

PARKSVILLE
QUALICUM BEACH

DESTINATION STRATEGY

EMBRACING NATURE'S RHYTHMS



WHERE IT ALL
COMES TOGETHER

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LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We acknowledge and give thanks to the Qualicum and Snaw-Naw-As First Nations on whose ancestral lands we operate and welcome visitors to.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

Parksville Qualicum Beach region includes the communities of Parksville, Qualicum Beach, Nanoose Bay, French Creek, Lighthouse Country and Arrowsmith Coombs Country on Vancouver Island. It is an area with a robust tourism industry and has recognized the necessity of a long-term vision to ensure the sustainability of the sector without compromising resident quality of life or environmental integrity. Destination Think, a renowned international destination marketing consultancy, was hired to lead an exhaustive research project and engagement process and subsequently create this strategy.

Objective

The strategy's objectives encompass development of a resilient tourism industry that is adaptable to changing trends, market demands and climate impacts. It aims to promote a year-round visitor economy to foster visitor experiences aligned with the destination brand, leading to high satisfaction and repeat visitation. Crucially, it seeks to cultivate positive resident sentiment towards tourism, encourage diverse group collaboration, and advocate for reconciliation, equity, and shared prosperity with Indigenous communities.

Key Strategic Pillars

Visitor Experience Pillar

This involves leading the adaptation to changing traveller behaviours and creating off-season experiences, while enhancing existing offerings. It includes developing evening and night-time activities for visitors and advocating for sustainable transportation options, improved safety in transportation infrastructure, and better connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists to popular tourism areas and experiences.

Social and Cultural Pillar

This strategy aims to increase the representation of the Qualicum and Snaw-Naw-As First Nations in the future of the visitor economy and elevate the development of Indigenous tourism experiences. The strategy includes plans to address residents' concerns

with the visitor economy and ensure a welcoming and inclusive destination for all. This strategy also involves supporting arts, culture and events; advocating for affordable housing for residents and the workforce; and leading initiatives for tourism workforce attraction, retention, skill development and growth.

Environmental Pillar

This strategy prioritizes reducing the tourism industry's carbon footprint and developing sustainable business practices within the tourism industry. It strongly advocates for the preservation and protection of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems.

Stakeholder Collaboration Pillar

This involves leading engagement and communication with stakeholders impacted by the visitor economy and aligning all stakeholders needed to implement the strategy

Importance of Stakeholder Engagement and Commitment

The implementation of this strategy is a shared responsibility that requires the commitment and leadership of various organizations, including governments. Recognizing the importance of the visitor economy to the region is crucial. Ignoring the strategy could pose significant risks, while embracing it provides ample opportunities for economic, social, and environmental benefits. The strategy hence emphasizes fostering a collaborative approach to achieve its objectives and mitigate potential challenges.

This destination development strategy does not include a specific timeline; instead, it will be executed via five-year implementation plans, bringing the industry closer to the vision each time. This approach ensures that the strategy remains adaptable and responsive to the dynamic nature of the industry, enhancing the destination's sustainability, attractiveness and overall success in the long term.

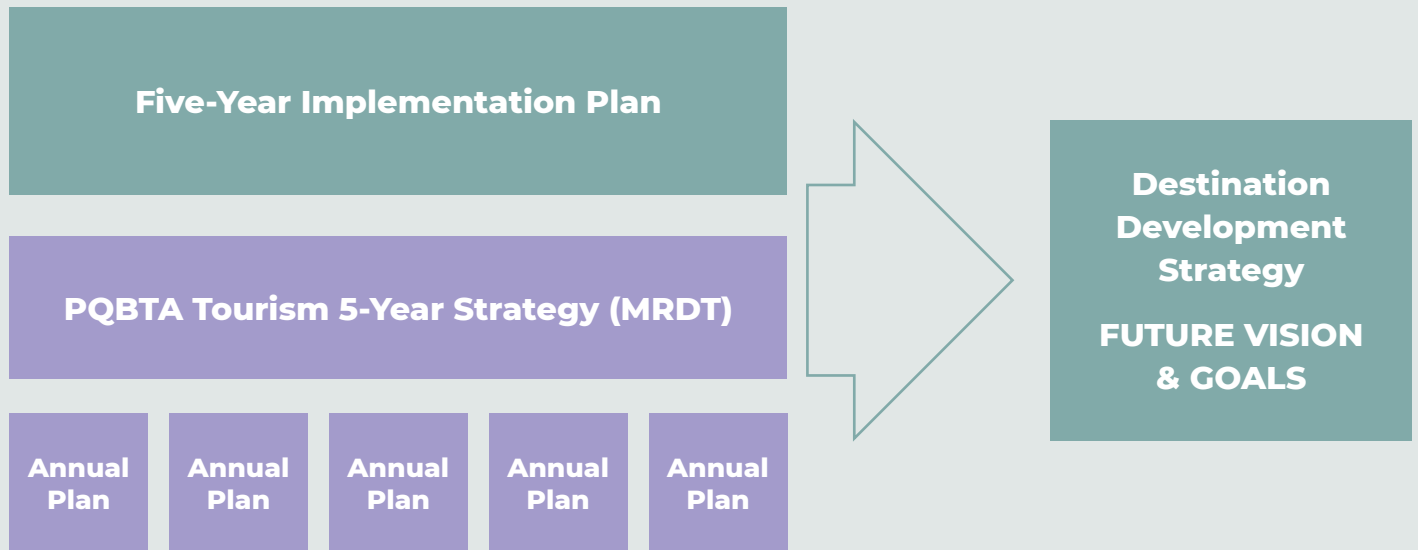
PURPOSE OF THIS STRATEGY

The purpose of this Destination Development Strategy is to present a vision for the future of the visitor economy in Parksville Qualicum Beach. Initiated and sponsored by the Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism Association (PQBTA), this strategy was shaped through extensive consultation with a multitude of stakeholders, underscoring the collaborative approach fundamental to its successful implementation.

The ultimate goal of this strategy is to guide the prioritization of efforts and investments. It aims to simultaneously meet the needs of residents and visitors while also fostering sustainable growth and prosperity for the region's tourism businesses. This strategy is not only about enhancing the visitor experience, but also about ensuring that tourism development benefits the local communities' quality of life and contributes to the area's sustainable economic development.

This strategy is not confined to a specific timeline. Instead, it acts as a guiding North Star for five-year implementation plans. These plans will be adaptable and will evolve based on the progress made and emerging factors. Each successive implementation plan aims to move closer to the vision outlined in this strategy.

The successful realization of this strategy hinges on its broad adoption and support from a wide array of stakeholders. As the custodian of the strategy, PQBTA will use these five-year implementation plans as the blueprint for its own five-year MRDT (Municipal and Regional District Tax) strategies. By aligning these plans, PQBTA aims to ensure a coordinated and effective approach to developing the visitor economy in Parksville Qualicum Beach.



PROCESS AND METHODOLOGY

Destination Think has designed a methodology for developing long-term strategic plans that are specific to the context of DMOs (destination marketing organizations).

The process is focused on the right level of engagement, collaboration and co-creation with the relevant stakeholders following “Design Thinking” principles. This methodology also results in innovative strategies that align with the evolved role of modern destination management organizations.

The strategy development followed a six-step process that was crafted taking into consideration the vision and ambition of the Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism Association. The approach was to meet people where they were when possible. By doing so, we were able to extract the vision, objectives and ideas to create a strategy. This added value to the research by providing our experience and expertise and re-engaging to ensure we got it right.

Strategic Planning Process

Step 1: Project Planning & Framing was initiated with the project members meeting the Destination Think team on location at Parksville Qualicum Beach for a meeting on January 6, 2023, to discuss project specifics. This session served multiple purposes: introductions, review of objectives, actions, and timelines, creating a comprehensive critical path, and a communications and engagement plan. The Destination Think team also verified the status of requisite documents and background materials. An important part of this phase was stakeholder mapping, a collective effort to identify key stakeholders to be included in the research and plan implementation.

Step 2: Where Are We? Step 2 involved extensive primary and secondary research to result in a comprehensive destination assessment. The research took place from January 8 to March 10, 2023, and included an engagement week at Parksville Qualicum Beach from February 6 to 10, 2023. The primary research included PQBTA staff interviews; resident, visitor and tourism industry surveys; a resident listening session; a tourism industry workshop; a PQBTA board meeting; a resident workshop; 10 one-on-one interviews with a variety of stakeholders and rights holders; and an arts and culture focus group. The secondary research comprised an evaluation of past economic impact, visitor data and labour market data. The key

findings were verified through two co-creation labs with residents and industry operators. Step 2 also included a Place DNA® report, which allowed our team to root strategies in local identity and values to best achieve resident alignment and buy-in.

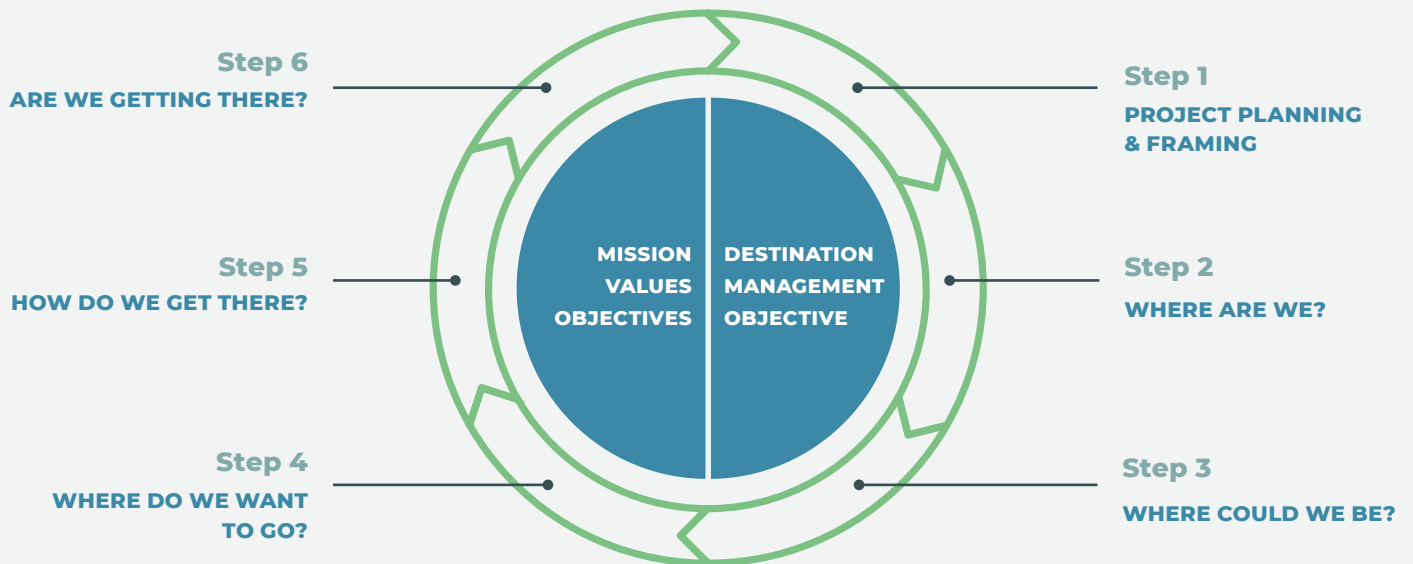
Steps 3 and 4: Where Could We Be and Where Do We Want to Go? These steps focused on gathering potential directions and objectives. This stage involved an in-person meeting with the Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism Association team and Board members on March 10, 2023. The findings were presented, potential directions were identified, and the development of the framework was initiated.

