

DATE: March 24, 2015

FILE: 6750-20/CV

TO: Chair and Directors
Regional District Board

FROM: Debra Oakman, CMA
Chief Administrative Officer

RE: CVRD and CV Economic Development Society - 2015-2020 five year agreement

Purpose

To present the April 1, 2015 to March 31, 2020 Comox Valley economic development agreement between the Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) and the Comox Valley Economic Development Society (CVEDS) for final consideration.

Policy analysis

The Comox Valley economic development (CVED) service was established in June 1976 by Supplementary Letters Patent 38 and subsequently converted to service establishment Bylaw No. 2395 to establish, maintain and operate an economic development commission on behalf of the consenting member municipalities and electoral areas. The maximum tax requisition rate is \$0.278 per \$1000 of net taxable assessed property value. Participating jurisdictions include Baynes Sound (a portion of Electoral Area 'A'), Lazo North (Electoral Area 'B'), Puntledge - Black Creek (Electoral Area 'C'), the City of Courtenay, Town of Comox and the Village of Cumberland. Participating jurisdictions cost share in the service on the basis of converted assessed property values.

Executive summary

The current agreement between the Comox Valley Regional District and Comox Valley Economic Development Society expires March 31, 2015. The agreement provided for an independent consultant to conduct a contract performance review and that review was completed in April 2014. The consultant, Urbanics consulting provided CVRD and CVEDS with approximately 31 recommendations for improvement relating to reporting, communications and a new agreement.

Between May and September staff worked to review the existing agreement and update language to incorporate recommendations from the external report as well as feedback from the board. The local government elections in November 2014 resulted in significant change and orientation of new board members however the new CVRD, CVEDS boards along with municipalities have had opportunities to review the document and provide additional comments. The final CVRD/CVEDS agreement represents a comprehensive document linking CVEDS annual work plan with their long term strategic plan. Annual reporting requirements have been further clarified and communications are expected to be enhanced.

The five year financial commitment to support economic development services for the Comox Valley is:

CV Economic Development Contract Proposal						
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	
CVEDS Five Year Financial Plan						
Annual contract amount	\$ 1,040,400	\$ 1,105,400	\$ 1,127,508	\$ 1,150,058	\$ 1,173,059	
2015 adjustment to contract requested	65,000	-	-			
subtotal	1,105,400	1,105,400	1,127,508	1,150,058	1,173,059	
annual CPI increment 2%/yr	included	22,108	22,550	23,001	23,461	
Total annual operating contract amount	\$ 1,105,400	\$ 1,127,508	\$ 1,150,058	\$ 1,173,059	\$ 1,196,520	

The estimated 2015 residential tax rate for the Comox Valley Economic Development Service (function 550) is \$0.0938 per \$1,000 of assessed value. The corresponding 2015 tax levy would be approximately \$32.83 on a property assessed at \$350,000.

Below is a background for the flow of reaching the final agreement. Attached as Appendix A is the recommendations from Urbanics Consulting.

Recommendation from the chief administrative officer:

THAT the April 1, 2015 to March 31, 2020 Comox Valley economic development agreement between the Comox Valley Regional District and the Comox Valley Economic Development Society be approved; AND FURTHER THAT the chair and corporate legislative officer be authorized to execute the agreement.

Respectfully:



Debra Oakman, CMA
Chief Administrative Officer

Attachments: Appendix A - Urbanics Consulting Ltd recommendations with status update
Appendix B - 2015 to 2020 CVRD and Comox Valley Economic Development Society service agreement

Background

Aug 2013	Request for proposal (RFP) issued August 2013 to review the CVED service and contract performance.
Sept 2013	RFPs forwarded to municipal chief administrative officer's (CAO) and CVEDS executive director for independent evaluation.
Oct 2013	October 2013 CVRD RFP board meeting award to Urbanics Consulting
Apr 2014	Invitation to municipal Mayors and Councils to April 8, 2014 CoW – Urbanics Consulting presents outcome and recommendations of economic development service function and CVEDS service contract performance reviews. * Urbanics - Service Function Review Report * Urbanics – Service Delivery Review Report
Oct 2014	Staff report to CVRD CoW on the CVEDS draft agreement.
Nov 2014	Draft CVEDS agreement referred to municipal Mayors and Councils and CVEDS for feedback/input requested by January 30, 2015. CVRD solicitor review pending feedback/input from CVEDS and municipalities.
Feb 2015	CVRD seeks solicitor review of draft agreement.
Mar 2015	Final 2015-2020 agreement referred to municipal Mayors and Councils and CVEDS for input/feedback by March 18. CVRD advises of intention to consider final agreement on or before March 31, 2015.

DRAFT AGREEMENT – Comox Valley Economic Development

Category	Urbanics Consultants Recommendation	Outcome as of Feb 2015
Defining economic development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Define economic development in the Economic Development Service Establishment Bylaw 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ New agreement - Appendix B ✓ Added to new function (service) bylaw 345
Communications with the regional district	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ CVEDS present to CVRD Board Semi-Annually ✓ CVEDS meets with CVRD CAO Semi-Annually ✓ CVEDS meets with CVRD Finance Semi-Annually ✓ CVEDS improves the timeliness of Annual Financial Reporting ✓ CVEDS and CVRD mutually develop a Reporting Protocol 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Reporting outlined in new agreement (Section 11, 26, 27 and Schedule C)
Communications with the Member Municipalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ CVEDS meets with each municipal CAO Semi-Annually ✓ Present to local Councils Semi-Annually • Develop Protocol for Information Requests from Governments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Section 27 & 28 of new agreement ✓ Engagement addressed via contract schedule on five year and one year Work Plan engagement
Communications with the general public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Issue Press Releases when presenting to CVRD Board ✓ Regularly Updated Economic Profiles ✓ Regularly Updated Real Estate Database ✓ Make Annual Work Plan Publicly Available ✓ Make More Timely Information Publicly Available ✓ Engage the media and constructively respond to criticism ✓ Communicate Location-Specific Impacts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ CVRD to determine if required or if that is role of their communications department/regular course of business at CVRD. ✓ Regular updated profiles Addressed in contract ✓ Real estate database already maintained, missed by consultant in report. ✓ Addressed in Contract schedules and already available on CVEDS website. ✓ Addressed in contract with quarterly reporting (Schedule C) to CVRD Board. ✓ Media is invited to attend and participate in workshops, tours, meetings and events, as well as provided press releases, as appropriate. ✓ CVEDS is mandated regional function vs location-specific and also addressed by Work Plan engagement process.
Strategic planning process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ CVRD Board votes on CVEDS Strategic Plans and Annual Work Plan ✓ Future Strategic Plan Updates to involve a broader range of participants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Sections 23, 24 & 25 of new agreement ✓ New agreement Appendix C

DRAFT AGREEMENT – Comox Valley Economic Development

Measuring and reporting outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ CVEDS to explore methods of estimating the monetary benefit of its activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Property tax sustainability and expansion noted in contract Appendix B
Managing Ad Hoc initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ CVEDS should develop a protocol for handling ad hoc requests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Items outside Work Plan referred to appropriate body/government.
Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Rebuild relationships with complementary organizations ✓ Develop operating relationships with complementary organizations ✓ Coordinate a shared calendar of events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Partnerships and organizations worked with across all industry and business sectors posted in public annual report. ✓ Calendar of events maintained online and at Visitor Centre.
Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Convert Elected Officials from Directors to Liaisons ✓ Add the CAOs of the four governments to the CVEDS Board in an ex-officio capacity ✓ Appoint key partners to the CVEDS Board ✓ Change the timing of the Service Delivery Agreement ✓ Change the term of the Service Delivery Agreement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Completed By-law changes before CVEDS members for final ratification. <p>o/s Function (service) bylaw 345 and society constitution bylaw to be finalized</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Timing and term updated in new agreement
Visitor Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Offer a low-cost solution for small operators to rack their brochures at the Vancouver Island Visitor Centre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Completed in 2013 for 2014 advertising year
Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ CVEDS should hire one additional staff FTE ✓ CVRD and CVEDS should enter into a new Service Delivery Agreement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Addressed in CVRD staff report contract agreement and budget. ✓ New agreement to board on or before March 31, 2015.

THIS AGREEMENT MADE THIS _____ DAY OF _____, 20_____.

BETWEEN:

COMOX VALLEY REGIONAL DISTRICT

600 Comox Road
Courtenay, BC V9N 3P6

(the "CVRD")

AND:

COMOX VALLEY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY

(Inc. No. S23751)
#102-2435 Mansfield Drive
Courtenay, BC V9N 2M2

(the "Society")

WHEREAS:

- A. The CVRD is empowered by Supplementary Letters Patent No. 38 and by Bylaw No. 2395 being "Comox Valley Economic Development Commission Establishment Bylaw No 2395,2001", to establish, maintain, and operate an economic development commission on behalf of one or more participating member municipalities and electoral areas and may fix the terms and conditions under which the commission will operate.

