme and the Agència de Residus de Catalunya)³⁷, with the number of people involved in the project on behalf of the consortium as a key indicator.

Returnable Food Containers

- A Barcelona start up company with returnable packaging for catering, with a wide portfolio of products to help make events zero-waste.³⁸

³² Turisme de Barcelona, 2023. [Barcelona Embraces Tourism Based on the Circular Economy](#)

³³ Turisme de Barcelona, 2023. [Barcelona Embraces Tourism Based on the Circular Economy](#)

³⁴ Barcelona Tourist Consortium. [Conference on the Circular Economy in the Tourism Industry](#)

³⁵ Barcelona Tourist Consortium. [Conference on the Circular Economy in the Tourism Industry](#)

³⁶ Turisme de Barcelona, 2023. [Barcelona Embraces Tourism Based on the Circular Economy](#)

³⁷ Agència de Residus de Catalunya, 2024. [Let's Clean up Europe](#)

³⁸ [Bumerang website](#)

Ljubljana, Slovenia

Sustainable Tourism Strategy

Ljubljana holds the title of European Green Capital 2016 and is a world-leading destination in the field of sustainable tourism. Ljubljana appears in the Sustainable Top 100 list produced by non-profit organisation Green Destinations. Ljubljana Tourism's vision for Ljubljana is that by 2027 it is recognised as the leading and most creative urban sustainable lifestyle destination in the world.³⁹ A strategic document outlining Ljubljana's tourism initiatives was developed in 2021 (not specifically focused on sustainability) but does not appear to be available online.⁴⁰ According to GDS, they have a sustainability strategy⁴¹, and detailed information is available on their website.⁴²

A key feature seems to be highlighting number and diversity of unique circular business models (e.g. PAPLAB⁴³ that makes handmade paper from invasive plants in the city centre, local umbrella repair shops, city-wide clothing swap events), with many other broader initiatives described below.

Circular Economy Strategy

City council adopted the Circular Economy Strategy for the City of Ljubljana in January 2022, and the CE is also embedded in other high-level strategies, roadmaps, or action plans including the tourism development strategy.⁴⁴ The circular economy is also embedded in other high-level strategies, roadmaps, or action plans, such as the municipal spatial plan, rural and urban agriculture development strategy, urban forest development strategy, local energy concept, cultural development strategy, tourism development strategy, zero waste strategy, and the digital development strategy. The strategy explicitly states the link the Ljubljana's tourism strategy, and that the circularity strategy considers residents as well as visitors. Many of the actions/initiatives described are linked to tourism. The strategy has four priority areas:⁴⁵

- **Plastics (single-use)** - circular solutions to reduce the use of plastic packaging (single-use) and plastic products;
- **Wasted food** - preventing the formation of wasted food and using food waste as a valuable resource;
- **Textiles** - reducing the amount of textile waste and promoting the reuse of clothing, and
- **Electronic and electrical equipment** - increasing the sharing and reuse of electrical and electronic equipment.

The Circular Economy Strategy has a number of targets and initiatives that focus specifically on tourism, many related to the actions/initiatives described below.

³⁹ Ljubljana Tourism [Vision and Strategy](#)

⁴⁰ Ljubljana's [Tourism Strategic Document](#)

⁴¹ Global Destination Sustainability Index: [Ljubljana](#)

⁴² Ljubljana Tourism [Vision and Strategy](#)

⁴³ PAPLAB [website](#)

⁴⁴ [Circular Cities Declaration](#), 2024

⁴⁵ [Circular Economy Strategy](#) for the City of Ljubljana

Examples of actions/initiatives

Largest Vehicle-free Zone in EU

- Ljubljana encourages active transit and has the largest vehicle free zone in the EU (12 ha), fully closing down the city center for pedestrians and cyclists. Free transport around the pedestrian zone is provided by several small electric vehicles.⁴⁶

Green Supply Chains Project for Local Food

- Via the Green Supply Chains project,⁴⁷ **Ljubljana Tourism encourages the use of locally produced food in hotels and restaurants.** The goal of the project is to increase the share of food and drink made with locally produced ingredients that are offered to Ljubljana visitors. The idea was to connect farms in the surrounding area (more than 800 farms) that supply produce with tourism providers in the city itself.
- The award winning Locally Grown Food Exchange initiatives connect local food producers with restaurateurs and hoteliers, representatives of primary schools and nurseries, and representatives of other public institutions in the Ljubljana Urban Region. The events raise awareness of the importance of locally produced ingredients even outside the sphere of tourism.
- Ljubljana Tourism has organised the Locally Grown Food Exchange in conjunction with the City of Ljubljana's Environmental Protection Department, the Regional Development Agency of the Ljubljana Urban Region, the Ljubljana Agriculture and Forestry Institute and EKometer.