Step 5: How Do We Get There? This step included virtual presentations by the Destination Think team to the Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism Association team and its board members on May 3 and 8, 2023. The aim was to discuss and finalize the vision and strategic goals. Recommendations for guiding principles, potential investments, and roles and responsibilities were also proposed, all of which are incorporated in the final report.

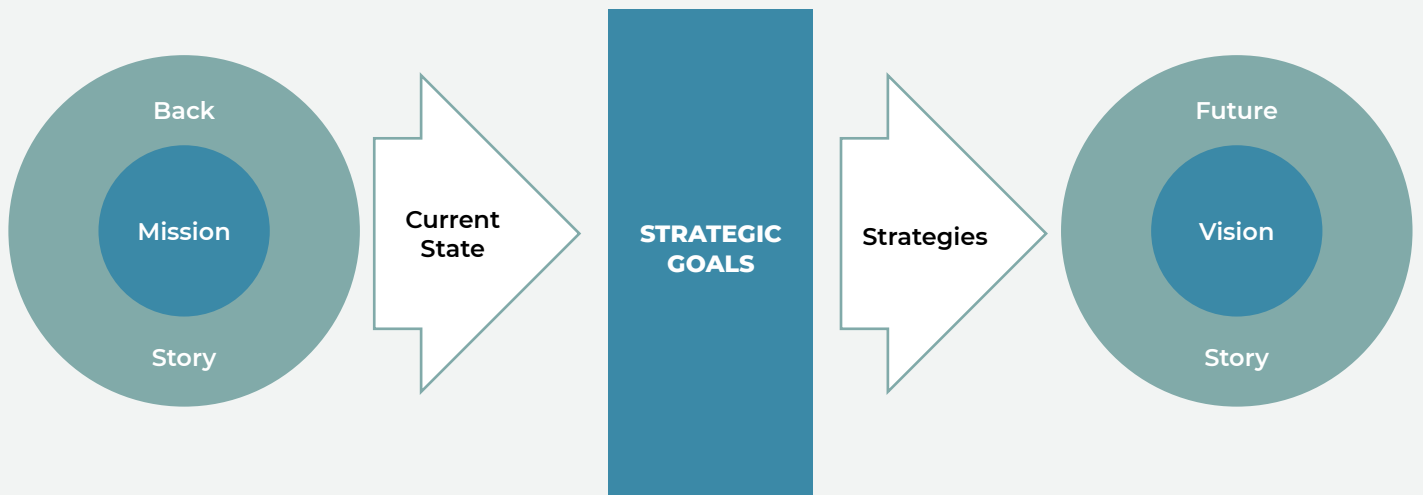
Step 6: Are We Getting There? This is the phase where the strategy transforms into actions, guided by a five-year implementation plan.

Our strategic planning process is described chronologically in the diagram below.

STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT PROCESS



THE JOURNEY TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE TOURISM



Our approach to developing a comprehensive tourism strategy for Parksville Qualicum Beach is a forward-thinking, step-by-step process. It starts with understanding our mission and backstory and culminates in a shared vision and future story.

The **Mission** is our starting point and serves as the core purpose of the Parksville Qualicum Beach tourism industry. It's the reason why we are undertaking this journey, defining the value we seek to create for our community and visitors alike.

Wrapped around our mission is the **Backstory**. It's our history, detailing the journey of tourism in the region and setting the context for our current state. It provides the foundation upon which we build our understanding of our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges.

The **Current State** is an arrow that points us to our goals. It's an honest assessment of where we are now, outlining the present-day challenges and opportunities of the Parksville Qualicum Beach tourism industry. It informs our strategic direction and helps us identify the necessary steps to reach our goals.

The **Strategic Goals** box encapsulates what we aim to achieve. They are tangible, achievable and directly tied to the mission and current state.

The **Strategies** arrow shows us how we plan to reach our goals. They are our action plans, the methods, and techniques we will employ to overcome our challenges, seize our opportunities and progress towards our goals.

The **Vision** circle represents the ideal future we seek to create for the Parksville Qualicum Beach tourism industry. It is the embodiment of our mission, goals and strategies, signifying what we hope to achieve through our concerted efforts.

The **Future Story**, wrapping around our vision, illustrates the end goal from an experiential perspective. It's based on our Place DNA® and serves as a guide for our tactics, outlining the desired look and feel of the region once our vision is achieved. It's our ultimate aspiration, the future we strive for, and the story we want to tell.

Each element of this approach is interconnected, forming a holistic and comprehensive strategy for the future of tourism in Parksville Qualicum Beach.



SITUATION ANALYSIS

Global Context

Climate change is disrupting the tourism industry

Climate change poses significant challenges to the tourism industry, as extreme weather events, rising sea levels, and shifting ecosystems threaten popular destinations worldwide. On the other hand, visitors are starting to make choices based on the impact of their travels. As a result, the tourism industry must adapt to these new realities, rethinking its approach to development, infrastructure, and marketing to create more resilient and sustainable tourism offerings.

Economic instability creates uncertainty

Economic instability, driven by geopolitical turmoil, financial crises, and fluctuations in currency values, can create uncertainty for tourists and tourism operators. This uncertainty can lead to reduced travel budgets, postponed trips, and decreased investments in tourism infrastructure and services—the tourism industry should prepare to adapt to these fluctuations and find ways to maintain its appeal and viability, even in uncertain economic times.

The Covid-19 pandemic exposed the impacts of closed borders

The Covid-19 pandemic brought the world to a standstill as governments closed their borders to limit the spread of the virus. This unprecedented situation exposed the vulnerability of the tourism industry. The pandemic highlighted the need for more resilient, adaptable tourism strategies to better withstand future crises and a greater emphasis on local and regional tourism opportunities to reduce dependence on international visitors.

Spread of overtourism

Overtourism has brought attention to the negative impacts that tourism can have on destinations, both socially and environmentally. Crowding, pollution and the degradation of natural and cultural resources can diminish local residents' quality of life and undermine the long-term sustainability of the destination. This awareness has spurred a growing demand for more responsible, sustainable tourism practices that prioritize the well-being of local communities and the preservation of their unique environments and cultural heritage.

People's needs and expectations related to travel are shifting

As visitors become more aware of the impacts of their choices, their needs and expectations evolve. Increasingly, visitors are seeking authentic, meaningful experiences that connect them with local cultures, environments, and communities. They are also more conscious of their ecological footprint and the need to travel responsibly, leading to a growing demand for eco-friendly accommodations, transportation, and activities. The tourism industry must respond to these changing preferences by offering more diverse, sustainable, and immersive experiences that cater to a broad range of interests and values.

Technology and data will continue to impact all phases of the purchase cycle

Advancements in technology and the increasing availability of data are transforming how people research, plan, book, and share their travel experiences. Digital platforms, artificial intelligence, and data analytics are helping visitors make more informed decisions and tailor their trips to their specific needs and preferences. These technologies also enable destinations and operators to understand better and anticipate their visitors' desires, allowing them to deliver more personalized, seamless experiences. The tourism industry must embrace these innovations and leverage the insights they provide to stay competitive and relevant in an ever-changing market.





Destination marketing organizations are shifting from destination promoters to destination managers/stewards

As the tourism landscape evolves, destination marketing organizations (DMOs) increasingly recognize the need to shift their focus from simply promoting destinations to managing and stewarding them—this involves taking a more holistic approach that balances the interests of visitors, local communities, and the environment, ensuring that tourism remains a positive force for all stakeholders. By embracing this new role, DMOs can help drive sustainable growth, foster responsible tourism practices, and safeguard the long-term health and vitality of their destinations.

Parksville Qualicum Beach Context

The following insights were gained from a detailed situation analysis that included a secondary research review, a visitor survey, a resident survey, tourism industry and stakeholder survey, listening sessions, workshops, focus groups and interviews during January and February 2023.

Figure 1: Estimated Annual Economic Impact of Tourism in Parksville Qualicum Beach, 2018–2019

Impact	 Employment		 Wages	 GDP	 Economic Output
	Jobs	FTEs	(\$Millions)	(\$Millions)	(\$Millions)
ESTIMATED 2018 IMPACT					
Direct	1,600	1,100	\$50	\$80	\$150
Indirect	300	300	\$20	\$30	\$60
Induced	300	200	\$10	\$30	\$50
Total in BC	2,200	1,600	\$80	\$150	\$260
ESTIMATED 2019 IMPACT					
Direct	2,000	1,300	\$70	\$100	\$190
Indirect	400	300	\$20	\$40	\$70
Induced	300	200	\$20	\$40	\$60
Total in BC	2,700	1,900	\$100	\$180	\$320

A strong performing tourism destination

- Tourism has been a key pillar of the economy in Parksville Qualicum Beach for a long time. An economic impact study conducted in 2021 by InterVISTAS Consulting Inc. measured the yearly contribution of tourism in the region, including multiplier impacts at approximately \$170 million GDP with an economic output of \$290 million, on average, over two years in 2018 and 2019. This resulted in approximately 1,800 full-time equivalents (FTEs) in the region, putting it on par with construction employment and close to health care and social assistance.

Growth of tourism without (significant) growth of accommodation inventory

- Tourism revenues collected through the MRDT (Municipal Regional District Tax—local hotel room tax) program have almost doubled over the past decade, according to BC government data. Exact numbers are unavailable, but according to industry insiders, hotel inventory has not substantially increased during the same period, except for short-term rentals available through platforms such as Airbnb. Growth is from a combination of room rates and occupancy increases. Growing accommodation capacity is not the primary objective, however. Building a robust year-round visitor economy and maximizing value from each visitor are better ways to build a successful visitor economy.

High seasonal gap

- Parksville Qualicum Beach is one of the most seasonal destinations in British Columbia, with more than half of its revenues collected in the summer months. As a result, the region hosts numerous seasonal businesses. This is highly evident during the off-season, with many “closed for the season” signs, and could be a deterrent for potential visitors. This was confirmed by comments in the visitor survey when visitors were asked why they did not choose to visit outside the high season.
- Working towards a year-round visitor economy is a priority for many industry operators, not only from a revenue perspective but also from an operations perspective, as it would be easier to attract and retain year-round staff. There are also a number of “lifestyle entrepreneurs” who prefer operating a seasonal business without the desire to run a year-round business

High numbers of day trip visitors

- During the peak summer months, parts of the Parksville Qualicum Beach region can experience visitor congestion from time to time, largely due to a high volume of day visitors (61%)¹ travelling by car. Many of these visitors come from nearby communities. While these day visitors create opportunities for local attractions and retailers, it is essential to effectively manage visitor flows and traffic to minimize negative impacts on both residents and the overall visitor experience.

High numbers of visiting friends and relatives (VFR) visitors

- The region hosts a large number of visiting friends and family (55%)², most likely due to the high number of retirees, which provides an opportunity for off-season growth. This steady stream of visiting friends and family members creates a potential source of off-season tourism growth.
- The region can encourage VFR visitors to explore the area during quieter, off-peak periods, thereby extending the tourism season and boosting the local economy. Developing targeted marketing campaigns and special offers can entice these visitors to explore the region’s attractions and potential experiences beyond their initial purpose of visiting friends and family.