NOW THEREFORE in consideration of the mutual promises and covenants herein contained and other good and valuable consideration, the receipt and sufficiency of which are hereby acknowledged by both parties, the CVRD and the Society covenant and agree as follows:

Provision of Services

1. The Society will provide economic development services (the Services) for the benefit of the residents of the Comox Valley in accordance with the Society's five-year Strategic Plan (Appendix B) which contains objectives, strategies and performance measures, and as manifested by the Society's Annual Work Plan (Schedule B) which identifies the tasks and goals from the Strategic Plan that are to be performed that year.
2. The Society shall provide the Services in accordance with the terms and conditions set out in this agreement.
3. The Society shall carry out the Services in and from land and premises that are zoned to permit the activities of the Society, and in accordance with any other applicable laws, regulations and bylaws ('enactments') and orders made under such enactments.

Fee for provision of services

- 4.a) Subject to deductions made under Section 30, the CVRD will pay to the Society the funding identified in Schedule A on the following basis:
 - i. January to June, paid no later than January 15 of each year
 - ii. July to December, paid no later than August 15 of each year

4. b) If one of the municipalities or electoral areas that is a participant in the Comox Valley economic development service through the CVRD withdraws from that Service, the CVRD shall provide 6 months' notice of withdrawal in writing to the Society. Following such notice, the parties shall, in good faith, renegotiate the amount of financial contribution payable by the CVRD to the Society under this section 4 of this Agreement, to reflect the proportion of the tax requisition that would be affected by the withdrawal of the participant. If the parties are unable to reach agreement on the amount of the reduction applicable to the payment, the matter shall be resolved by way of Dispute Resolution under section 38.
5. The Society shall be responsible for the payment of all expenses associated with the Service, other than the costs paid directly by the CVRD referred to in section 30.
6. In the event the Society fails to pay for any expenses associated with the Service, the CVRD shall deduct the corresponding amounts from the funds requisitioned by the CVRD for the Service, and may in its discretion pay such expenses directly.

Accounting Services, Audit and Records

7. The Society will provide the Services in a professional, timely and transparent way through the reporting provisions contained within this Agreement, as befits the provision of the Services to the CVRD in accordance with Schedule B and Appendix B.
8. The Society will not have any authority, actual or implied, to commit the CVRD to obligations outside this Agreement, without the prior written consent of the CVRD.
9. The Society will follow accounting principles in Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations ensuring that good financial practices, management, controls and procurement policies are in effect and will maintain at all times, accurate books, records and accounts for the Society, including all receipts and invoices supporting any expenditures, applied on a consistent basis from year to year and permit the CVRD to inspect the same at all reasonable times and to make copies thereof.
10. The Society shall present audited financial statements prepared by an independent accountant at the annual general meeting that include the statement of financial position, the statements of operations and changes in net assets and related schedules, and cash flows for the Service for the preceding fiscal period January 1 to December 31.
11. The Executive Director, or a designated employee responsible for preparing the financial statements, of the Society will meet annually with financial staff of the CVRD to discuss the audited financial statements. These meetings are intended to be for the exchange of information only.
12. The Society shall not make any changes to the Bylaws or membership of the Society that affect the membership in the Society or the election, appointment of persons to or on the Board of Directors of the Society or the powers or duties of the members or Directors of the Society without the CVRD receiving written notice of proposed changes.

Asset Management Plan

13. The Society shall provide an asset management plan for the Vancouver Island Visitor Information Centre as of December 31, 2015. Thereafter an updated asset management plan may be taken into consideration every five years. The CVRD may consider contributing to a reserve fund towards the replacement of the Vancouver Island Visitor Information Centre subject to funds being available.

Term of Agreement

14. This Agreement commences April 1, 2015 and expires on March 31, 2020, subject to earlier termination.
15. This Agreement may be renewed for an additional five (5) year term through the mutual consent of CVRD and the Society. If a party wishes to renew the Agreement, then it shall advise the other party in writing no later than June 1 of the year prior to the expiry of the Term. If the other party agrees to consider a renewal, it shall by September 1 of that year advise the other party and the parties shall then conduct negotiations in good faith toward securing such agreement between September 1 and November 30, unless another schedule for negotiations is otherwise agreed by the parties.

Early Termination

16. This Agreement is immediately terminated, if the Society:
 - a) voluntarily winds up its affairs or disbands;
 - b) becomes bankrupt;
 - c) fails to hold a general meeting for a period of 18 months; or
 - d) fails to maintain itself under the *Society Act* of the Province of British Columbia and any amendments thereto or regulations thereunder.
17. If the Society fails to comply with or is in breach of any of the terms and conditions of this Agreement, the CVRD may serve written notice on the Society requiring the Society to remedy the default within 30-days from receipt of such notice, and if the Society fails to cure the default or take such steps as may be reasonably taken to correct or remedy the default within such time period, the CVRD) may terminate this Agreement forthwith.
18. At any time during the Term, either party may terminate this Agreement on six months' notice to the other party, and upon the expiration of six months from the date of receipt of such notice, this Agreement shall be terminated.
19. The parties acknowledge that the constitution of the Society provides that in the event of a windup or dissolution of the Society, funds and assets of the Society remaining after the satisfaction of its debts and liabilities, shall be paid to the CVRD, the City of Courtenay, Town of Comox and the Village of Cumberland or their successors and any other corporate body incorporated under the *Local Government Act* of the Province of British Columbia and any amendments to it that participate in the funding of the Society, in proportion of the funding provided by each such regional district, local government or corporation during the existence of the Society.

Planning and Work Plan Approval

20. On or before January 1 of every year of the Agreement, the Society will submit to the CVRD board its Annual Work Plan (Schedule B) for the provision of Services for the following year and corresponding budget.
- 21.a) On or before April 1 of every year of the Agreement, the CVRD board will either approve the Annual Work Plan and inform the Society or have otherwise returned the Annual Work Plan to the Society with reasons why the Annual Work Plan is not approved;

- b) If the Society has not, within 90 days of receiving notice from the Regional District, amended the Annual Work Plan to respond to the matters in disagreement, either party may commence dispute resolution under Section 38;
- c) On or before March 31, 2016 the Society will complete in conjunction with local governments participating in the service, a comprehensive “Employment Lands” assessment. (Appendix D)
- d) On or before April 1, 2019, the Society will begin a process of stakeholder and public engagement for the purpose of developing its next five year Strategic Plan in accordance with Appendix C (Five Year Plan requirements)
- e) On or before October 31, 2019, the Society will submit to the CVRD board its five-year Strategic Plan for the provision of Services for the following five years commencing April 1, 2020.
- f) On or before April 1, 2020, the CVRD board will either approve the Strategic Plan and inform the Society or have otherwise returned the Strategic Plan to the Society with reasons why the Strategic Plan is not approved;
- g) If the Society has not, within 90 days of receiving notice from the Regional District, amended the Strategic Plan to respond to the matters in disagreement, either party may commence dispute resolution under Section 38.

Reporting

22. In every year of this agreement, the Society will:

- a) On or before July 31, provide to the CVRD a written annual report which shall contain information on the Society's performance outcomes relating to the Annual Work Plan, the year's operations, the status of any capital developments and the Five Year Economic Development Strategic Plan.

23. On a quarterly basis of this Agreement, the Society will:

- a) For each “member”, send a written status report summarizing the objectives, accomplishments and any changes to initiatives presented in Schedule C for inclusion in the formal agendas of the local governments participating in the service.
- b) work in partnership with each local government designated staff to support external communications on the report activities, and other economic development related items of importance to that local government such as new projects, economic data and research, streamlined process and items that support the ongoing mandate of the economic development service.

Coordination of Activities

24. The Executive Director of the Society will meet regularly and independently with each of the four local government chief administrative officers participating in the service upon their request. The purpose of the meetings will be to coordinate the roles, responsibilities and activities of the parties as they relate to this Agreement as per Appendix C, and specific economic development related applications and or projects that the local government is reviewing.

25. The Society shall maintain a 'living calendar of events' and provide a link to the calendar for the elected officials of the City of Courtenay, Town of Comox, Village of Cumberland and the Comox Valley Regional District Electoral Directors of Baynes Sound (Area A); Lazo North (Area B) and Puntledge/Black Creek (Area C) and the chief administrative officer's of each local government. The calendar shall include events and registration information such that members may consider in a timely manner whether they wish to attend an event.

Seeking Additional Funding Sources

26. The Society will diligently seek funds from sources other than the CVRD to help fund the Services. The Society may seek the CVRD's assistance to support applications to other grant programs and revenue sources and establish partnerships with local governments to explore revenue generating activities that support both parties.