Ljubljana Style Breakfast

- The Ljubljana Style Breakfast is offered by hotels and restaurants and features a selection of dishes that changes with the seasons. Dishes reflect the time of year and the choice of fresh ingredients available. In order to help Ljubljana hotels and restaurants choose seasonal dishes, Ljubljana Tourism (as part of their Green Supply Chains project) distributes monthly recipes whose main ingredients are seasonal fruits or vegetables. A list of local suppliers is included with the recipes. The breakfasts are marked on menus and online publications by a common logo.⁴⁸

Destination Map of Circular Shopping and Businesses

- A map of swap shops, borrowing shops, repair and recycling facilities directs visitors and locals to local circular businesses. The map provides communication support for the promoters of circular practices in the city and strengthens their profile and involvement in the lives of citizens. The project is promoted by the Circular Economy Manager and the Office for Digitalisation.⁴⁹

Promotion of Reusable Water Bottles

- Promoting and raising awareness about drinking water from taps among tourists is a goal in the circular economy strategy. This is accomplished by providing messaging around safety,

⁴⁶ [Sustainable Tourism in Ljubljana](#)

⁴⁷ [Green Supply Chains Project](#)

⁴⁸ [Ljubljana Tourism, The Ljubljana Breakfast](#)

⁴⁹ [Ljubljana Toward a Circular Economy](#)

environmental impacts, and a map of drinking fountain locations across the city (available on an app to download).^{50 51}

Reducing plastic use at events

- The Circular Economy strategy sets a goal to only co-financing events that are free of plastic products and single-use plastic packaging.⁵²

Breakfast 2GO program

- An initiative that connects hotels, restaurants and accommodation providers with environmentally friendly breakfasts and packaging.⁵³

⁵⁰ Ljubljana [Toward a Circular Economy](#)

⁵¹ Ljubljana Tourism. [Potable Water and Public Drinking Fountains](#)

⁵² Ljubljana [Toward a Circular Economy](#)

⁵³ Ljubljana [Toward a Circular Economy](#)

North America Spotlight

While EU jurisdictions tend to be leaders in the sustainability and circularity space, there are many initiatives in North America happening as well. This section is not meant to be a comprehensive review, but aims to highlight a few examples of actions in North America.

Destination Canada's Regenerative Tourism Approach: Destination Canada's new approach focusing on Regenerative Tourism⁵⁴ is in line with many circular economy principles, although it does not mention circularity by name. It points to the climate and nature crisis as key drivers behind the need for a new approach. Regenerative tourism presents an alternative paradigm through the lens of living systems (Figure 3) and involves practices that regenerate the vitality of local people, businesses, community, and the complex ecologies that sustain them all.



Figure 3: Living systems worldview as the basis for regenerative tourism

⁵⁴ Destination Canada. [A Regenerative Approach to Tourism in Canada](#)

Edmonton, Alberta: Edmonton's Regenerative Tourism Strategy⁵⁵ mentions circularity and highlights the importance of circular practices in a regenerative system. "Regenerative systems have a focus on quality and effectiveness. They are circular by design. Energy, natural resources, and materials are re-used, recycled, and waste is designed out of a product or event's life cycle".⁵⁶

The Strategy aligns with The City of Edmonton's Climate Emergency Declaration and Climate Resilience strategy to work towards achieving the city's goal of Net Zero Greenhouse Gas emissions by 2050. The Regenerative Tourism strategy highlights the importance of decreasing resource use as part of their decarbonization pathways, with a goal to increase reutilization and reduce consumption of natural resources in the visitor economy. Key targets include a 90% diversion of waste away from landfill by 2040, and a 20% decrease in waste generation and reduction in single-use items by 2027.