Resident sentiment towards tourism is positive, but there is room for improvement

- A resident survey indicated that 69% of respondents support tourism in the region, with 22% being neutral and 9% not supporting tourism. Even though these results are positive, the support for tourism is lower than in similar surveys conducted in other places. The results can serve as a benchmark for future surveys to measure the impact of this strategy.
- Residents see tourism as a positive economic driver (81%) but not as a positive contributor to the quality of life (38% positive, 25% negative) or protecting the natural environment (16% positive, 50% negative). Many residents see tourism as a reason to be proud to live where they live but do not feel they have a voice in the decision-making process related to tourism.

¹ Source: Economic Impact of Tourism in Parksville Qualicum Beach, BC 2018-2020, InterVISTAS, 2021.

² Source: Economic Impact of Tourism in Parksville Qualicum Beach, BC 2018-2020, InterVISTAS, 2021.

Perceptions versus reality: reconciling residents' concerns with tourism

- Residents' primary concerns include visitor congestion due to the rising number of visitors, the loss of natural spaces as a result of land development, and the potential erosion of the region's comfortable and peaceful identity due to visitor behaviour. Some perceive that the development and promotion of tourism is a contributing factor to increased congestion. However, the reality is more complex.
- A 2018 research study on overtourism³ highlighted that the causes are often multifaceted and influenced by population growth, broader societal trends, and global events. Although an increased number of day visitors is likely contributing to congestion, the more significant contributing factors are likely to be urbanization and population growth in the region.
- Residents' concerns may be focused more on potential future consequences rather than the current situation. Many residents express apprehension regarding the future growth of tourism and its potential effects, as opposed to the existing state of affairs. This strategy, which includes a set of commitments from the tourism industry, a future vision, and ongoing engagement with residents, should help alleviate these fears and ensure that sustainable development remains a priority.

Caution toward the idea of change

- The Parksville Qualicum Beach community culture includes caution toward change, and people are passionate about expressing their concerns. This culture can result in well-considered solutions yet may also hinder or delay the progress that many people deem important. Many businesses and residents express frustration that decades-old challenges have still not been addressed despite best efforts and plans. This inaction impacts resident quality of life and the quality of the visitor experience.
- By fostering a spirit of cooperation and advocating for innovative ideas with a specific end goal in mind, the region should be able to overcome potential barriers to change and drive continuous improvement in its tourism offerings, overall destination appeal, and resident quality of life.

The impact of an older demographic

- The Parksville Qualicum Beach area is home to a predominantly senior population which, according to StatsCanada projections, will continue to grow. This presents a unique opportunity to cater to the specific needs and interests of older visitors and their families. This could involve developing a range of age-appropriate activities, attractions, and accommodations, ensuring that the destination remains welcoming and accessible to a diverse array of visitors. By focusing on these demographics, the region can establish itself as a go-to destination for older travellers and families seeking a relaxed, enjoyable, and inclusive holiday experience while adding value to the local quality of life.

A differentiating essence through local nuance

- The tourism brand promise for the Parksville Qualicum Beach region is "Celebrating connections that matter" with a brand personality that is "Refreshingly timeless." This offers a true West Coast Canadian experience in a unique way. Just like many places on Vancouver Island, nature is the foundation. Whereas other places are more urban, remote, rugged, or raw, the essence of Parksville Qualicum Beach is calmer, warmer, gentler as well as timeless and mature. Its competitive positioning differentiates itself from other British Columbia destinations by offering authentic culture in a peaceful way.
- The region stands out as a whole and offers interesting local nuances for those who visit. Residents within different parts of the region consider their area vastly different from that of their neighbours. As significant as this might appear on a micro level, from a visitor perspective, they make for interesting nuances in a wider context.

³ Source: "Is Overtourism Overused? Understanding the Impact of Tourism in a City Context" by Ko Koens, Albert Postma, and Bernadett Papp (2018).

Figure 2: Competitive positioning

Source: PQB MRDT 5-Year (19-24) Strategic Business Plan



The importance of a feeling of nostalgia

The region evokes a great sense of nostalgia, through both its look and feel, the experiences it offers, and the memories visitors cherish from past visits. Tangible manifestations of this nostalgia are mini-golf, camping at provincial campsites, the look and feel of downtown Qualicum Beach, and the goats on the roof at Coombs market. Intangible aspects are related to affordability and free access to natural wonders. Maintaining this sense of nostalgia will be important as there is a fear that any change will compromise this essence.

Pristine, natural environment with recognized attractions and amenities

The region has been a popular tourist destination for decades, drawing visitors with its milder climate, stunning beaches, rivers, waterfalls, forests, and mountains, many of which are situated within provincial and regional parks. Attractions such as Rath Trevor Beach; Cathedral Grove; Little Qualicum Falls; Englishman River Falls; Horne Lake Caves, and more are iconic natural places. These places are also part of the Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Region, a UNESCO Biosphere, confirming the importance and uniqueness of the environment.

The region also hosts unique experiences such as The Old Country Market in Coombs and Paradise Fun Park that enjoy great recognition and have an excellent reputation. These experiences are complemented by numerous golf courses, mini-golf courses, farm experiences, unique retail stores, quality restaurants, craft breweries, hotels, resorts, spas, and museums. Generations of visitors have forged a strong connection to the region, as parents and grandparents share their fond memories with their children and grandchildren. This emotional bond is reflected in the high brand loyalty towards the region, as evidenced by the Tourism Sentiment Index, a methodology measuring the positive versus negative sentiment of online conversations, and provides a strong case for continuing this legacy and focusing on customer lifetime value through repeat visitation.

A mature tourism destination lacking a consistently safe and mature infrastructure

Parksville Qualicum Beach is known as a tourism destination and includes mature experiences and operators. Not all aspects of the destination provide a safe infrastructure for people driving, biking, or walking. Some popular tourist locations lack safe

parking (Cathedral Grove/MacMillan Provincial Park, and The Old Country Market) or safe bike access (connection between downtown Parksville and Rath Trevor Beach), and some walkways connecting the urban area to the waterfront could be improved. Changes have been made, and more are planned in the future. These developments need to be prioritized and accelerated so that the destination can continue enjoying a strong reputation.

Transitioning from car-based to sustainable transportation options

The Parksville Qualicum Beach region spans a considerable area, with its diverse tourist attractions dispersed throughout. At present, access to most of these experiences requires car transportation. The region's growth occurred during a period that prioritized cars, often at the expense of pedestrian and cycling infrastructure. However, there is a growing desire among residents and visitors alike to explore alternative transportation options that are more sustainable and environmentally friendly.

Cultural experiences and festivals and events

Parksville Qualicum Beach boasts a strong foundation for nurturing arts and cultural experiences, thanks to a strong community of artists, galleries, and cultural events. During the development of this strategy, many residents expressed regret over the loss of festivals and events due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The revival of these events, coupled with strategic planning throughout the year, offers an opportunity to enhance off-season visitation. By elevating and extending existing cultural experiences and events, the region can build a stronger reputation among visitors and establish compelling reasons for year-round visits.

A lack of evening entertainment and opening hours

One of the most debated topics in the region is the need for versus the risk of increasing night-time entertainment. Visitors and residents indicate that the region lacks options in the evening. This includes existing restaurants closing early and on certain days of

the week where most establishments are closed. People also believe there is an opportunity for more restaurant and entertainment options, such as a live music venue. Some residents fear that increased opening hours and entertainment options will disrupt the quiet and peaceful nature of the region, while others view them as welcome additions to the local quality of life.

Limited presence of First Nations in the region and tourism industry

Though the region is located on the traditional territories of the Qualicum and Snaw-Naw-As First Nations, there is little visible presence of Indigenous peoples or recognition of the traditional territories in the region. It should be a priority to address this in partnership with both Nations.

Tourism to support Indigenous reconciliation

Indigenous reconciliation is important in Canadian and provincial tourism strategies. Local residents and businesses also recognize its value and see tourism as a way to help with reconciliation. Indigenous engagement has begun through this project and should keep going to support Indigenous-led efforts, bringing fairness and opportunities to both Nations.

Environmental sustainability and regeneration

Residents and operators prioritize environmental sustainability and regeneration in the Parksville Qualicum Beach region. Local governments are also striving towards these goals by formulating plans to enhance sustainability, restore lost natural habitats, and expand urban green spaces. For instance, the city of Qualicum Beach has a “Waterfront Masterplan” that includes a proposal to “restore a natural beach profile,” while the city of Parksville is working on its “Parksville Urban Forest Strategy.” The loss of trees due to development is a significant concern for many residents, which recently led to the city of Qualicum Beach adopting a tree protection bylaw.

The region’s unique natural environment has inspired the establishment of numerous environmental organizations and initiatives. Some examples include the Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Region, The Nature Trust of BC, Deep Bay Marine Field Station, and North Island Wildlife Recovery Centre.

Climate change concerns

Tourism operators and residents are concerned about climate change. A portion of operators have climate action plans in place, and work is being done to reduce their carbon footprint. There has not been a structured, collective effort to meet provincial climate targets. The focus in the Parksville Qualicum Beach region has been on local environmental sustainability. Recently, the Vancouver Island DMO (4VI) introduced a Vancouver Island Carbon Audit & Action Plan. It is too early to understand how the region could leverage this plan.

Tourism operators' challenge to attract, retain, and accommodate staff

The worldwide staffing challenges in the tourism industry after the pandemic are also evident in Parksville Qualicum Beach. This issue is further exacerbated by the region’s lack of affordable housing and the seasonal nature of many businesses. Housing prices have soared, making it difficult for many residents to afford homes. Supporting solutions to address the housing crisis will benefit both residents and the local industry in the future.

A challenging business environment

Several tourism operators and entrepreneurs have expressed concerns about the challenging business environment in the region. The cautious attitude towards change, coupled with vocal opposition from certain groups, has led to governmental hesitancy. Additionally, entrepreneurs have commented that numerous bylaws can make starting and operating a business more difficult. For businesses that rely on approvals, agreements, or licenses from multiple government agencies or private landowners, these challenges can become insurmountable obstacles.

Rights-Holders

Since time immemorial, the southern regions of Vancouver Island have been home to

14 Nations, which include the Qualicum and Snaw-Naw-As.

Qualicum First Nation

The Qualicum First Nation's name means "Where the Dog Salmon Run" and the nation has 170 members. The languages spoken are hən'qəminəm' (Hul'q'umi'num') and Pentlatch. It operates the Qualicum campground, which is very reliant on the tourism industry, as it operates at capacity during the peak visitor months.

Snaw-Naw-As Nation

The Snaw-Naw-As Nation, which has approximately 250 members, operates a gas station, campground and marina. The language spoken is Hul'q'umi'num', which currently has one fluent speaker and 23 learners.

Key Stakeholders

Implementing this strategy necessitates collaboration and backing from numerous stakeholders within and beyond the tourism sector. The development of a thriving, sustainable, and resilient tourism industry relies on the combined efforts of various parties.

The tourism industry, while extensive, is characterized by fragmentation. The destination marketing landscape mirrors this pattern. British Columbia has over 100 destination marketing organizations (DMOs), including one provincial, five regional and more than 100 local DMOs. The majority of these local DMOs receive funding through the province's Municipal and Regional District Tax (MRDT) program.

It is important to note that the following list of key stakeholders, essential for the successful implementation of the strategy, is not comprehensive.

Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism Association

Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism Association (PQBTA) operates within the traditional territory of the Qualicum and Snaw-Naw-As First Nations and is the official destination marketing organization

for the tourism industry within the City of Parksville, Town of Qualicum Beach, and the Regional District of Nanaimo Areas E, F, G, and H. PQBTA operates as a non-profit society incorporated by the BC Societies Act. A collaboration MOU between PQBTA, Qualicum Beach and Parksville Chambers of Commerce, Parksville Downtown Business Association, and Lighthouse Country Business Association was established in 2019.

The organization is funded primarily by the hotel tax (MRDT) collected by accommodation provided in the region and some secondary sources. It has been successful in developing a strong regional brand through effective promotional activities. The organization is currently staffed by 1.8 full-time employees and will use this strategy to evolve the organization to become effective custodians of the strategy.

4VI

Formally known as Tourism Vancouver Island, 4VI changed its name and became a social enterprise in 2022. Its business model is focused on providing contracted destination marketing services to Destination British Columbia and DMOs situated on Vancouver Island. Revenues are reinvested in local initiatives and projects for the benefit of all residents of Vancouver Island.

Even though 4VI offers regional programs that could be beneficial for Parksville Qualicum Beach, the shift in focus and mandate has left a void that has traditionally been filled by a regional DMO. Stakeholders have pointed out that no organization is working towards a common marketing strategy for Vancouver Island as a whole, while the 4VI business model is based on offering services to, and even running, local DMOs, which poses a potential conflict of interest.

Destination British Columbia

Destination British Columbia (DBC) is the provincial destination marketing organization. DBC's

corporate strategy is aligned with the provincial government's tourism strategy. Like many DMOs around the world, the organization is shifting its focus from pure destination promotion towards destination development. In a 2017 province-wide destination development strategy, Parksville Qualicum Beach was part of the South Central Island planning area. This strategy is in the process of being implemented, although currently not within the Parksville Qualicum Beach region.

Destination British Columbia is in the process of planning for its "Lead with Iconics" strategy. This strategy will establish brands for distinct geographic areas of the province for the purpose of attracting international visitors. Parksville Qualicum Beach is located in the area with "West Coast Route" as the working title. The "Iconic" roughly spans the coast and islands of British Columbia. Aligning with the strategy provides an opportunity for increased international visitation.

Destination British Columbia has funded promotional projects through its co-op marketing program. It is likely that the continued shifts towards destination development, including sustainability and Indigenous reconciliation, will result in changes to this program in order to support local DMOs in the form of strategic planning, knowledge sharing, and program funding.

Indigenous Tourism British Columbia

British Columbia is located on the traditional territories of 204 Indigenous communities, where more than 30 Indigenous languages are spoken. Indigenous Tourism British Columbia (ITBC) is committed to growing and promoting a sustainable, culturally rich Indigenous tourism industry. Its efforts are focused on developing Indigenous-owned tourism operators and promoting these businesses to potential visitors. None of the businesses ITBC works with are currently located in the region. The collaboration between ITBC and Destination British Columbia has recently been strengthened with a growing mandate towards increasing Indigenous tourism and reconciliation. This partnership is likely to strengthen even more in the future.

Destination Canada

Destination Canada is the national DMO that is primarily focused on attracting international visitors. Destination Canada is also shifting its focus towards destination development, stewardship, and Indigenous reconciliation. As a national organization, its impact on local DMOs such as Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism is indirect. The region currently does not host any of the 200 "Signature Experiences" Destination Canada uses to promote the country. The organization will continue to be a resource for national research, data, and knowledge sharing.

Local governments

The region is governed by two First Nations, two municipalities, and one regional district. Local governments are supportive of tourism and consider it an important economic driver and part of the local identity. Like most places that are similar to the Parksville Qualicum Beach region, tourism is welcomed but not always a top-of-mind consideration. Government leaders who engaged in the process of developing the strategy welcomed a stronger relationship with the tourism industry in the future.

Chambers of Commerce

The region includes both the Parksville and District Chamber of Commerce as well as the Qualicum Beach Chamber of Commerce. Both organizations support tourism through operating local visitor centres and through their vast membership and programs.

Parksville Downtown Business Association

The Parksville Downtown Business Association is a business improvement area that dedicates resources to the promotion and enhancement of downtown Parksville. Tourism is important to this group of businesses as it drives economic benefit and adds vibrancy to the area.

Lighthouse Country Business Association

The Lighthouse Country Business Association (LCBA) and its over 150 diverse businesses represent the entrepreneurial and creative spirit found throughout the communities of Lighthouse Country. Those communities include Bowser, Deep Bay, Dashwood, Horne Lake, Spider Lake and Qualicum Bay. The goal of the LCBA is to support the interests and prosperity of our local businesses and of our community through our activities, signage, and communication.

BC Parks

The role of BC Parks is to conserve British Columbia's natural spaces for everyone to enjoy. They help locals and visitors experience BC's parks while working to ensure the natural environment flourishes into the future. Parks that fall within their jurisdiction in the region are: Rathtrevor Beach, Cathedral Grove, Englishman River Falls, Horne Lakes Caves, Jedediah Island, Little Qualicum Falls, Spider Lake, Rosewall Creek, Nanoose Bay/Arbutus Grove, and Gerald Island. It should be noted that the Regional District of Nanaimo also manages an extensive parks and trails system in the region.



PLACE DNA®

Place DNA® is a proprietary research methodology developed by Destination Think. It answers the question “What makes Parksville Qualicum Beach, Parksville Qualicum Beach?” and identifies the attributes that shape the look, feel, and culture of an area—and by extension, the visitor experience. Aligning this strategy with the region’s Place DNA® will ensure we align the tourism experience with local values and aspirations.

Place DNA® attributes

Place DNA is described as a set of defined attributes. The attributes below make up the Place DNA® of Parksville Qualicum Beach.



OCEAN

The Salish Sea is the lifeblood of the region. It tempers the climate and creates the tides. It is a source of the region’s biodiversity and ability to attract residents and visitors.



BEACH

The region’s beaches are soft and sandy, and they go on forever when the tide is low. They dominate the shore and are one of the main attractions for locals and visitors.



MILD CLIMATE

The region is sometimes called “Canada’s Riviera” because of its mild winters and warm summers. The climate is much milder than that of the rest of British Columbia.



RETIREEES

The average age of the region is one of the highest in Canada.⁵ People choose to retire to the region due to its natural beauty, outdoor activities, and comfortable and relaxed lifestyle.



CALM

The region has a calm vibe. The ocean is calmer than the west coast, the climate is mild, and the people are peaceful and relaxed.



BIODIVERSE

The region is home to a wide variety of plant and animal species, including several endangered and threatened species. The diverse habitats range from coastal marine ecosystems to old-growth forests and alpine meadows.



ECLECTIC

The region has attracted numerous artists, environmentalists, libertarians, entrepreneurs, and other free spirits who bring a unique and diverse mix of people, business ideas, styles, and experiences. This is best represented in and around Coombs.



INDIGENOUS

The region is located on the traditional territories of the Qualicum and Snaw-Naw-As First Nations. Their peoples and culture have existed in connection with the land since time immemorial.⁴



ENERGETIC

People in the region are active and energetic. They enjoy the outdoor activities the region offers.



RESORTS

The region was already a popular holiday resort for early settlers. This tradition continues to this day with a number of unique and well-known resorts.

⁴ Reference: <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/as-sa/98-200-X/2021004/98-200-x2021004-eng.cfm>.



ISLAND

Being located on an island means being somewhat removed and remote from mainstream society.



TRADITIONAL

People in the region respect traditions.



ARTS

Many artists live in the area and have a diverse array of expertise and stature. Residents appreciate and support the arts.



SEASONS

The region is mild but still diverse in its seasons. Seasonality goes beyond climate, with times of the year when birds, whales, salmon, or herring are present.



ENGLISH INFLUENCE

The influence of early settlers from England is still present in many parts of the region, especially Qualicum Beach.



COMFORTABLE

Life in the region is mostly described as comfortable.



SPIRITED

People are passionate about their values and ideas. They will speak out when things misalign, mostly in a respectful and thoughtful way.



RIVERS

The Englishman River and Little Qualicum River are Mount Arrowsmith watersheds and are important natural features of the region, from both a natural and cultural standpoint.



WATERFALLS

The water that flows from the mountains to the ocean includes multiple waterfalls in both rivers.



SEASIDE

The region has multiple seashores. Some are developed, while others are not. The seashores are important aspects of local culture and leisure activities.



SAFE

The community is generally safe, and that is how most people perceive it.



PEACEFUL

Residents appreciate the peacefulness of the region. Disrupting the peace will lead to spirited action.



OPINIONATED

People in the region are not shy about sharing their opinions. They will stand up for what they believe.



QUIET

Residents appreciate the quietness of the community.



TRAILS

Trails are an important part of the lifestyle. Trails offer ways to access the oceanfront, rivers, waterfalls, and forests. They offer ways to be active in nature.



NATURE

The combination of geography, biodiversity, climate, ecosystems, and geology offers a unique and important natural environment residents recognize.



NOSTALGIC

The region is timeless, and residents and visitors have a nostalgic view of it. It is important to maintain the local authenticity that inspires that nostalgia.



ECO-AWARE

Residents care about the natural environment. Their priority is maintaining the pristine environment.



MANICURED

Some of the developed parts of the region, along the ocean, are well maintained and manicured. This provides an interesting contrast with the raw natural environment.



HIGHWAY

The old Island Highway (19a) and Inland Highway 19 have influenced the local culture over time. Parts of the community are still influenced by them.



CAUTIOUS

Residents are risk averse. Change in the community that is perceived as posing a risk to an individual will result in a passionate response.



QUAINT

Many parts of the region have been unaffected by rapid growth and industry. They have retained a traditional look and feel, which is important to maintain.



SCENIC

Most places in the region offer beautiful scenery—from the oceanfront tides and sunsets, to majestic trees and waterfalls.



TREES

Residents care passionately about trees and will fight to protect them. The importance of trees is symbolized in Cathedral Grove, MacMillan Provincial Park.



TOURISM

Tourism has been an important economic driver and part of the region's identity. Many residents who chose to retire here were visitors first.



TIDES

The shallow beaches result in large and unique intertidal zones, stretching for hundreds of metres. The tides affect how, where, when people connect with the ocean.



SUNSET

The combination of the ocean, beaches, tides, and cardinal direction of the region results in spectacular sunsets.



MINI-GOLF

A highly visible mark of nostalgia in the community is represented in its mini-golf courses.



SPRIGHTLY

The region has the highest average age in Canada. These people are by and large full of energy and are active in body and spirit.

DESTINATION BACKSTORY AND FUTURE STORY

Just like in most tourism destinations around the world, the tourism industry and visitor experience have developed organically. The current state of the visitor experience is captured in the destination backstory.

By defining a future story, the Parksville Qualicum Beach tourism industry and its stakeholders can point to a North Star. Aligning as many aspects of the visitor experience to this North Star will enable the essence of the region to be maintained and its competitive differentiation strengthened.



BACKSTORY

Parksville Qualicum Beach is situated on the east coast of Vancouver Island, where the climate and ocean waters are mild in contrast to the rest of British Columbia. The natural environment and biodiversity are so unique that it has been designated as a UNESCO Biosphere Region since 2000.

The region is located on the traditional territories of the Qualicum and Snaw-Naw-As First Nations, who have lived in the area since time immemorial. Despite the impacts of colonialism, they continue to maintain their cultures and traditions.

European settlers arrived in the mid-1800s. The stunning beaches, natural environment and picturesque surroundings attracted visitors almost immediately. This resulted in quaint towns that are well cared for, often in the style of Victorian England.