Performance contract review

27. The CVRD shall, by December 31, 2019, conduct an independent contract performance review assessment on the performance of the Society's delivery of contracted services. The intent is to assess the level of success of meeting performance measures and delivery of economic development services on behalf of the Comox Valley local governments (Annual work plans (Schedule B) and Strategic Plan (Appendix B)).
28. Intentionally left blank.

Regional District Service

29. The CVRD retains the right to administer and manage the regional district's Comox Valley Economic Development service.
30. The CVRD may retain from the amount requisitioned for the Service, amounts for costs incurred by the CVRD in connection with the Service including an administration charge for support services, cost of liability insurance and cost of property insurance in accordance with the CVRD support services policy, studies, reserves and any other costs incurred by the CVRD in connection with or arising from the Service.

Insurance

31. The Society shall at its expense, throughout the term of the agreement, maintain and pay for a comprehensive general liability insurance policy or policies with a limit of not less than \$2,000,000 inclusive per occurrence for bodily injury and property damage.
32. The Society shall at its expense, throughout the term of the agreement, maintain and pay for property insurance.
33. The CVRD shall be added as an additional insured to that policy of insurance.
34. The Society shall furnish the CVRD with a certificate or certificates of insurance as evidence that such insurance is in force including evidence of any insurance renewal policy or policies. Every certificate, or certificates of insurance, shall include certification by the insurer that the certificate of insurance specifically conforms to all of the provisions required herein.
35. Maintenance of such insurance and the performance by the Society of their obligation under this clause shall not relieve the Society of liability under the indemnity provisions here and above set forth.

Indemnity

36. The Society shall indemnify, save harmless, release and forever discharge the CVRD, its elected officials and appointed officers and employees from and against any and all manner of actions, causes of actions, claims debts, suits, losses, liabilities, costs, demands and expenses whatsoever, whether known, in any way arising from, in connection with or attributable to the actions of the Society, its servants, agents, officers, employees, contractors or subcontractors in connection with this Agreement.

Employment Relationship

37. It is understood that this Agreement is strictly between the CVRD and the Society and in no way shall be interpreted as an employment relationship between the CVRD and the Society and their employees and/or its agents and/or their employees, and/or its contractors and/or their employees. Should any differences arise between the Society and any of its employees and/or its agents and/or their employees and/or their contractors and/or their employees, they shall be resolved directly between them and the Society in this connection.

Dispute Resolution

38. Where a matter relating to the Annual Work Plan or Strategic Plan is under dispute under Section 21 and the Parties cannot settle the dispute through negotiation, then the Parties must attempt in good faith to resolve the dispute through mediation before resorting to binding arbitration pursuant to the *Arbitration Act* (British Columbia).

39. If any dispute is referred to mediation or to an arbitrator appointed under the *Arbitration Act*, the costs of the arbitration shall be borne equally by the parties involved in the dispute. The Parties agree that in the event of arbitration, a single arbitrator shall be appointed in lieu of a panel.

General

40. This Agreement, and any rights or obligations hereunder, shall not be transferred or assigned by the Society without the prior written consent of the CVRD, and any attempt to do so without such consent will be of no force and effect.

41. The provisions herein contained constitute the entire Agreement between the parties and supersede all previous communications, representations and agreements, whether verbal or written, between the parties with respect to the subject matter hereof.

42. This Agreement shall enure to the benefit of and be binding upon the parties hereto and their successors and permitted assigns.

43. Each of the parties hereto hereby covenants and agrees to execute such further and other documents and instruments, and to do such further and other things as may be necessary to implement and carry out the intent of this Agreement.

44. This Agreement may not be modified or amended except by an instrument in writing signed by the parties hereto or by their successors or assigns.

45. Wherever the singular or masculine are used herein the same shall be deemed to include the plural or the feminine or the body politic or corporate where the context or the parties so requires.

46. The headings to the sections of this Agreement are inserted for convenience only and shall not affect the construction hereof.

47. Time is expressly declared and stipulated to be of the essence of this Agreement in respect of all payments to be made hereunder and all covenants and agreements to be performed and fulfilled.

- 48. Either party may, in writing, from time to time and at any time waive, in whole or in part, the benefit to it of any provision of this Agreement or any default by the other party, but any waiver on any occasion shall be deemed not to be a waiver of that provision thereafter or of any subsequent default, or a waiver of any other provision or default under this Agreement.
- 49. All notices, requests and demands required or permitted to be given hereunder shall be given in writing and may be delivered personally, or sent by electronic mail transmission to the parties at the addresses on the first page of this Agreement. All notices, requests and demands shall be deemed to have been received when by electronic mail, on transmission; when mailed, on the seventh calendar day after being mailed and when telegraphed or delivered, when actually received.

Entire Agreement

50. This document, including:

- Schedule A - Provision of Funding
- Schedule B – Annual Work Plan
- Schedule C – Activity Status Report
- Appendix A – CVEDS five year strategic plan
- Appendix B – Summary of economic development definition, role, activities, and reporting
- Appendix C - Five year economic development strategic planning process
- Appendix D – Employment Lands Strategy – Draft scope of work

The parties hereto have executed this Agreement as of the day and year first above written.

The terms of this Agreement are hereby agreed to, as at the date above:

**COMOX VALLEY
REGIONAL DISTRICT**

**COMOX VALLEY ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY**

Bruce Jolliffe
Chair

Signature and Title

James Warren
Corporate Legislative Officer

Signature and Title

SCHEDULE A

PROVISION OF FUNDING

1. Delivery of core economic development service requirements including management, administration, personnel and operating costs (excluding leased premises). Delivery of strategic goals, sector priorities and annual work plan objectives for the Comox Valley.
 - April 1, 2015, to March 31, 2016 \$412,400
 - April 1, 2016, to March 31, 2017 \$420,648
 - April 1, 2017, to March 31, 2018 \$429,061
 - April 1, 2018 to March 31, 2019 \$437,642
 - April 1, 2019 to March 31, 2020 \$446,394

2. Destination Marketing Activities:
 - April 1, 2015, to March 31, 2016 \$365,000
 - April 1, 2016, to March 31, 2017 \$372,300
 - April 1, 2017, to March 31, 2018 \$379,746
 - April 1, 2018 to March 31, 2019 \$387,341
 - April 1, 2019 to March 31, 2020 \$395,088

3. Delivery of visitor information services:
 - April 1, 2015, to March 31, 2016 \$328,000
 - April 1, 2016, to March 31, 2017 \$334,560
 - April 1, 2017, to March 31, 2018 \$341,251
 - April 1, 2018 to March 31, 2019 \$348,076
 - April 1, 2019 to March 31, 2020 \$355,038



Comox Valley Economic Development & Tourism Annual Work Plan - 2014



December, 2013

investcomoxvalley.com
discovercomoxvalley.com

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Executive Summary

The updated Comox Valley Regional Economic Development Strategic Plan was developed over the period from September 2012 to March 2013. It included extensive consultation with community groups, industry sector representatives, local governments and the CVEDS Board through workshops, focus groups, online surveys and a public open house.

Derived from that plan is the 2014 Comox Valley Economic Development and Tourism Annual Work Plan that outlines programs and actions. Utilizing the outcome-based approach, each program has a clearly identified goal that the program is intended to achieve. It also has a series of set concrete performance guidelines that will help to track progress and success in achieving the intended outcomes.

The following outlines the new activities within each program for 2014. The ongoing day-to-day activities of the office are not included, however, will be reported on quarterly in the Client and Projects File Summary provided to the Board of Directors and to the Comox Valley Regional District as part of CVEDS Fee for Service Agreement. Given the significance of focus and resources provided to the Destination Marketing and Visitor Services related programs, and the requirements of the Additional Hotel Room Tax agreement, a complete 2014 Comox Valley Destination Marketing Tactical Plan is included as an Appendix A, while only major, new highlights from the related tourism and destination marketing programs are included here.

Of the 19 programs within the Strategic Plan, 14 programs will have particular focus applied to them in the 2014 Work Plan. The activities fall within the three major focus areas; Business Retention and Enhancement, Investment Attraction and Promotion, and Economic Development Coordination, Facilitation and Communication.

Partnerships with local, regional, provincial and international government partners and ministries, private sector partnerships with industry and stakeholder sub-groups, businesses, associations, and K'omoks First Nation, form an imperative role in the success of these tactics and their ability to reach the intended outcomes.