The "Future of Waste" plan, a comprehensive, 25-year zero waste plan, also informs the City's tourism strategy. Currently this plan does not intentionally integrate tourism, as recycling presents major challenges for many businesses operating in the Visitor Economy. This is due to costs and availability of waste processing infrastructure to recycle. Circularity is defined in the plan as: *The intentional design of systems that minimize economic leakage by keeping tourist spending within local communities and economies, and actively reinjecting those resources to benefit local businesses, residents, and the environment.*

Key work packages in support of the goals include:⁵⁷

- Work with City of Edmonton to ensure the visitor economy is integrated into city's Waste Management Strategy and Waste Reduction Roadmap.
- Develop a taskforce with the City, commercial waste haulers, and tourism and events industry to define challenges, establish ambitious targets and develop a shared circularity strategy to prevent more materials from becoming part of the waste stream, increase engagement and partnership with the community and implement policy and initiatives to drive reduction in single-use plastics/single-use disposables
- Work with city and key partners to identify/provide access to funding and resources to tourism and events business to support increased circularity

Portland, Oregon: The City of Portland's Tourism Master Plan includes a plan for a "Green Loop"⁵⁸ concept that could be relevant for Victoria's AAA bike network. The Green Loop will be a six-mile linear park that connects people through the heart of the city, improving access to and linking regional attractions, cultural institutions, employment centers, and shopping districts. The Green Loop will support businesses and social services, improving access to places where people can get the staples and support they need. And it will reconfirm Portland's commitment to greater access to parks, nature, and active transportation. The Green Loop can become an iconic symbol of a city that

⁵⁵ Explore Edmonton, 2023. [Flourishing Future: A Regenerative, Resilient Vision and Strategy for Edmonton's Visitor Economy](#).

⁵⁶ Explore Edmonton, 2023. [Flourishing Future: A Regenerative, Resilient Vision and Strategy for Edmonton's Visitor Economy](#).

⁵⁷ Explore Edmonton, 2023. [Flourishing Future: A Regenerative, Resilient Vision and Strategy for Edmonton's Visitor Economy](#).

⁵⁸ City of Portland. [About the Green Loop](#)

values and supports all people: residents, workers, students, and visitors of all ages, shapes and sizes, origins, and incomes.

Montreal, Quebec: Montreal was the first Canadian City to join the Global Destination Sustainability (GDS) Index and has a Sustainable Tourism policy that aligns with the SDGs. Although focused on climate (some initiatives on plastic reduction), Montreal launched a Circular Economy Roadmap in 2024, and is considered a frontrunner in circularity among Canadian Cities.⁵⁹ For example, visitors who forgot to bring a travel mug can benefit from Quebec's "La Tasse"⁶⁰ initiative, where a reusable cup can be purchased for \$5, used, and returned (or refilled) at any one of 400 participating coffee shops in the province (all mapped on a website for user convenience).

Summary of Best Practices and Key Takeaways for DGV

The jurisdictional scan has highlighted several important concepts relevant to the development of DGV's circular economy strategy, which will help inform the strategy. Key findings from the jurisdictional scan and actionable takeaways for DGV's circular economy strategy are described below.

Key Themes: Circularity is a broad topic that intersects with many areas of sustainability. Key topic themes that emerged across the jurisdictions in the context of the visitor economy were actions that focused on:

- Transportation
- Plastic waste reduction
- Food (local, but also organic and focused on reducing food waste)
- Water (but mostly linked to plastic bottles)
- Textiles/Retail

Key Takeaway: DGV's circular economy strategy should consider some or all of the following elements and themes.

"Circularity" and Tourism: While many jurisdictions are taking action that could be categorized as circular, they framed under the umbrella of regenerative or sustainable tourism more broadly. Barcelona and Edmonton were examples of jurisdictions where circularity was specifically mentioned in the context of tourism. Circular Economy strategies often referenced tourism-related initiatives, in particular Ljubljana's strategy which called out the connection to the Tourism industry in their Circular Economy Strategy.

Key Takeaway: Concepts and definitions can overlap. Ensure concepts in DGV's circular economy strategy are clearly defined and aligned with DGV's sustainability strategy and goals.

⁵⁹ Circle Economy. [Montreal taking concrete steps towards a circular transition](#)

⁶⁰ [La Tasse website](#)

Circularity and Climate: Climate action plans are often focused on Scope 1 and 2 emissions, with consumption-based emissions being overlooked, even though these emissions account for over half of all emissions in many large cities. Some cities (e.g. Copenhagen) are beginning to measure consumption emissions and include them in their consumption emissions. Copenhagen aims to include a target for Scope 3 emissions in their next climate action plan. Several cities, identified as frontrunners in circularity by the CCD report, are setting more specific, measurable upstream emission goals with a more concrete link to circularity principles, i.e. goals for reducing use of virgin material or increasing secondary raw materials, goals on product re-use.