The beauty of the region combined with its mild and comfortable nature has created a popular place for people to retire. The region's demographic is one of the oldest in Canada.

Over the years, the region has developed into a well-known tourism destination, with many British Columbians holding fond memories of their childhood visits and sharing those memories with their friends and families. With its beaches and climate as the primary attraction, the region has built a strong reputation amongst British Columbians.



FUTURE STORY

The attraction to Parksville Qualicum Beach lies in the natural beauty, diversity of experiences and ease of exploration in a familiar setting. Visitors navigate the myriad offerings intuitively, savouring the beautiful beaches, diverse trails, captivating rivers and waterfalls, and an eclectic range of local businesses, all part of a seamlessly enjoyable visitor experience.

The unique charm of Parksville Qualicum Beach is amplified by its vibrant and quaint communities, with their nostalgic allure, thriving arts scene and unique retail offerings. The essence of these communities maintains a sense of timelessness and nostalgia.

The two Nations have worked closely with the tourism industry to properly acknowledge the traditional territories and develop a visitor economy that generates shared benefits and enhances cultural visibility.

Parksville Qualicum Beach's community remains dedicated to environmental conservation, ensuring the harmonious coexistence of a thriving visitor economy with committed preservation efforts. This eco-awareness is reflected in every facet of the region, maintaining its unique offerings for future generations.

In this envisioned future, Parksville Qualicum Beach emerges as a beloved, resort-like destination, where people return time and again. Each visit unravels new discoveries within a familiar setting, making Parksville Qualicum Beach a place that continues to leave an indelible mark on the hearts of all who visit.

The following mission and vision statements are intended to guide the development of Parksville Qualicum Beach as a tourism destination, reflecting the collective aspirations of our community, local businesses and visitors.

VISION

Parksville Qualicum Beach, where our community and the ebb and flow of our pristine oceanfront come together to create a sustainable resort feeling that nurtures the spirit, revitalizes the senses and leaves an indelible mark on the hearts of all who visit.



MISSION

To create meaningful, sustainable and diverse experiences that enrich lives, foster connections and promote responsible stewardship of our natural and cultural heritage for the benefit of all.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Building a tourism industry that generates comprehensive benefits for visitors, tourism operators, and residents, while conscientiously safeguarding the natural environment demands commitment. Drawing on community values, international frameworks such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, and best practices in the tourism sector, we have crafted a series of commitments to guide and underpin the Parksville Qualicum Beach tourism industry.

These commitments form the foundation upon which specific goals and strategies have been built. They should also serve as the compass for directing future actions at both the destination-wide and operator levels.

Guiding Principles:

- **Preserve or regenerate the region's natural beauty and biodiversity**
- **Deliver sustainable tourism and eco-awareness**
- **Foster inclusivity and diverse community representation and engagement**
- **Respect and collaborate with Qualicum and Snaw-Naw-As First Nations and leverage tourism in a path to reconciliation**
- **Support development of the arts, culture and local heritage**
- **Prioritize resident quality of life and well-being**
- **Develop sustainable outdoor recreational activities**
- **Drive sustainable economic growth**
- **Enhance visitor experiences year-round**
- **Maintain local aesthetic and scenic beauty aligned with the region's Place DNA®**

LEVERAGING THE UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN OUR DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) serve as our guide in shaping a sustainable future for Parksville Qualicum Beach. These 17 interlinked global goals aim to foster prosperity, protect the planet, and eradicate poverty by 2030.

We've integrated the SDGs into our strategy, using them as a validating tool for our strategic goals. Each goal corresponds to one or more SDGs, ensuring our actions contribute to these universal targets for sustainability.

As we move forward, the SDGs provide a framework to monitor progress, offering clear targets to measure our effectiveness. By aligning our strategy with these global goals, we are committing to a future where tourism in Parksville Qualicum Beach not only drives local economic growth but also promotes social, environmental, and cultural wellbeing. Together, we work towards a sustainable, inclusive, and prosperous future for our community.





STRATEGIC GOALS

1.

A resilient tourism industry that is adaptable to changing trends, market demands, resident sentiment and climate impacts.

The overarching goal of this strategy is to create a resilient and adaptable tourism industry. By shifting from a predominantly organic approach to a more proactive one, this strategy aims to address the various challenges and uncertainties that tourism destinations face globally.

By embracing this strategic vision, the tourism industry will not only be better equipped to navigate the rapidly evolving landscape, but also remain responsive to the needs and desires of both visitors and local communities. This forward-thinking approach will ensure that the tourism sector remains robust, sustainable, and prepared for the unpredictable challenges of the future.

KPIs

- Tourism growth (in the off-season)
- Visitor satisfaction scores
- Resident sentiment Index
- Climate impact assessment

SDGs

- SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth
- SDG 13: Climate Action
- SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals

2.

A year-round visitor economy that delivers a well-rounded experience every day of the year.

Establishing a year-round economy is essential to increasing resiliency and addressing challenges such as seasonal employment and housing. By capitalizing on strong visiting friends and relatives (VFR) and senior visitor segments, Parksville Qualicum Beach can build a mainstream reputation and ultimately become an ideal destination for quick, off-season getaways or extended vacations, fostering a thriving, year-round economy.

KPIs

- Off-season visitation levels will exceed British Columbia’s provincial average
- A well-rounded variety of experiences are available to visitors every day of the year, delivering consistent positive visitor sentiment
- A variety of evening dining and entertainment options are available every day of the year to meet visitor demand

SDGs


- SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth

Parksville Nighttime Quarter

The region needs a dedicated central location for nighttime entertainment. Downtown Parksville is ideal for establishing an entertainment district, given its central location, alignment with downtown revitalization plans, and compatibility with the local identity.

The Parksville Qualicum Beach Place DNA® and brand emphasize a peaceful and relaxed destination—these attributes can be reflected in the concept of a “Cultural Quarter” for the area. It is essential to note that this district is not intended to be a party hub but rather a place for more family-friendly entertainment.

In this context, the ideal scenario involves developing a central area in Downtown Parksville that offers a variety of nighttime options, including cultural events, markets, wine bars, live music that focuses on acoustic sounds, and more. These offerings should align with the region’s peaceful and relaxed ambiance, providing visitors with enjoyable experiences without promoting a party atmosphere.



Case Study

The City of Palm Springs and other desert resort cities have a 24-hour/7-day noise ordinance that is strictly enforced. Guests must keep the volume of voices and entertainment at a reasonable level, and after 9:00 pm, they must bring conversations indoors and close windows and doors to contain any noise. Despite these restrictions, the nightlife and late-night entertainment in the city continue to thrive. While the neighbourhoods are quiet after 9:00 pm, the commercial areas bustle with activity, showcasing a vibrant nighttime scene within a peaceful community.

Goal 2 continues over page >

2.

KPIs

- Quantifiable growth in off-season experiences
 - ~ An increased number of tourism operators remaining open year-round
 - ~ A higher percentage of tourism operators transitioning seasonal amenities to year-round amenities (e.g., outdoor pools)
 - ~ An increased number of tourism operators offering different seasonal experiences (e.g., restaurants changing menus, art galleries changing exhibitions)
 - ~ Growth in the number of specialty retail stores, unique non-franchise restaurants, art galleries and exhibitions, performing arts venues, indoor activities and attractions for younger children, interpretive centres, museums, educational attractions, and all-season access to natural attractions
 - ~ An expanded festival and event calendar that attracts year-round visitation and increases the number of annual events with strong reputations throughout the province
- A measurable increase in repeat visitation and customer loyalty
- Growth in the number of Indigenous tourism experiences developed and led by the two local First Nations
- Improved integration of time-based and personalized information in destination marketing, such as a destination-wide calendar of events and the promotion of seasonal offerings
- Enhanced international recognition of Cathedral Grove/MacMillan Provincial Park, and Rath Trevor Beach Park as natural attractions, along with a measurable increase in the quality of their holistic experiences

SDGs

- SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth
- SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production

3.

Visitor experiences aligned with the destination brand that lead to high satisfaction and repeat visitation.

The tourism industry must differentiate itself by incorporating key elements of the destination brand and Place DNA®, as outlined in the section Place DNA® and the future story. By ensuring that visitor experiences are closely aligned with these core values, the destination can foster a sense of loyalty and encourage repeat visitation.

Critical to this approach is striking a delicate balance between maintaining a sense of nostalgia and timelessness, without appearing outdated or old-fashioned. Additionally, leaning into the destination's peaceful and relaxed atmosphere while simultaneously ensuring that experiences cater to contemporary visitors and meet modern quality standards is critical to maintaining a strong reputation.

KPIs

- An increase in the overall satisfaction rate based on visitor surveys, which can help capture insights on various aspects such as activities, accommodation, and amenities
- A higher percentage of repeat visitation across all seasons
- An increased number of trips/year by visitors across seasons
- A noticeable increase in the average duration of visits
- Growth in new experiences and offerings

SDGs

- SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth
- SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production



Creating a sense of nostalgia at the Qualicum Beach Inn

The opportunity and risk related to nostalgia

Timelessness and nostalgia play a significant role in the visitor experience in Parksville Qualicum Beach, as people seek to relive cherished memories or share their favourite experiences with their families. However, there is a risk that nostalgia can lead to the destination becoming outdated and thus fail to appeal to contemporary visitors or adapt to changing trends. Furthermore, as we work towards Indigenous reconciliation, it is also critical to recognize that certain nostalgia might be rooted in a problematic colonial past.

To maintain a sense of nostalgia in Parksville Qualicum Beach, while ensuring it remains modern and relevant, tourism operators can develop experiences that seamlessly blend tradition with innovation while addressing problematic elements of the past. Offering activities that evoke nostalgia while incorporating contemporary elements enables visitors to appreciate the rich history and culture of the region while enjoying fresh, engaging experiences. Simultaneously, updating accommodations, facilities, and transportation options is essential to balancing nostalgic charm with modern comfort and convenience. Prioritizing the preservation of the region's timeless architecture and historic landmarks, such as Paradise Mini Golf and Coombs Old Country Market, is essential, while supporting amenities should be upgraded to contemporary standards.

Much of the nostalgia in Parksville Qualicum Beach is rooted in its pristine natural environment and the meaningful connections fostered between travelling families. Ensuring the region's natural environment remains unspoiled while continuing to nurture these connections will encourage the return of generation after generation, creating a lasting appeal that transcends contemporary trends and amenities. This delicate balance between nostalgia and modernity will help Parksville Qualicum Beach remain a highly attractive and vibrant destination for years to come.

4.

Positive resident sentiment towards tourism, with diverse groups collaborating to support the destination's success.

At present, Parksville Qualicum Beach residents hold a favourable view of tourism and primarily recognize its economic value to the community. The tourism industry understands that a destination for visitors is also the place where residents live and thrive. Consequently, it is essential for the development of the tourism industry to align with resident values and contribute to the liveability and sustainability of the destination, while fostering a strong sense of shared identity and purpose.

To achieve this, the industry must ensure that residents are aware of the holistic, positive impact tourism has on the community which encompasses not just economic benefits but also social, cultural, and environmental advantages. This comprehensive understanding can help build community-shared value to strengthen the relationship between residents and the tourism sector and facilitate the collaboration of diverse groups in supporting the destination's success.