2013 – 14 Comox Valley Economic Development Society Board of Directors

Whitehead	Ian	President
Hardy	Richard	Vice President
Rigsby	Justin	Secretary
Grant	Ken	Treasurer / Councilor, Town of Comox
Presley	Murray	Past President
Anglin	Bill	Councilor, City of Courtenay
Baird	Leslie	Mayor, Village of Cumberland
Cameron	Don	Director
Jordan	Haideh	Representing CVRD Area B
Chappell	Brad	Representing CVRD Area C
Turner	Bruce	Representing CVRD Area A
Knox	Melinda	K'omoks First Nation
Oddleifson	Jay	Director
Simkin	Deana	Director

2013 – 14 Committees; Roles and Membership:

Executive:

Whitehead	Ian	President
Hardy	Richard	Vice President
Rigsby	Justin	Secretary
Grant	Ken	Treasurer / Councilor, Town of Comox
Presley	Murray	Past President

Destination Marketing Advisory Committee (DMAC)

Role: The Destination Marketing Advisory Committee (DMAC) is committed to increasing year round, overnight stays from tourists and other segments of the traveling public to the Comox Valley.

Bill Anglin	Chair, CVEDS Appointed Representative
Jill Rushton	Old House Village & Spa
Grant Smith	Holiday Inn Express
Linda Bridgman	West Western PLUS Westerly Hotel
Gregor Mowatt	Crown Isle Resort & Golf Community
Faruk Goz	Courtenay Travelodge
Abel O'Brennan	Coastal Black Estate Winery
Brent Curtain	Mount Washington Alpine Resort
Carolyn Touhey	Two Eagles Lodge
Edd Moyes	Blackfin Pub
Susan Wood	MusicFest / Nautical Days

Additional Hotel Room Tax Committee (AHRT)

Role: The Additional Hotel Room Tax (AHRT) Committee is committed to Destination Marketing that is defined as developing marketing programs and initiatives that encourage tourists and other segments of the traveling public to prefer the Comox Valley for their overnight stays.

Best Western PLUS Westerly Hotel	Rick Browning
Courtenay Travelodge	Tansy Pauls
Crown Isle Resort & Golf Community	Ron Waugh
Old House Village & Spa	Roger Mckinnon
Holiday Inn Express	Grant Smith

Comox Valley Signage Committee

Role: The Comox Valley Signage Committee is a volunteer Committee who is undertaking four key initiatives in partnership with local communities, Ministry of Transportation, the Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training and local tourism and business sectors, to endeavour to improve the destination and highway signage for the region.

- Ken Grant, Chair
- John Ambler
- Ron Webber
- Lara Austin
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Strategic Framework; Core vs. Support Programs

There are three key Strategic Focus Areas that organize the plan: (i) Business Retention and Expansion, (ii) Investment Attraction and Promotion, and (iii) Economic Development Coordination, Facilitation and Communication. Each Focus Area contains multiple Programs, some defined as 'core services', which denotes CVEDS as the primary lead, while other Programs are defined as 'support services', recognizing the importance of the Program to the regional economy, with CVEDS undertaking a supportive role.

2014 Programs and Services

Focus Area #1 - Business Retention and Expansion

Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) is a core focus of many economic development organizations. Parallel to the clear benefit of supporting existing businesses is the notion that, for a given business, the costs of retaining an existing customer are far lower than the costs of acquiring a new customer. The share of employment growth from BRE is estimated in various regions from 60% to 90% (a recent estimates reported by the University of Minnesota is 86%). Programs within this focus area are directed toward supporting existing companies and industries and helping them expand. It also includes programs that provide the building blocks for economic growth, including workforce development.

Labour Force Readiness Program (Strategic Plan Reference 4.1)

Objective: Support training and labour force development for Valley employers.

Program & Tactics	Outcomes	Measurement Indicators
<p>1.1 Employers “Talk” PROGRAM PRIORITY LEVEL: LOW</p> <p>Develop and implement an employer’s survey of labour force needs relating to current and future employment trends, statistics and issues.</p> <p>Provide support to and participate in local job fairs (ie: 19 Wing).</p> <p>Communicate labour force research, new innovations and data to employers.</p> <p>Partner with local employers to retain and attract young professionals through training and development events.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership with NIC • Partnership with SD 71 • Development of research and data collection. • Assistance provided to local employers in recruitment and retention of workforce • Development of strategic partnerships with industry and employment support associations • Create awareness of professional opportunities for young professionals in the region 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # of Employers included in survey • #of partnerships created • New communications tool for program data launched

Food Security Enhancement Program (Strategic Plan Reference 4.2)		
Objective: Support the Development of local resource capacity needed to increase food production and growth in agrifood businesses.		
Program & Tactics	Outcomes	Measurement Guidelines
<p>1.2 CV Agrifood Monitor Pilot Project PROGRAM PRIORITY LEVEL: MEDIUM</p> <p>Update the agrifood investment and industry profile and lure piece.</p> <p>Develop a communications tool for improved flow of agriculture related issues, opportunities, regulatory changes and events.</p> <p>Complete 15 agrifood business visits to food production operators under the business visitation program providing specific assistance as needed.</p> <p>Develop agribusiness training opportunities and support the hosting of the 2015 Island Agricultural Show in the Comox Valley by submission of a hosting proposal to the Island Agriculture Show Board and participation in the 2014 IA Show.</p> <p>Partner with Farmers Institute and the agricultural sector on an agricultural education marketing and communications campaign by expanding the agrifoodcomoxvalley.com website to increase the public’s awareness and understanding of progressive farming practices and businesses through farm profiles, videos and online resources. This includes a social media campaign, and creating an ag resource area within the site.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtain and update data to improve agriculture business communication and marketing • Increased opportunity for agri-business expansions • Improved communication with industry operators • Improved awareness of progressive agriculture practices and businesses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # of agri-business visits • # of communications that receive significant confirmed reviews (email link click through, attendance at events, etc.) • 2015 Ag show is hosted in partnership with local and regional partners • Expanded agrifoodcomoxvalley.com website, resources and profiles • Increased social media awareness of agricultural activities

Tourism, Arts, Culture & Heritage Development (Strategic Plan Reference 4.3)		
Objective: Key new and existing destination level events are expanded to drive more out of area visitation and increase length of stay, and barriers are removed in attracting events to use the Comox Valley to as a regional host venue.		
Program & Tactics	Outcomes	Measurement Guidelines
<p>1.3 Sport and Event Attraction Fund PROGRAM PRIORITY LEVEL: HIGH</p> <p>Establish an ongoing Sport and Event Attraction Fund that supports local sport associations, events and groups to attract new and/or expand existing events that have the ability to bring overnight stays.</p> <p><i>1.3.1 Meeting & Conference Attraction</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand Meetings content on Discover Comox Valley • Purchase Knowland Data and Contacts – lead generation subscription • Track and Support leads to properties and partners <p><i>1.3.2 New product and tour development</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Itinerary development and packaging with bus tour operators; targeted to Vancouver Island and lower mainland based operators • Tour itineraries also provided via the VIVC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing and new events are applying for funds and demonstrating ability to drive increased overnight stays 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # of new or enhanced festivals and events funded • % increase in room revenues
<p>1.4 Event Facilitation and Expansion Support PROGRAM PRIORITY LEVEL: ONGOING</p> <p>Establish an Event Attraction and Facilitation Contract that supports new and expanded event development lead by Discover Comox Valley, including new event bid development and submissions, sponsorship framework development & sales.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Event contract established 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % increase in sponsorship revenues • # of new or expanded Discover Comox Valley lead events

<p>1.6 Online Event Booking System PROGRAM PRIORITY LEVEL: ONGOING</p> <p>Purchase online sales booking system software to ensure ease of booking event tickets and packages on discovercomoxvalley.com, complimenting current VIVC booking and sales systems.</p> <p>Using the Sport Tourism Workshop (2009) report, host meeting to update infrastructure shortfalls summary, to capture infrastructure barriers to event attraction for consideration for longer term planning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • System research completed, presented and actioned • Meeting allows for key issues and feedback to be documented with sport partners and stakeholders, and is provided to local governments as appropriate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # of products available for sale • # of tickets / package sold • Workshop held and summary prepared
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Business Visitation & Entrepreneurship Program (Strategic Plan Reference 4.4)		
Objective: Provide support and resources to business in order to facilitate the reduction in common challenges, issues and barriers to potential growth and expansion.		
Program & Tactics	Outcomes	Measurement Guidelines
<p>1.7 Business “Counts” PROGRAM PRIORITY LEVEL: MEDIUM</p> <p>Visit 20 Businesses / survey 200 companies annually, prioritizing companies in emerging sectors, high growth potential, industry sub-sectors and development.</p> <p>Use Business Counts data to improve and market the business retention and enhancement program.</p> <p>Coordinate response to businesses surveyed requiring follow up.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timely and up to date information on business issues, emerging trends and understanding of new opportunities • Growth in business activities as a result of responsive local BRE program • Stronger engagement with business leaders • Increase in # of businesses receiving assistance and information from Invest Comox Valley 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # of business visited/surveyed • # of businesses receiving follow up one-on-one assistance • Key information included on program invest website. • # of business updates and social media postings /counts • Media coverage of program • Increase in total annual business (class 6) property tax revenue is increasing from new investment.