Key Takeaway: DGV's circular economy strategy could include actions to measure and report consumption emissions linked to its circular economy initiatives as well as setting emission reduction targets. This could include emissions from waste disposal, or extraction and use of raw materials.

Frameworks for Assessing Circularity: Signatories to the Circular Cities Declaration indicated limited use of these, with no clear alignment or emergence of best practice on external measurement frameworks.⁶¹ However, alignment with regional and national strategies was a strategy that was commonly employed to encourage consistency of indicators and facilitate coordination. This reinforces the importance of DGV's alignment with other regional strategies in the context of the visitor economy.

Research by the UN on the circular economy in tourism⁶² highlights two key frameworks that may be useful: The Global Tourism Plastic Initiative⁶³, and The Global Roadmap for Food Waste Reduction in Tourism⁶⁴. No mention of these specific frameworks was found in the review, but further research to understand how they might be relevant for DGV in future initiatives would be informative.

Key Takeaway: Further explore circularity frameworks and their application to DGV's circular economy strategy, such as the Global Tourism Plastic Initiative and the Global Roadmap for Food Waste Reduction in Tourism.

Transparency: Circularity is a complex topic, making transparent communication especially critical given the increased risk of greenwashing. For example, nuanced communication on the topic was seen on the CopenPay website, which explicitly states that it recognizes that the emissions from local transportation are small in comparison to travel to and from Copenhagen. As such, the initiative is not meant to increase tourism, and is marketed to locals and visitors alike.

⁶¹ [Circular Cities Declaration, 2024](#)

⁶² UN Tourism: [Integrating Circular Economy Principles in Tourism](#)

⁶³ UN Tourism: [Global Tourism Plastic Initiative](#)

⁶⁴ UN Tourism: [The Global Roadmap for Food Waste Reduction in Tourism](#)

Key Takeaway: Ensure that DGV's circular economy strategy is transparent and that complexities, implementation challenges and limitations are acknowledged and clearly communicated.

Education and Awareness Building: As with any effort in regenerative tourism, initiatives related to the circular economy require education and capacity building, which continues to be a key focus in the jurisdictions identified. Workshops, educational material, and conferences like the one organized in Barcelona that help participants understand how they can shift from linear to circular practices are key. Educating both locals and visitors is important. Events like Barcelona's beach clean ups that were pitched not only as a way to help clean up beaches, but also as an activity to raise awareness among business owners and other participants in the tourism industry is an interesting example. Helping businesses communicate and showcase their circularity initiatives will help build momentum and raise awareness in the community. As seen in Copenhagen, highlighting initiatives that go to the "next level" of sustainability, for example, showcasing restaurants who have energy saving or other reuse initiatives in place in addition to local food procurement strategies could go a long way in building awareness around the circular economy.

Key Takeaway: Ensure DGV's circular economy strategy contains actions around education and awareness building, both for businesses and the general public.

Collaboration: Setting the foundations for relationships and synergies up and down the supply chain (e.g. Barcelona's conferences and events), similar to upcoming engagement initiatives at DGV will clearly bring value. Many jurisdictions stated mechanisms to gather ideas and opportunities for participants to provide feedback.

Key Takeaway: This highlights the importance of collaboration and engagement to the development of a circular economy strategy. Engagement is an important component of the development of DGV's circular economy strategy. Engagement activities include virtual workshops to gather feedback on themes, actions and the draft strategy, and key informant interviews.

Targets and KPIs: Targets and goals are high-level and relate to the sustainability strategy more generally. They are a mix of process rather than output goals ("i.e. engage businesses" vs "reduce x amount of waste").

Key Takeaway: With respect to DGV's circular economy strategy, more specific KPIs can be developed once alignment on key themes is reached after further engagement and prioritization efforts for DGV. DGV should watch developing local and regional Circular Economy initiatives and look for opportunities to support targets and KPIs set by other organizations in the ecosystem.

Conclusion and Next Steps

DGV should look to leading jurisdictions for inspiration as it develops its Circular Economy Strategy. Research reinforces the importance of this topic and the ability of circularity initiatives to contribute to sustainable tourism and support regional goals on waste reduction, climate action, and nature conservation. The overarching focus areas identified are generally aligned with sustainability objectives in DGV's strategy. Specific actions and targets can be further refined as strategy development, stakeholder engagement and pilot project evaluation proceeds.



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