By actively engaging with residents and addressing their concerns, the tourism industry can foster a sense of unity and shared responsibility, ultimately creating a destination that residents are proud to call home and visitors are eager to explore. This harmonious collaboration will not only contribute to the long-term success of this destination, but also cultivate an environment that enhances the quality of life for all.

KPIs

- Positive sentiment measured bi-annually through a resident survey with enhanced resident awareness of the holistic impact of tourism
- Increased community engagement through joint initiatives and projects and recognition of tourism-related community projects
- Greater resident involvement in tourism-related activities such as volunteering
- Positive media coverage of the tourism industry
- Positive trends in social media conversations and comments from residents

SDGs

- SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth
- SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities
- SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals

5.

A respectful and inclusive tourism industry and visitor experience for all people.

Creating a respectful and inclusive tourism industry in Parksville Qualicum Beach entails fostering an environment where everyone, regardless of their background, feels welcomed and valued. This objective encompasses interactions between visitors, the local tourism industry, and residents, as well as ensuring a respectful working environment for those employed within the sector. By promoting accessibility in accommodations, attractions, events, and activities throughout the region, and considering the unique needs of diverse visitor groups, Parksville Qualicum Beach can provide exceptional experiences for all, while supporting long-term sustainability and competitiveness.

Collaboration and open dialogue between industry stakeholders, local residents, and diverse visitor groups in Parksville Qualicum Beach are crucial to identifying and overcoming potential barriers to inclusivity. This collaborative approach, combined with a commitment to a respectful work environment, contributes to a more inclusive destination where everyone can enjoy a fulfilling and memorable experience. By prioritizing respect and inclusivity, the Parksville Qualicum Beach tourism industry will enhance the visitor experience as well as foster a positive and supportive atmosphere for those working within it.

KPIs

- An increase in the number of accessible accommodations, attractions, events, and activities throughout the region
- The percentage of tourism industry employees who have completed inclusivity and cultural sensitivity training
- High satisfaction rates among diverse visitor groups, as captured through targeted surveys and feedback channels
- An increase in the attendance and participation of diverse visitor groups and individuals with disabilities at events and activities in Parksville Qualicum Beach
- Positive online reviews and social media sentiment: growth in the number of positive online reviews and social media comments related to inclusivity and respect in the Parksville Qualicum Beach tourism industry

SDGs

- SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities
- SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth
- SDG 5: Gender Equality

6.

Achieve reconciliation, equity, and shared prosperity through collaboration with First Nations.

The strategic objective of collaborating with Indigenous communities in Parksville Qualicum Beach is aimed at promoting reconciliation, equity, and shared prosperity. This objective acknowledges the importance of engaging with Qualicum and Snaw-Naw-As First Nations, in a meaningful and respectful manner. Through close cooperation and mutual understanding, the cultural tourism industry can work together with these communities to create a more inclusive and culturally rich visitor experience.

By fostering trust and open communication, the tourism industry can gain valuable insights into the needs, aspirations, and concerns of these communities. This foundation of mutual respect will serve as a basis for developing a strategic plan that addresses representation and opportunities for their members within the tourism industry. By working together, the tourism industry and the Indigenous communities can identify areas of shared interest, create authentic and respectful educational cultural experiences, and foster economic development that benefits all parties. Ultimately, this collaborative approach will contribute to a more diverse and equitable tourism industry in Parksville Qualicum Beach, promoting reconciliation and shared prosperity for generations to come.

KPIs

- Establishment of an Indigenous tourism advisory group, or the inclusion of representatives from both First Nations in a broader advisory group
- Completion of a strategic plan developed in collaboration with the Qualicum and Snaw-Naw-As First Nations and relevant adjustments made to this plan where necessary
- An increase in the number of authentic and respectful Indigenous tourism experiences, products, and services offered in the region
- Growth in the economic benefits and opportunities for the Qualicum and Snaw-Naw-As First Nations communities as a result of their involvement in the tourism industry
- An increase in the number of training, mentorship, and employment opportunities provided to members of the Qualicum and Snaw-Naw-As First Nations within the tourism sector
- The percentage of tourism industry employees who have completed cultural awareness and sensitivity training related to the Qualicum and Snaw-Naw-As First Nations
- The number of joint initiatives and projects involving the tourism industry, the Qualicum and Snaw-Naw-As First Nations, and other stakeholders to increase visibility and promote reconciliation and shared prosperity
- Satisfaction among Indigenous communities: regular assessment of satisfaction levels among the Qualicum and Snaw-Naw-As First Nations with regards to their involvement and representation in the tourism industry

SDGs

- SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities
- SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions
- SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals

7.

A vibrant arts and culture scene that contributes to the region's unique identity and appeal.

A vibrant arts and culture scene is a critical component in developing a year-round visitor economy, as it provides compelling reasons for visitors to explore the region beyond the traditional summer season. The Parksville Qualicum Beach region already boasts a foundation of quality arts and artists. There is a significant opportunity to build a stronger reputation for the destination's art scene to further enhance its unique identity and appeal. By nurturing and promoting the diverse array of visual and performing arts present in the region, Parksville Qualicum Beach can elevate its cultural offering and attract a wider audience of art enthusiasts and culturally curious visitors.

KPIs

- Increase in public art throughout the region
- An increase in the number of arts and culture events, including visual and performing arts, held throughout the year
- Growth in the number of visitors attending arts and culture events during off-peak seasons
- An increase in the variety of arts and cultural experiences available in the region
- Growth in the number of local artists involved in arts initiatives and events
- An increase in the number of collaborative initiatives and partnerships between arts organizations and tourism businesses
- Improvement in the reputation of Parksville Qualicum Beach as an arts and culture destination, as measured by media coverage, online reviews and visitor feedback

SDGs

- SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities
- SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth

8.

Resident and visitor access to well-maintained infrastructure, recreational activities and public spaces with a safe, comfortable environment.

Achieving alignment between the tourism industry and residents is essential to creating a sustainable and successful destination. By incorporating resident needs into the development of visitor experiences, Parksville Qualicum Beach can foster a harmonious coexistence that benefits both residents and visitors. This alignment enhances the visitor experience and helps to ensure that the region remains a vibrant and attractive place for residents that offers a range of recreational activities, well-maintained public spaces, and a safe, comfortable living environment.

Aligning the development of amenities and experiences with the unique essence of Parksville Qualicum Beach, as encapsulated in its Place DNA®, can significantly boost the destination’s competitive positioning. This approach echoes resident values and caters to diverse visitor interests. The consideration of resident needs can guide the creation of amenities and experiences that might not be immediately apparent to the tourism industry, yet they can considerably enhance the value proposition for visitors. Think of facilities like playgrounds, pickleball courts, and varied retail offerings that serve both locals and tourists. By ensuring that resident-focused amenities and experiences resonate with the destination’s Place DNA®, Parksville Qualicum Beach can present a more unified, attractive destination that addresses a wide spectrum of interests and requirements.

KPIs

- Increased number of new recreational facilities and amenities developed for both residents and visitors, such as playgrounds, pickleball courts, and other public spaces
- Popular tourist areas have safe parking as well as bike and pedestrian access
 - ~ Cathedral Grove, MacMillan Provincial Park’s parking challenges have been resolved
 - ~ Coombs tourism area includes safe access and parking
 - ~ Downtown Qualicum Beach traffic congestion and parking challenges have been resolved
 - ~ Bike and pedestrian trails safely and conveniently connect Parksville Resort Area, downtown Parksville, Coombs, and downtown Qualicum Beach and waterfront
- Alternative transportation options in place for visitors
- Capacity and access to natural experiences meet demand without compromising the natural environment
- Increased number of experiences align with Place DNA® and future story in order to strengthen brand essence and competitiveness

SDGs

- SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities
- SDG 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure
- SDG 3: Good Health and Well-Being

8.



Beyond a traffic challenge: The untapped potential of Cathedral Grove, MacMillan Provincial Park

Cathedral Grove, MacMillan Provincial Park is a world-class natural attraction drawing around 500,000⁵ visitors annually, comparable to Antelope Canyon, Giant's Causeway, and The Twelve Apostles. Unfortunately, the current visitor experience is far from ideal, with limited parking along a busy highway and no designated pedestrian crossing to access the park. For an attraction of global significance, these conditions are unacceptable.

Today's experience economy provides the opportunity to reimagine Cathedral Grove, MacMillan Provincial Park as a comprehensive, contemporary experience that goes beyond marvelling at the towering trees. By including educational and immersive elements, the destination can create a more meaningful and lasting impact on visitors. This could involve dedicated shuttle services, ticketed access, an interpretive centre with a restaurant and souvenir shop, and guided tours that delve into the history, ecology, and cultural significance of the area.



Case Study

The Christie Lake Conservation Area in Hamilton, Ontario, offers a successful example of a similar transformation. Due to limited parking and increased visitation, visitors must now use a park-operated shuttle after arriving at a nearby information centre. With fees starting at \$35 per adult, this approach has proven viable and could serve as inspiration for enhancing the Cathedral Grove, MacMillan Provincial Park experience, allowing it to thrive in the experience economy and leave a more significant impression on its visitors.

⁵ <https://engage.gov.bc.ca/govtogetherbc/engagement/cathedral-grove>

9.

A sustainable tourism destination where responsible tourism practices maintain its pristine natural environment.

As Parksville Qualicum Beach strives to become a sustainable tourism destination, it is imperative that responsible tourism practices are employed to maintain the region's pristine natural environment. This includes focusing on reducing the industry's carbon footprint and ensuring that tourism development has no net negative environmental impacts on the region. By incorporating environmentally conscious measures in the planning and execution of tourism initiatives, the destination can contribute to the preservation of its beautiful surroundings while providing unforgettable experiences for visitors.

Environmental protection, restoration, and regeneration should be at the forefront of the region's sustainable tourism strategy; this involves safeguarding existing natural resources and actively working toward their improvement and resilience. Additionally, offering environmental educational opportunities for visitors and residents can raise awareness about the importance of maintaining a healthy ecosystem and inspire more sustainable actions. By prioritizing responsible tourism practices, Parksville Qualicum Beach can maintain its pristine natural environment, create a unique selling point for eco-conscious visitors, and ensure the long-term viability of the destination for generations to come.

KPIs

- Measurable reductions in the carbon footprint of the tourism industry within the region, including emissions from transportation, accommodations, and activities, resulting in a zero-impact tourism industry
- The number of tourism businesses and attractions achieving recognized sustainable tourism certifications
- Regular assessments of the environmental impact of tourism development projects, ensuring no net negative effects on the region's natural environment
- The number of environmental education initiatives embedded in tourism experiences
- Improvements in waste reduction and recycling rates within the tourism industry
- Positive feedback from visitors regarding the region's commitment to sustainable tourism practices and environmental stewardship

SDGs

- SDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy
- SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production
- SDG 13: Climate Action
- SDG 14: Life Below Water

9.



Case Study: Sustainable Tourism in Werfenweng, Austria

Werfenweng, a picturesque lakeside town in Austria, is committed to sustainable tourism practices and eco-friendly transportation. The town encourages visitors to leave their cars at home and travel by train instead, promoting a more environmentally conscious approach to tourism.

Upon arrival at the train station, visitors can make use of a complimentary pick-up service, which transports them to their accommodations without the need for a personal vehicle. To further support sustainable transportation, the tourism office in Werfenweng offers the Werfenweng Card, which grants visitors access to a variety of green initiatives and transportation options.