Export Development Program (Strategic Plan Reference 4.5)		
Objective: Support existing Comox Valley companies in the successful export of goods and services		
Program & Tactics	Outcomes	Measurement Guidelines
<p>1.8 Export; “beyond borders” PROGRAM PRIORITY LEVEL: HIGH</p> <p>Coordinate the delivery of export-related workshops or seminars such as “export to markets” program.</p> <p>Facilitate information on regional, provincial and national level programs and services around exporting.</p> <p>Provide export related expertise & one-on-one support to up to 20 export related businesses.</p> <p>Support and facilitate 3 inbound buying and 2 external trade missions with provincial and national government partners.</p> <p>Provide support to local agrifood companies in their applications to the Island Agriculture Foundation for funding from the BC Agrifoods Export Program to increase export sales and expand international market access.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing # of companies indicating they are exporting beyond the local area. • Development of database of exporting companies maintained. • Provide new exporter business guidance. • BC Agrifoods Export Program application guidance provided to local agrifood exporters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # of exporters profiled in database • # of “beyond borders” communications to local companies • # trade initiatives, programs and delegations • # of companies exporting internationally • # of companies exporting out of province but within Canada • # of companies submitting applications for funding

Downtown, Waterfront & Local Area Enhancement (Strategic Plan Reference 4.6)		
Objective: Increased focus supports new initiatives that result in improved economic activity in the downtown areas including increase in core area population, business start-ups and revitalization initiatives.		
Program & Tactics	Outcomes	Measurement Guidelines
<p>1.9 Downtown Enhancement Support Program PROGRAM PRIORITY LEVEL: HIGH</p> <p>Implement a business resource and visitor information kiosk at 580 Duncan Ave, downtown Courtenay.</p> <p>Implement improved signage for 580 Duncan Ave building façade.</p> <p>Implement street lighting enhancement project in partnership with 6th Street partner businesses and the DCBIA.</p> <p>Conduct of a series of seminars and workshops, targeted separately to each of the two downtown BIAs and to Cumberland’s downtown businesses, as well as the business community at large; topics might include targeted marketing strategies, accounting, human resources and succession planning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional business resource support downtown Courtenay business community and greater connectivity from downtown to the services of the VIVC. • Signage improvements assist in awareness of CVEDS office and services. • Improved decorative lighting support increased visitation to the areas businesses and services. • 1 - 2 annual seminars are held that support needs of downtown businesses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # of businesses racking • Completion of sign design and installation • # of program business partners • # of seminars • # of businesses in attendance

<p>1.10 Investment Incentive Program PROGRAM PRIORITY LEVEL: HIGH</p> <p>Examine and facilitate a developer’s roundtable process (2013/2014) that allows for discussion and engagement of the development community to improve processes, information sharing and the potential for new incentive programs to be developed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased understanding of the opportunities for incentive based programs that may be suitable for driving investment change over the coming years. • Marketing and communications materials produced to support increased awareness of improved development processes or new incentive program structures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meetings held and feedback received from development community and communicated back to local government in a collaborative manner. • Specific suggestions provided on incentives that may, if supported by local government in some fashion, result in the potential for increased investment activity in specific areas or zones. • # of materials produced to market and communicate changes or new incentive programs.
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Focus Area #2 - Investment Attraction

The investment attraction and promotion programs all have an element of generating awareness about the Comox Valley outside the local area. This takes multiple forms, including the proactive attraction of investment in priority areas (agrifood, air services, health services, and sustainability-related) where there is believed to be a strong competitive advantage with significant potential benefits. This includes the attraction of new residents, who bring many benefits to the region as workers, entrepreneurs and consumers.

Destination marketing of the Comox Valley to visitors is also included (where there are also significant benefits and a strong product to sell), along with a program for the Vancouver Island Visitor Centre, which focuses on maximizing the value of those visitors by presenting all the possibilities of the region and providing on-site bookings. *See Appendix A for the complete 2014 Destination Marketing Tactical Plan.*

Agrifood Investment & Land Utilization Program (Strategic Plan Reference 5.1)

Objective: Encourage increased investment in local food and beverage production in the Comox Valley

Program & Tactics	Outcomes	Measurement Guidelines
<p>2.1 Land and Marine Based Investment Opportunities Program PROGRAM PRIORITY LEVEL: HIGH</p> <p>Specific land and marine based business investment opportunities (new or existing expansions) are catalogued into investor ready marketing profiles and the BC Business Opportunities database.</p> <p>Identify and attend 2 key international trade and investment specific shows while supporting 3-5 inbound delegations from target markets.</p> <p>Actively support industry or government-led efforts to identify and resolve areas of policy and regulation that may delay or inhibit new investment in the land or marine base and therefore increased food production opportunities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of land utilized for food production increases. • Revenue per hectare in ALR increases • New Shellfish tenures areas are increased where environmentally suitable to do so and new species are approved by appropriate regulatory agencies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # of investment profiles generated and loaded to BC opportunities. • # of shows attended with regional provincial and national partners. • # of inbound delegations supported

<p>2.2 Shellfish Aquaculture Hatchery Facility Planning Project PROGRAM PRIORITY LEVEL: HIGH</p> <p>Facilitate business planning and partnership development for the attraction of investment capital to support the startup of a shellfish private sector or private/public shellfish hatchery within the Valley.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding of the constraints, critical issues and opportunities relating to the future success and growth of the BC and Comox valley Shellfish Industry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preliminary Business Development Plan for the construction, operation and funding of a shellfish hatchery/nursery facility in the Comox Valley • Project design, cost estimates for construction are reported on for a potential shellfish hatchery.
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Destination Marketing (Strategic Plan Reference 5.2)		
Objective: Expanded and enhanced destination marketing initiatives result in increased visitation and overnight stays to the Comox Valley, as well as increased partnership within the industry; recognized as the premier, year round Island destination.		
Program & Tactics	Outcomes	Measurement Guidelines
<p>2.3 Destination Marketing Program PROGRAM PRIORITY LEVEL: ONGOING</p> <p>Evaluate and increase TV Campaign based destination marketing campaigns; Alberta and Island target markets.</p> <p>Support the activities of the Comox Valley Destination Marketing Advisory Committee and its related subcommittees to ensure broad engagement of the tourism industry and awareness of DMAC’s activities.</p> <p><i>2.3.1 Online Marketing</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance profiles on: You Tube, TripAdvisor and Foursquare Establish monthly SEO enhancement activities Maintain monthly consumer Discover Comox Valley e-newsletter Establish Annual Photo Contest to increase engagement and photo resources <p><i>2.3.2 Targeted advertising in partnership with TVI and Destination BC</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Book the following stand-alone Discover Comox Valley Destination ads for 2014: <p>Tourism Vancouver Island</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wine & Culinary Guide; focus on culinary event line up Travel Planning Map; focus the VIVC Times Colonist ‘Discover Fall and Spring; destination focus, with partner buy in Brochure Distribution Program; Comox Valley Vacation Guide distribution Monthly Specials x 12 Island Moments x 6 2015 TVI Vacation Guide and Outdoor Adventure Guide 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expanded TV Campaign results in increased awareness of regions attractions and assets DMAC Committees meeting as needed, outreaching to larger industry to create improved awareness about its activities. Improved online results and awareness of the Comox Valley as a destination The Comox Valley as a destination is recognized with progressive branded ads, structured to allow for partner buy in where appropriate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # of visits website, package click throughs to properties, contest entries, requests for Visitors’ Guide # of meetings attended and Board/Committees with DCV representation # of updates # of SEO updates # of consumer e-news # of contests

<p>2.3.3 TV Campaigns Create 1- 2 stand-alone DCV TV campaigns, expanded with stakeholder partnerships, supported by targeted online tactics in Alberta and Vancouver Island.</p> <p>2.3.4 Brand Enhancement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using the creative themes developed for 2014 TVI Vacation and Outdoor Guide, prepare Request for Proposals from brand strategy/design firms. • Assign the 2014 advertising requirements to successful firm/s, building upon the creative established as per above. <p>2.3.5 Advertising Tracking & Research</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to implement and analyze tracking methods and results. • Provide quarterly tracking report of AHRT collections to AHRT properties. <p>2.3.6 Consumer and Trade Show Attendance 2014 Shows include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ RendezVous Canada, May (applications due November) ○ Canada’s West Marketplace, November (application is June) ○ WestJet Blitz – Fort McMurray and/or expanding regional carrier destinations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce show collateral including new booth and retractable banners, giveaways 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TV campaigns are leveraged to gain maximum targeted exposure, ideally leveraging other existing marketing • Creative themes extended into key marketing medium allow for reinforced messaging • Tracking allows for effective analysis of campaign results to both AHRT revenues and marketing • Product and show materials produced, confirmed attendance at 2014 or 2015 shows completed, and lead follow-up and sales ongoing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # of partners • # of reach • # increase in website visits • # of reports provided • # of shows attended and leads generated • # of new materials produced
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Sustainability Related Business Opportunities (Strategic Plan Reference 5.3)		
Objective: Encourage the development of green or sustainable energy and technology investments including green construction and technical services.		
Program & Tactics	Outcomes	Measurement Guidelines
<p>2.4 Waste Energy and Sustainable Technologies investment readiness: <i>Upon approval of federal matching funded dollar/grants:</i> PROGRAM PRIORITY LEVEL: LOW</p> <p>Establish a partnership with local governments to evaluate the specific potential for waste energy or other targeted sustainable technology investment. (ie: marine based, tidal, etc.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vacant lands are identified for suitable investment for waste energy or sustainable technology – related investment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 partnerships established • 3 potential sites and specific potential target industries identified

Resident & Entrepreneur Relocation (Strategic Plan Reference 5.5)		
Objective: Facilitate the attraction of new residents, entrepreneurs, and international students to the Comox Valley		
Program & Tactics	Outcomes	Measurement Guidelines
<p>2.5 Western Canada “lifestyle and relocation campaign” PROGRAM PRIORITY LEVEL: MEDIUM</p> <p>Utilizing the advantages of the WestJet service via Calgary and leveraging on the new “feeder routes” from Western Canada into Calgary from points (ie: Winnipeg, Brandon, Saskatoon, Regina, Fort McMurray, and Edmonton) support increased promotion, not only by the community, but local employers and businesses in Western Canada via targeted tradeshow, events and campaigns.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased awareness of housing options to families and young professionals looking to locate on Vancouver Island Increased awareness of the Comox Valley in Western Canada among young families, new skilled young professionals and entrepreneurs are driving population growth in the Valley Increase in families who choose to locate to the region 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # targeted campaigns # of families who locate to the region Specific web traffic from western Canadian region.
<p>2.6 New Immigrant, Skilled Worker & Entrepreneurial Recruitment opportunities PROGRAM PRIORITY LEVEL: MEDIUM</p> <p>Investment opportunities are profiled for new immigrant investor opportunities in the Comox Valley.</p> <p>Market the Valley in conjunction with the Provincial government and other regional and local partners (North Island College) at specific skilled worker, and entrepreneurial and/ or international student tradeshow and events.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Comox Valley receives increased awareness in key foreign target markets (NIC and international student markets; Korea, Taiwan, and Europe) Develop and maintain database of investment opportunities for PNP and other provincial programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # of foreign entrepreneurs who locate to the region Census data on migration in key target groups such as new immigrant’s skilled professionals increases as a percentage of population growth

Visitor Services Opportunities (Strategic Plan Reference 5.7)		
Objective: Increase the awareness of the Vancouver Island Visitor Centre programs and services resulting in increases business engagement, visitation and product sales.		
Program & Tactics	Outcomes	Measurement Guidelines
<p>2.7 Visitor Services Opportunities Program PROGRAM PRIORITY LEVEL: ONGOING</p> <p>Develop and implement marketing awareness campaign in BC and western provinces to drive increased usage of the VIVC services.</p> <p>Support the activities of the Comox Valley Signage Gateway Project, in particular in the launch and implementation of a fundraising campaign and design contest, to ensure local awareness and engagement as it relates to improving visitor experiences in the Comox Valley.</p> <p><i>2.7.1 Visitor Survey's and Tracking</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review questionnaires from Value of Visitor Study to determine most relevant questions. • Contact Destination BC to obtain advice on questionnaire design and sampling methodology. • Determine whether Destination BC can assist in consolidating collected information. • Implement surveys through the new Vancouver Island Visitor Centre and key attractions. • Consolidate and analyze data as part of the annual tourism planning process. <p><i>2.7.2 Comox Valley Visitor Services Opportunities Program</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch 2013-2014 Comox Valley Visitor Services Program Sept 11 at Comox Valley Tourism Industry Forum. • Create marketing materials (both online and print) that promote the Vancouver Island Visitor Centre and the bookable products. • Launch the 2014 Comox Valley Vacation Guide in the spring; consider adding a Top 10 Things to do, similar to the DCV App. • Ensure VIVC marketing systems including racks, screens, poster housing, banner station, resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VIVC sees increased visitation to the centre and sales • Sign concept contest and fundraising campaign launched and maintained • Data supports development of destination marketing planning for 2015 and resource information for tourism industry sector in general • Program allows for cohesive mechanism for tourism industry businesses to engage in the Vancouver Island Visitor Centre services, and create flagship website and Vacation Guide as tools for the VIVC and industry to service visitors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % increase in VIVC sales • % increase in room revenue • # of inquiries to the VIVC • # of entries into contest • Amount of funds raised • # of campaign partners • # of survey's received • Report produced, analysed and circulated • # of businesses engaged • Sales targets met • # of online and print ads completed

<p>and sales systems coincide to support new and expanded festival and event tactics.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Utilize new images from photo contest and industry invite to update Touch Table and exhibits as required.• Consider 2015 Comox Valley Vacation Guide in relation to print guides effectiveness and competing print guides.• Explore additional promotional product such as an internal Comox Valley television channel		
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**Focus Area #3 - Economic Development Coordination,
Facilitation and Communication**

CVEDS is regularly engaged in partnerships with other organizations in the Comox Valley in order to successfully implement most of the programs in the Strategic Plan. Communicating the Society’s activities and successes is an important activity both to keep partners and stakeholders informed, but also to raise the profile of economic development opportunities in the region. There are also programs under this focus area relating to specific partnerships (K’ómok First Nation, 19 Wing Comox, regional partners across Vancouver Island) as well as a program involving partnering with land owners, possible developers and local governments to facilitate land development.

K’omok First Nation Liaison Program (Strategic Plan Reference 6.1)

Objective: Support Key Economic Partners such as K’omoks First Nation and local landowners in developing new economic opportunities for investment and expansion.

Program & Tactics	Outcomes	Measurement Guidelines
<p>3.1 First Nations Economic Opportunities Program PROGRAM PRIORITY LEVEL: ONGOING</p> <p>Explore the potential of partnering and supporting First Nations on specific development opportunities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The growth of K’omoks First Nation as a leading economic development driver in the Comox Valley in areas of land development, tourism, shellfish aquaculture and seafood processing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrated support of KFN development opportunities

Communications and Media Relations (Strategic Plan Reference 6.2)

Objective: Investors, visitors and potential resident migrants are aware of the Comox Valley as a leading location for livability, relocation and business expansion. CVEDS Stakeholders are aware of the organizations mandate, ongoing activities and areas in which CVEDS can assist.

Program & Tactics	Outcomes	Measurement Guidelines
<p>3.2 External and Internal Communications and Media Outreach Program PROGRAM PRIORITY LEVEL: HIGH</p> <p>Drives increased awareness around regional and municipal business and investment announcements, opportunities and updates, to potential migrant and investors around strategic areas and opportunities.</p> <p>Drives improved awareness around CVEDS programs, initiatives and services.</p> <p>Includes monthly press releases, online communications, and media outreach and hosting activities. Also includes production of communication tool including online backgrounders and fact sheets</p> <p>Emphasis is to continue to present open, two way communications with all major stakeholders to the CVEDS function and activities.</p> <p><i>3.2.1 Tourism Media and Communications</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Release RFP to contract a media relations professional with tourism experience to implement media relations activities for 2015; consider increasing spend on annual contract. • Track monthly results and values. • Establish a list of targeted media outlets, editors and freelance writers. • Determine whether prepared stories, press releases, familiarization tours, or other methods of achieving editorial coverage are appropriate for each. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased local and regional stakeholder awareness of CVEDS activities, programs and successes • Increased awareness of key regional economic development, business and investment announcements, opportunities and initiatives • Online materials that communicate the opportunities and announcements • Increased earned media exposure generates increased awareness of the regions tourism and investment opportunities, complimenting the marketing efforts of the region 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Web and social media counts • Volume of media coverage • # of media visits • % of newsletter distribution growth • # of press releases • # of survey's and responses • # of distributed materials • # of leads generated • Web and social media counts • Volume of media coverage • # of media visits