With the Werfenweng Card, visitors can explore the town using e-cars, novelty buggies, and bikes, all of which contribute to reducing the town's carbon footprint and protecting its natural beauty. This innovative approach to sustainable tourism not only preserves the environment, but also creates a unique and memorable experience for visitors, who can enjoy the charming town without causing harm to its surroundings.

Case Study: IKEA: Embracing Sustainability Without Hesitation

As climate change poses a significant threat to humanity, Jesper Brodin, CEO of Swedish home-furnishings giant IKEA, and Ingka Holding believe that “greenwashing is less dangerous than silence.” IKEA has set ambitious sustainability goals and actively promotes a sustainable lifestyle through its marketing initiatives and in-store experiences.

While many companies hesitate to discuss their sustainability efforts for fear of being accused of greenwashing, IKEA has embraced the concept of “green hushing.” They openly share their commitment to sustainability and encourage others to follow suit.

Parksville Qualicum Beach tourism industry can adopt a similar approach by leading through example and actively educating visitors about reducing their environmental footprint both during their travels and at home. By openly sharing and promoting sustainable practices, the industry can inspire positive change and contribute to a more sustainable future.



STRATEGIC PILLARS

To meet our strategic goals, specific strategies have been organized into four pillars. Meeting a strategic objective will often need strategies from different pillars.

STRATEGY: VISITOR EXPERIENCE

1

1. Lead the adaptation to changing traveller behaviours
2. Lead the creation of off-season experiences while elevating existing offerings
3. Lead the development of evening and night-time options for visitors
4. Advocate for addressing traffic congestion challenges, sustainable transportation options, and improved safety in transportation infrastructure
5. Advocate for improved connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists to popular tourism areas, products and experiences

STRATEGY: SOCIAL AND CULTURAL

2

1. Support the increase in representation of the two First Nations in the future of the visitor economy
2. Support and elevate the development of Indigenous tourism experiences
3. Lead the effort to address residents' concerns with the visitor economy
4. Lead the effort of a welcoming and inclusive destination for all people
5. Elevate and support arts, culture, and events
6. Advocate for affordable housing for residents and the workforce
7. Lead initiatives for tourism workforce attraction, retention, skill development, and growth

OBJECTIVES

1. A resilient tourism industry that is adaptable to changing trends, market demands, resident sentiment and climate impacts
2. A year-round visitor economy that delivers a well-rounded experience every day of the year
3. Visitor experiences aligned with the destination brand that lead to high satisfaction and repeat visitation
4. Positive resident sentiment towards tourism, with diverse groups collaborating to support the destination's success.
5. A respectful and inclusive tourism industry and visitor experience for all people
6. Achieve reconciliation, equity, and shared prosperity through collaboration with First Nations
7. A vibrant arts and culture scene, contributing to the region's unique identity and appeal
8. Resident and visitor access to well-maintained infrastructure, recreational activities and public spaces with a safe, comfortable environment
9. A sustainable tourism destination where responsible tourism practices maintain its pristine natural environment

STRATEGY: ENVIRONMENTAL

1. Lead the effort to eliminate the tourism industry's carbon footprint
2. Lead the development of sustainable business practices within the tourism industry
3. Advocate for the preservation and protection of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems

3

STRATEGY: STAKEHOLDER COLLABORATION

1. Lead engagement and communication with stakeholders impacted by the visitor economy
2. Lead the alignment of all stakeholders needed to implement the strategy

4

VISITOR EXPERIENCE

Adapt to changing traveller behaviours and technology innovations

Adapting to the evolving tourism landscape is crucial for the resilience of the destination. In response to this need, a proactive strategy is designed to stay ahead of emerging trends and technology. The first step entails setting up a systematic approach to monitor and analyze significant shifts in traveller behaviour and technological innovation relevant to the Parksville Qualicum Beach tourism industry.

The strategy is to then translate these insights into action with suggestions for updates in communication, promotion, and transaction methods, as well as operational practices. This could involve workshops, seminars and toolkits to assist local businesses in implementing these changes.

Finally, the strategy fosters a culture of innovation within the local tourism sector. This encourages businesses to continually refine their offerings and processes, ensuring Parksville Qualicum Beach remains competitive and responsive to the changing needs and expectations of its visitors.

Grow off-season experiences while elevating existing offerings

Building a competitive, year-round visitor economy is complex, especially with the limited off-season market. Despite challenges such as seasonal businesses closing outside summer months, Parksville Qualicum Beach can leverage its strengths such as a significant visiting friends and relatives (VFR) segment, an older population, a strong tourism reputation, and international visitors travelling off-season through BC.

To tap into the international market, the destination should enhance its global reputation by highlighting landmarks such as Cathedral Grove and Rathtrevor Beach Park. This could attract visitors to Tofino, which is grappling with overtourism and high prices. By promoting the region's natural experiences, the destination can compete more effectively.

Creating off-season experiences for VFR visitors, international tourists, and retirees can boost the destination's reputation and inspire more frequent visits and word-of-mouth recommendations. Once these strategies show success, the next step would involve converting summer visitors into year-round visitors. This would involve diversifying activities, building the arts and culture base, fostering night-time vibrancy, and organizing off-season events.

The ultimate goal is to make Parksville Qualicum Beach an ideal off-season retreat or vacation spot, catering to various visitor segments—from local families and international tourists to retirees. Despite challenges, opportunities like business meetings and niche market experiences can also significantly contribute to the year-round visitor economy.

Develop evening and night-time options for residents and visitors

The initial approach to address the gap in evening and night-time offerings will be to create alignment among existing operators. This will include discussions and collaboration to ensure at least one dining option remains open until 11 pm, starting with the high season. In order to extend this outside the high season and attract more entrepreneurs and investors, the strategy depends on successfully building a sustainable, year-round visitor economy.

A second focus is establishing a central location for night-time activities, with downtown Parksville identified as the ideal hub. Here, the strategy will work towards the establishment of a Cultural Quarter where food, drink, and entertainment can be found in one vibrant yet peaceful location. This space will be further enriched over time with the addition of cultural events and experiences.

This strategy will aim to strike a balance between visitor demand and resident concerns. This will involve open dialogue with the local community to ensure that the development of night-time options does not compromise the peaceful character of Parksville. The goal is to create a destination that caters to the needs of both residents and visitors, creating a thriving destination with a respectful nod to its tranquil roots.

Strengthen the experience differentiation through alignment with Place DNA® and the destination brand

The first step of the strategy to strengthen the unique identity and differentiation of Parksville Qualicum Beach involves developing comprehensive guidelines that capture the region's unique Place DNA® and brand. These guidelines will provide a blueprint by which various stakeholders can create experiences, design spaces, and tell stories that harmoniously align with the region's distinctive identity.

The strategy will then move to launch initiatives that encourage and support stakeholders—ranging from architects and hoteliers to experience providers, city planners, and playground designers—to incorporate these guidelines into their work. This could manifest in a myriad of ways, such as the architecture of buildings, the design of playgrounds, the aesthetic of signage, and the art in hotels, all reflecting the region's timeless, nostalgic, and tranquil ambiance.

A significant part of this strategy will also be to host workshops and sessions where stakeholders can learn how to effectively utilize these guidelines, while maintaining their individual uniqueness. This will ensure that the application of the guidelines enhances rather than restricts creativity and innovation.

In the end, the aim is to imbue the Parksville Qualicum Beach narrative so deeply into the region's products and experiences that they become instantly recognizable as belonging to this region, no matter where they are encountered.

Increase connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists to safely access popular tourism areas, products and experiences

To cater to the modern visitor's needs for active transportation, the first step in this strategy will be to complete the connectivity between key tourism areas, such as the Parksville Resort Area, downtown Parksville, Coombs, downtown Qualicum Beach, and the waterfront. This will involve aligning with existing plans at a regional level and focusing on these popular destinations as the primary nodes in an expanding network.

The strategy includes enhancing these routes with clear signage, facilitating bike rentals, and providing storage options to make navigation easy and intuitive for visitors.

Collaboration with local governments and private landowners, who are integral to the success of this strategy, will be actively sought from the outset. The strategy recognizes their ongoing efforts towards similar objectives and aims to unify these into a comprehensive plan.

Address traffic congestion challenges, sustainable transportation options, and improved safety in transportation infrastructure

To tackle visitors' dependency on private vehicles and safety issues around parking and pedestrian areas, this strategy promotes comprehensive regional transportation plans, with a focus on addressing safety challenges.

In collaboration with local governments, government agencies, and businesses, the strategy pushes for a unified approach to identifying and implementing effective solutions.

Simultaneously, the strategy encourages the conducting of studies, tests, and pilot projects to experiment with alternative, sustainable transportation forms for visitors, including shuttle services, bike rentals, and improved public transportation routes and schedules.

The success of this strategic approach hinges on effective collaboration and shared ownership among all stakeholders, with the aim of creating a safer, more accessible, and sustainable transportation network that enhances visitor experience, while also benefiting local residents.

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL STRATEGIES

Increase the representation of the two First Nations in the future of the visitor economy

Increasing the representation of the two First Nations in the visitor economy is essential to ensuring the authentic and inclusive development of the region. To achieve this, the strategy starts by establishing a consistent dialogue and meaningful partnership with the Nations' representatives and formalizing this partnership.

By integrating the Nations' representatives into the core of tourism planning, this strategy ensures that the ongoing development of Parksville Qualicum Beach is guided by their wisdom, cultural values, and unique perspectives.

Elevate the development of Indigenous tourism experiences

The first step to embarking on this strategy is to strengthen the relationships through dialogues with the two First Nations communities. This is about understanding their perspectives and aspirations, fostering mutual respect, and paving the way for a collaborative process to shape a mutually beneficial strategy.

During these interactions, we will identify and act on immediate opportunities that reflect shared objectives. This ensures tangible progress while we are still in the process of designing the broader strategy. In tandem with these short-term actions, we will jointly develop a longer-term plan that seamlessly integrates the rich cultural heritage of the First Nations into the visitor economy of the Parksville Qualicum Beach. Through this approach, we are not just ticking boxes; we are weaving the unique history and contributions of the First Nations into the very fabric of our destination.

Address residents' concerns with the visitor economy

Ensuring resident support for the tourism industry is a crucial factor for the destination's long-term success. The strategy takes a dual approach to manage this delicate balance.

The approach involves establishing a formal Resident Advisory Group. This group not only acts as a consultative body on destination management decisions, providing valuable input at the operator level to ensure resident alignment, but it can also champion shared priorities with regulatory stakeholders.

Second is the creation of an annual "Community Shared Value" report. This report serves as a platform for the tourism industry to communicate its plans and demonstrate how it supports local priorities and addresses concerns.

Together, these initiatives foster a dialogue between residents and the tourism industry, enhancing mutual understanding and ensuring that the growth of the visitor economy aligns with the community's values and aspirations.

Create a welcoming and inclusive destination for all people

Creating a welcoming and an inclusive destination begins with establishing formal policies and guidelines that all stakeholders adhere to. In this regard, the strategy promotes a structured approach to foster inclusivity across all aspects of the tourism sector.

The strategy also emphasizes the accessibility of experiences to ensure that everyone, regardless of their physical abilities or background, can enjoy the unique offerings of Parksville Qualicum Beach. This involves working closely with local businesses and operators to assess and improve the accessibility of their services.

Simultaneously, the strategy is aimed at highlighting the region's diversity through marketing and communication efforts, as well as via collaborations with the local arts and culture community. Doing so will not only make the destination more appealing to a wider audience, but will also create a more authentic and enriching experience for all visitors.