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Update and maintain media archives online.• When newsworthy events occur, prepare press releases and pitch to appropriate media.• Ensure TVI, Destination BC and CTC have up to date, media-ready content on the Comox Valley.• Attend GoMedia, Canada Media Marketplace		
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Land & Development Impact Analysis (Strategic Plan Reference 6.3)		
Objective: The Economic value and impact of key lands and developments are promoted.		
Program & Tactics	Outcomes	Measurement Guidelines
<p>3.3 Land and Economic Impact Analysis Model PROGRAM PRIORITY LEVEL: HIGH</p> <p>Encourage and facilitate the discussion of financial and economic impacts of developments via the referral process of local governments</p> <p>Respond to DP and Rezoning referrals in a transparent and effective manner.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased awareness of the economics of developments and investment activities in the Valley occurs at both local government Board and Council levels in a public and transparent way. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of economic impact model that calculates at a minimum construction impacts; fees and taxation revenues; local government costs for specific developments # of referrals responded to
<p>3.4 Industrial and Commercial Lands Development Strategy PROGRAM PRIORITY LEVEL: LOW</p> <p>Produce a commercial and industrial lands strategy for the Comox Valley</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analysis and strategies will be developed to address future growth constraints including employment, technological, and land supply for industrial and commercial lands Specific strategies are developed for target areas including the Bevan Road Industrial Zone and the Airport Lands 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An Industrial and Commercial Lands Development Strategy provides key strategies to impact the Comox Valley's ability to attract investment and business # of sub-regional target area strategies developed

Economic Profile and Information Program (Strategic Plan Reference 6.4)		
Objective: Economic information is readily available and utilized in online and other media for CVEDS investment, business start-ups and relocation clients, and ongoing business and economic development partnerships are enhanced with regional provincial national and international delivery partners.		
Program & Tactics	Outcomes	Measurement Guidelines
<p>3.5 Online Resources Maintenance Program PROGRAM PRIORITY LEVEL: ONGOING</p> <p>Implement quarterly sweep and updates to resources sections of Invest and Discover websites to ensure timely, relevant and updated content and resources are provided to stakeholders, businesses, investors and relocation clients</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updated and relevant content posted and reviewed in a timely and consistent way 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # of quarterly reviews # of documents and links updated

2014 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES UPDATE
COMOX VALLEY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM

Focus Area	5 Year Plan Reference (19)	Program Name (22)	Priority	Tactic (106)	Task	Status / Outcome	Completion
Business Retention and Enhancement	4.1 Labour Force Readiness	1.1 Employers Talk	Low	Job Fair Support / Attendance	Attend North Island College career / job fair and provide awareness of opportunities and research for employment.	Event to be scheduled.	Pending
				Labour Force Survey	Survey research, design and launch to 200 Comox Valley businesses to determine if the Comox Valley's skilled and unskilled labour will meet the needs of growing industries.	Completed survey design and partnership. Survey launched, currently collecting responses.	In Progress
				Partner with local employers to retain and attract young professionals.	Partner and provide assistance to employers through events and workshops such as the Global Strategies Workshop, and BIA professional development, on strategies for attracting and retaining labour.	Completed 2 workshops in June 2014, 3 in October, and 1 in Novemeber. Planned Good Agricultural Practices workshop in Feb 2015.	Ongoing
				Communicate labour force research, new innovations and data to employers	Update Invest website with current labour force research from BC Stats and Statistics Canada and communicate research to employers.	Completed a website update of labour force development resources for employers as well as updated labour force demographics that are featured on the invest website statistics and reports page.	Completed
	4.2 Food Security Enhancement	1.2 CV Agrifood Monitor Pilot	Medium	Agriculture Education Campaign	Develop an agriculture education campaign in partnership with the Farmers Institute to showcase innovative farming practises and the range of producers located in the Comox Valley.	FI website framework being finalized, photos and videos completed, targetted release for February.	In Progress
			Agrifood Investment Profiles	Update the agrifood investment profiles using current agri-investment opportunities and 2011 Census of Agriculture Data to attract investment and expansion into the local agriculture industry.	Agrifood investment research, three profiles and a sector profile completed. Agriinvestmment redevelopment website complete. Project submitted to ICCI Grant officers.	Completed	
			Communications Tool	Develop a communications tool for the local agriculture industry so as to be able to provide timely communications relating to business resources and opportunities for development.	All current agriculture contacts (Farm Market, Growers Guide, Farmers Institute) have been updated and inputted into CVEDS constant contact system which allows for seamless contact management and communication to contacts using this online tool. e-newsletters have been distributed with resources, links and industry event notices.	Completed	
			Business Visits	Complete 15 agrifood business visits to local producers in order to understand and identify opportunities for growth and development.	16 farm visits and follow up activities related to specific business issues have occurred to date.	Completed	

2014 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES UPDATE
COMOX VALLEY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM

Focus Area	5 Year Plan Reference (19)	Program Name (22)	Priority	Tactic (106)	Task	Status / Outcome	Completion
				Training Opportunities	Host agribusiness training opportunities in partnership with local agriculture organizations to encourage and increase the opportunity of agri-business start-up and expansion.	BC Small Scale Food Processors workshop hosted in November. Also, partnered again with BC SSFPA on 2 more workshops during January 2015. Good Agricultural Practices workshop scheduled for Feb 12 with BC Food Safety & Inspection Branch. Wide array of conference sessions at 2015 Islands Agriculture Show Feb. 13-14.	Completed
				2015 IAS Submission	Submit proposal to host the 2015 IAS in partnership with local agriculture organizations which includes an agriculture conference for producers as well as the second largest agriculture tradeshow in BC.	Proposal to host the 2015 IAS was successful. The IAS will be hosted Feb 13-14, 2015 at the Florence Filberg Center and Native Sons Hall in Courtenay.	Completed
4.3 Tourism, Arts, Culture and Heritage Development		1.3.2 New Product & Tour Development	High	New Product and Tour Development	Creation of itinerary development and packaging with bus tour operators on Vancouver Island and lower mainland, and provision of itineraries to the VIVC.	Participated in Tour Operator event in partnership with TVI. Follow-up directly with operator leads in provision of itineraries and fam tour options. 6 varied itineraries in development to provide as examples; for completion this October. Decision made to attend MTS in April 2015 for development of ski tour sector.	Ongoing
		1.5 Existing and New Discover Comox Valley Lead Destination Event Support	Ongoing	Existing and New Discover Comox Valley Destination Event Support & Development	Expand existing events via product development and marketing to establish annual marquee destination level events.	Product expansion, sponsorship & partnership development and campaign marketing occurred for WinterBites, Dine Around, BC Shellfish & Seafood Festival, Farm Cycle Tour, Pacific Toast and Pacific Toast Expo. Toast ticket sales and Expo registration underway. WinterJam 100 launch mid October, Dine Around expansion determined in December	Ongoing
		1.5.1 Festival and Event Tracking	Ongoing	Tracking Festival and Event Results	Review stats from online, ticket sales, social media, and room bookings and compare to previous years.	All DCV lead events stats reviewed, reports produced that capture marketing and overnight stay impact. This coupled with AHRT reporting and Visitor Centre tracking provides high level analysis of key event impacts. Addition of VIVC hotel booking for AHRT-funded events to measure overnight stays	Ongoing
		1.3.1 Expand Meeting & Conference Attraction	High	Meetings and Conference Attraction	Expand meeting & conference content on website, purchase conference generation subscription, support meeting leads to properties and key partners.	Researched options with lead generation firms, which were very expensive. Enhancement of meeting information to be updated on current site utilizing data collected via the CV Vacation Guide, with links to major properties and key regional hosting venues.	Completed

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Focus Area	5 Year Plan Reference (19)	Program Name (22)	Priority	Tactic (106)	Task	Status / Outcome	Completion
		1.3 Sport and Event Attraction Fund	High	Sport and Event Attraction Fund	Support local sport association, events and groups to attract new and/or expanding existing events that have the ability to bring overnight stays.	Grant application framework researched and completed, DMAC sub-Committee established to evaluate submissions. Sport, culture groups and association database expanded to communicate program. 3 events provided grants in Phase 1 intake. Phase 2 intake; 11 applications received approval for funding in December for events in 2015.	Completed
		1.4 Event Facilitation and Expansion Support	Ongoing	Event Attraction and Facilitation Contract	Development, release and evaluation of RFP responses for Event Attraction and Facilitation contract that supports expansion of existing or attraction of new events.	Contracts secured for sponsorship and event development for WinterBites, BC Shellfish & Seafood Festival, and Toast Expo. Ongoing event development and sponsorship contract established for 2015.	Completed
		1.6 Online Event Booking System	Ongoing	Purchase on-line ticket system	Purchase online sales booking system software to ensure ease of booking event tickets and packages on discovercomoxvalley.com.	Researched 2 companies and other DMO best practices. Evaluated that they are too large for the CV presently, while securing a simpler system for event tickets sales that was integrated into campaigns for WinterBites, BC Shellfish and Seafood Festival and Pacific Toast events.	Completed
4.4 Business Visitation and Entrepreneurship		1.7 Business "Counts"	Medium	Survey Businesses	Survey research, design and launch to 200 Comox Valley businesses.	Completed survey design and partnership with the Comox Valley Chamber of Commerce and MNP. Survey launched by joint media release with survey partners as well as direct by CVEDS through e-news blast and industry groups. CVEDS, the CV Chamber of Commerce, and MNP also partnered on a January 2015 event focused on discussing survey results and trends. CVEDS continues to collect survey responses.	In Progress
				Communicate the Business Counts Program Services	Include key program information on Invest Website and communications (e-news, social media) to local business.	Developed a Business Counts e-newsletter template and have distributed e-newsletters for small business workshops under this brand online and via social media. Marketed 'Small Business Counts' Survey to business community. Business Counts pull up banner purchased.	Ongoing