Establish affordable housing for residents and the workforce

Addressing the affordable housing challenge depends on contributions from a range of organizations, particularly governmental bodies, to address this challenge.

Where the tourism industry can be proactive is by partnering with not-for-profit organizations that are already pursuing affordable housing initiatives. Additionally, to mitigate the impact on workers commuting from outside the region, methods will be explored for making commuting more appealing and efficient.

Strengthen tourism workforce attraction, retention, skill development, and growth

Recognizing the essential role of a skilled and dedicated workforce in the tourism industry, this strategy is designed to bolster the industry's personnel resources. This will involve carrying out regular needs assessments to understand the current state of the workforce and identifying areas for improvement.

Training programs tailored to address the identified gaps to foster skill development and growth can be implemented. These programs could range from workshops on customer service to seminars on the latest trends in sustainable tourism. This includes incorporating best practices from other successful tourism destinations and industries. Insights gleaned from these studies can provide valuable guidance for attraction and retention strategies, ultimately strengthening the tourism workforce in Parksville Qualicum Beach.

ENVIRONMENTAL STRATEGY

Eliminate the tourism industry's carbon footprint

This strategy ensures alignment with government targets and supports the tourism industry's transition towards a sustainable future. It builds on the environmental commitments of operators already engaged in sustainability initiatives.

Benchmarking will quantify the industry's carbon footprint destination-wide. This includes individual operators and extends to the overall tourism sector. Based on these insights, targeted climate action plans will be developed that push for incremental reductions in carbon emissions.

The strategy also recognizes areas outside its immediate influence, such as transportation and infrastructure. In these areas, the strategy takes on an advocacy role, pushing for the adoption of carbon-neutral solutions.

Develop sustainable business practices within the tourism industry

In continuing the industry's existing efforts towards sustainability, the first step is to devise a unified approach. This involves setting up best practices, crafting policies, and rolling out training and resources specifically tailored for sustainable operations in tourism. A standout part of this process is the introduction of a certification program to visibly recognize and applaud sustainable practices within the industry.

Subsequently, the focus shifts to communication, highlighting the industry's dedication to sustainability. This commitment is shared with visitors not just as a mark of honour but also as an opportunity to educate them about sustainable tourism. This approach aims to cultivate an environment where both industry stakeholders and visitors actively contribute to the destination's sustainability.

Preserve and protect terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems from tourism impacts

To recognize the profound role of the natural environment in shaping the visitor experience, efforts will be directed towards mitigating and, where possible, reversing the effects of tourism on the terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems of Parksville Qualicum Beach. This involves collaborating with local environmental organizations to fully understand the current impact of tourism activities on these ecosystems.

Based on assessments, suitable mitigation and regenerative actions can be identified. This could range from revamping operations to introducing eco-friendly infrastructure or services while always striving for a net positive impact.

Crucially, we will also roll out initiatives to educate visitors about zero-impact travelling. This could be done through information campaigns, onsite signage, or interactive experiences that heighten visitor awareness and promote responsible behaviour.

STAKEHOLDER COLLABORATION

Engage and communicate with stakeholders impacted by the visitor economy

The journey towards a sustainable visitor economy requires strong collaboration and open communication with those impacted by it. The strategy begins by establishing the Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism Association (PQBTA) as the chief steward of this initiative, responsible for facilitating dialogue and overseeing progress.

As part of this role, PQBTA will foster advisory groups, bringing together a range of voices from the community and industry. These groups will advise on future decisions to ensure a balanced approach that respects diverse interests and perspectives.

Align all stakeholders required to implement the strategy

Launching this strategy involves more than just the tourism industry; it demands the collaborative efforts of various stakeholders, including government bodies and organizations outside the tourism industry. PQBTA will take the lead in mobilizing these diverse parties.

As a first step, PQBTA will communicate the clear vision of the strategy, which outlines the potential for bolstering the regional economy, improving residents' quality of life, and protecting the environment. This shared vision will serve as the rallying point for all involved parties.

Next, PQBTA will facilitate dialogue and collaboration among stakeholders, focusing on areas of mutual interest. The goal is to build a sense of shared ownership and commitment to the strategy. By recognizing and appreciating each stakeholder's contributions, PQBTA will foster a cooperative and motivated network, all driving toward the realization of the strategy's transformative potential.

STRATEGIES RELATED TO OBJECTIVES

Each strategy within this plan has the potential to address one or multiple objectives. The following table delineates how each strategy aligns with and supports the corresponding objectives.

	A resilient tourism industry that is adaptable to changing trends, market demands, resident sentiment, and climate impacts	A year-round visitor economy that delivers a well-rounded experience every day of the year	Visitor experiences aligned with the destination brand that leads to high satisfaction and repeat visitation	Positive resident sentiment towards tourism, with diverse groups collaborating to support the destination's success	A respectful and inclusive tourism industry and visitor experience for all people.	Achieve reconciliation, equity, and shared prosperity through collaboration with First Nations.	A vibrant arts and culture scene, contributing to the region's unique identity and appeal.	Resident and visitor access to recreational activities, well-maintained infrastructure, public spaces, with a safe, comfort-able environment.	A sustainable tourism destination where responsible tourism practices maintain its pristine natural environment.
VISITOR EXPERIENCE									
Adapt to changing traveller behaviours and technology innovations	X		X		X	X	X	X	X
Grow off-season experiences while elevating existing offerings (with a focus on VRF and retirement market segments).	X	X							
Develop evening and night-time options for residents and visitors		X	X	X	X		X		
Strengthen the experience differentiation through alignment with Place DNA® and the destination brand			X	X	X	X	X		X
Increase connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists to safely access popular tourism areas, products, and experiences	X	X	X	X	X			X	
Address traffic congestion challenges, sustainable transportation options and improved safety in transportation infrastructure	X	X	X	X	X			X	X
SOCIAL AND CULTURAL									
Increase the representation of the two First Nations in the future of the visitor economy	X		X	X	X	X			X
Elevate the development of Indigenous tourism experiences	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Address residents' concerns with the visitor economy	X		X	X	X			X	X
Create a welcoming and inclusive destination for all people	X		X	X	X	X	X		
Establish affordable housing for residents and the workforce	X				X			X	
Strengthen tourism workforce attraction, retention, skill development, and growth	X		X		X				
ENVIRONMENTAL									
Eliminate the tourism industry's carbon footprint	X		X	X					X
Develop sustainable business practices within the tourism industry	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
Preserve and protect terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems from tourism impacts	X		X	X					X
STAKEHOLDER COLLABORATION									
Engage and communicate with stakeholders impacted by the visitor economy	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Align all stakeholders required to implement the strategy	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X



CONCLUSION

A Shared Vision for Sustainable Tourism in Parksville Qualicum Beach

As we draw this document to a close, we pause to reflect on the journey we are about to embark on—a journey that requires our collective resolve, commitment and active participation—a journey towards a sustainable, inclusive and prosperous future for the tourism sector in Parksville Qualicum Beach.

Our roadmap, carefully crafted and articulated in this Destination Development Strategy, hinges on the strength of our resolve to enhance the visitor experience while ensuring the well-being of our residents and the protection of our environment. Our strategy, inspired by global standards and tailored to local realities, is not confined by rigid timelines. Instead, it is dynamic, adaptable, and responsive to the evolving trends and realities of the tourism industry.

We have outlined strategic pillars—Visitor Experience, Social and Cultural, Environmental, and Stakeholder Collaboration—each essential to achieving our collective vision. These pillars stand as a testament to our commitment to balance the needs of our visitors and residents, fostering sustainable growth and prosperity for all.

In our hands, we hold the power to shape the future of the visitor economy in Parksville Qualicum Beach. Our strategy is not just a plan but a call to action—inviting all stakeholders to join us. This journey requires more than passive acceptance; it calls for active engagement, dedication and commitment.

With this strategy as our North Star, we will navigate the dynamic landscapes of our industry, guided by five-year implementation plans adaptable to the ever-evolving realities of tourism. Together, let us create a future where tourism enhances our community, protects our environment, and nurtures our unique cultural heritage.

This strategy is our shared vision—a beacon illuminating our path toward a sustainable, resilient, and prosperous future. Let us take this step forward together for the love of Parksville Qualicum Beach, for the love of our community, and for the love of our shared future.



GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Destination Brand

Destination brand refers to the image, reputation, and perception associated with a particular destination. It encompasses the unique characteristics, experiences, and qualities that distinguish a destination from others and attract visitors. A destination brand is often created through strategic marketing efforts aimed at promoting the destination's attributes, such as natural beauty, cultural heritage, recreational activities, hospitality, and infrastructure.

Destination Marketing Organization

A destination marketing organization (DMO) is an entity or organization responsible for promoting a specific destination to attract visitors and stimulate tourism-related economic activity. DMOs are typically established at the national, regional or city level and operate with the goal of increasing visitor arrivals, enhancing the destination's image and reputation, and maximizing the economic impact of tourism.

The primary functions of a DMO include destination marketing, management, and development.

Infrastructure

In the context of tourism, infrastructure refers to the physical and organizational systems that support the industry and facilitate travel, accommodations, and activities for visitors.

Overtourism

Overtourism refers to a situation in which the number of people visiting a particular destination exceeds the capacity of that destination, resulting in negative social, cultural, economic, and environmental impacts. It can be characterized by overcrowding, congestion, and a strain on the local infrastructure, resources, and community.

Overtourism is often driven by factors such as the availability of cheap travel options, increased connectivity, social media influence, and the concentration of tourism in specific areas. It is important to find a balance between tourism development and the preservation of local culture, environment, and quality of life for residents. Sustainable tourism practices, destination management strategies, and responsible travel behaviour are crucial to mitigating the negative impacts of overtourism and ensuring the long-term viability of the destination.

Sustainable Tourism

Sustainable tourism, also referred to as eco-tourism or responsible tourism, is a form of travel and tourism that takes into consideration the economic, social and environmental impacts of tourism activities.

Overall, sustainable tourism seeks to strike a balance between the economic benefits of tourism, the conservation of natural and cultural resources, and the well-being of residents, with the goal of creating a positive and lasting impact on both visitors and destinations.

Stakeholders

Stakeholders are individuals, groups, or organizations that have an interest or involvement, or are affected by the activities and outcomes of a particular organization or industry. In the context of destination marketing organizations, stakeholders typically include:

- Residents
- Local businesses
- Tourism industry
- Government agencies
- Community organizations
- Other tourism organizations (i.e., other DMOs, provincial marketing organization)
- Visitors
- Media and influencers
- Non-government groups (e.g., environmental groups)
- Educational institutes

These stakeholders play a crucial role in shaping the success and sustainability of a destination. Engaging with them and considering their perspectives helps DMOs make informed decisions, develop effective strategies, and ensure that tourism benefits the destination and its stakeholders in a balanced manner.

Visitor Economy

Visitor economy refers to the economic activities and impacts associated with visitors and tourism within a specific destination or region. It encompasses the spending, employment, and economic benefits generated by visitors who travel for various purposes, such as leisure, business, or other activities.

The visitor economy goes beyond the direct expenditures made by visitors on accommodation, meals, transportation, and attractions. It also includes the ripple effects of visitor spending, which stimulates additional economic activity within the destination. This can include indirect impacts, such as the purchases made by local businesses supplying goods and services to the tourism industry, and induced impacts, which are the result of increased household spending by employees in the tourism sector.

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