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Focus Area	5 Year Plan Reference (19)	Program Name (22)	Priority	Tactic (106)	Task	Status / Outcome	Completion
				Provide business assistance to entrepreneurs and local businesses	Provide business assistance by meeting, email, and phone to discuss business start-up, government program, and demographic information of concern to local businesses and entrepreneurs.	Continue to respond to local business requests and provide related follow up information to assist entrepreneurs and existing business achieve their business plans. Partnered with the Innovation Island Technology Association to provide support in the delivery of events and seminars targeted towards early-stage entrepreneurs and supporting the development of early stage tech and innovation based entrepreneurs within the community. Jan 23 Emerging Technologies Panel Discussion was the first session hosted as part of this new partnership.	Ongoing
4.5 Export Development	1.8 Export; "beyond borders"		High	Deliver Export-related workshops to encourage and facilitate export development opportunities	Provide export professional development opportunities for export ready and existing exporters looking to expand and access new markets.	Partnered with the BC Governments Ministry of International Trade to host a Global Growth Strategies workshop which focused on strategies for expanding sales and exports. Workshop summary and presentations are posted online at www.investcomoxvalley.com . Also, coordinated an MLA Caucus event in partnership with local aquaculture exporters and the BC Shellfish Growers Association to highlight and discuss opportunities for industry expansion.	Completed
				Facilitate information on export programs and services	Provide exporters with specific government and industry program support information on export related issues and opportunities.	Provided agriculture export ready companies with communication on international trade show and market exploration events, available support funding, as well as arranged for site visits from the senior provincial agri-foods export manager.	Completed
				Provide export support	Provide direct one-on-one support to export related businesses in order to identify areas and markets for expansion and to communicate available support resources.	As part of the Global Strategies Workshop, B2B and B2G meetings were arranged with local exporters and export professionals in order to provide related expertise and one-on-one support. CVEDS Small Business Counts Survey also focusses on identifying local exporters and potential markets for expansion.	Completed
				Buyers / Trade Missions	Attract, coordinate and support investment delegations to the Comox Valley.	Hosted a Chinese investors group and toured them to available accommodation, retail, and agriculture related opportunities.	Completed
				BC Agrifood Export program support	Provide support to local agrifood companies in their applications for funding to the BC Agrifood Export program.	Offered support to local agrifood companies and provided follow up assistance to 2 local companies that expressed interest in submitting applications to the Agrifood Export Program.	Completed

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Focus Area	5 Year Plan Reference (19)	Program Name (22)	Priority	Tactic (106)	Task	Status / Outcome	Completion
	4.6 Downtown, Waterfront & Local Area Enhancement	1.9 Downtown Enhancement Support	High	Improve Street Lighting for 6th Street	In partnership with the DCBIA and 6th Street businesses, improve decorative lighting to increase visitation to area businesses.	Letters of support received from several businesses. Request to the DCBIA for support submitted.	Pending
				Improve Signage for 580 Duncan Avenue	Provide input into the design and installation of new signage to support increased awareness of CVEDS office and services.	Meetings held with City of Courtenay and CVAG to finalize and prioritize sign ideas. Final sign design and location to be completed and implemented late Winter.	In Progress
		1.10 Investment Incentive	High	Developers Round Table process facilitated to input into incentive programs	Facilitate developer round table meetings to provide input into the Town of Comox incentive program	Hosted two developer round table meetings, researched and summarized best practices in incentive programs, provided input into Town Staff reports to council. Press release on program required.	In Progress
		1.9 Downtown Enhancement Support		Business and Visitor Info Kiosk in 580 Duncan Ave	Design and install kiosk to provide additional business resource/information support for downtown businesses and visitor information, with connectivity to the services of VIVC.	Brochure rack installed, TV pending install with connection to the VIVC UCView information system. Direct phone line between the kiosk and VIVC being considered.	Completed
				Workshop Series with the two BIAs	Develop a workshop to support the professional development activities of the BIA's.	Coordinated a professional development session with the Comox BIA which focused on online marketing strategies and tax tips for retailers.	Completed
Investment Attraction	5.1 Agrifood Investment & Land Utilization	2.2 Shellfish Aquaculture Hatchery Facility Planning Project	High	Facilitate Business Plan development for a Shellfish Hatchery	Research and establish partnerships with public and private aquaculture organizations to develop a preliminary business plan for the operation and funding of a shellfish hatchery in the Comox Valley.	NA	Pending
		2.1 Land and Marine Based Investment Opportunities	High	Creation of investment marketing profiles for cataloguing into opportunities database	Secure and report on ICCI funding outputs for Agrifood Investment Attraction program components.	Agrifood sector research and three investment profiles completed for Aquaculture, Speciality Meat Production and High Value Crop Production. Website updated to profiles agrifood investment success stories and to present investment opportunities in ag sector. For launch in February.	In Progress
				Attendance at international trade shows and support for inbound buyers missions	1. Confirm targeted shows, Provincial engagement and industry participation. 2. research potential partnerships and opportunities for inbound buyers missions.	Attendance and representation at 2 shows in partnership with Provincial and Federal government Ministries : 1) Boston International Seafood show and expo 2) Natural Products Expo - West Inbound trade delegation support and coordination provided in seafood sector during BC Shellfish Sector.	In Progress

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Focus Area	5 Year Plan Reference (19)	Program Name (22)	Priority	Tactic (106)	Task	Status / Outcome	Completion
				Support opportunities for identification and resolution of policy and regulation impeding land and marine investment.	Establish key policy reform requirements in partnership with industry (aquaculture) and action steps for communicating with senior levels of government the need for prioritization of a review process.	Partnership established with BC Shellfish Growers Association to co-host Provincial level policy review and advocacy session for MLA's completed. Meetings coordinated with Provincial Ministry staff to convene industry round table with 35 industry representatives attending with Minister of international Trade Tersea Wat. Coordination of industry submissions to senior levels of government on key regulatory reforms completed.	Completed
5.2 Destination Marketing		2.3.5 Advertising Tracking & Research	Ongoing	Advertising Tracking and AHRT Reporting	Evaluate statistical reports from website, on-line ads, social media continue. Established reporting mechanism for AHRT and delivered report to properties	Ongoing evaluation of all online activities and campaign reports. Quarterly AHRT reporting being provided to AHRT properties to provide benchmark of revenue changes occurring in the marketplace.	Ongoing
		2.3.6 Consumer & Trade Show Attendance	Ongoing	Attend Travel Trade Shows	Attend 3 trade shows, and prepare collateral material, new booth and retractable banners	DMO's are not permitted to attend Rendez-Vous or Canada's West Marketplace. Attended TVI tour operator show and outreached to tour operators. Event based display materials produced for BC Shellfish and Seafood Festival. For the WestJet Blitz see section 2.5	Ongoing
		2.3.1 Online Marketing	Ongoing	Improve Online Destination Marketing	Enhance You Tube, Trip Advisor, establish monthly SEO, monthly consumer e-newsletter (promos), and establish photo contest.	Website updated and enhanced based on new Visitors Guide content. Expanded consumer contact database to support weekly consumer promos distribution. Photos requested in industry news and direct request to partners.	Completed
		2.3.2 Targeted advertising in partnership with TVI and Destination BC	Ongoing	Stand Alone Discover CV ads in TVI & Destination BC publications	Determine ads and vehicles to partner in, secure opportunities for additional partner buy-in, and track results.	Discover CV ads included in TVI: Wine & Culinary Guide, Travel Planning Guide, Times Colonist Discover Fall, Monthly Specials, Island Moments, Vacation Guide, Outdoor Guide.	Completed
		2.3.3 TV Campaigns	Ongoing	Partnered TV Campaigns for Alberta and Vancouver Island	Partner with TVI and local stakeholder to participate in Go Vancouver Island TV, targeted to Alberta market. Two Global TV ad campaigns also undertaken to support key event visits and raise awareness about the destination.	Partnered with the Comox Valley Airport on Go Vancouver Island. Global TV campaigns and contests targeted to VI an the lower mainland to drive attendance to WinterBites and BC Shellfish and Seafood Festival.	Completed
		2.3.4 Brand Enhancement	Ongoing	Establish Creative Themes for Discover Comox Valley Brand	Work with firm to design ads to support creative themes & branding for destination advertising.	Branding integrated into key destination ads. RFP for media and ad design being developed for 2015 contract.	Completed
		5.3 Sustainability Related Business Opportunities		2.4 Waste Energy & Sustainable Technologies	Low	Evaluate Potential for Waste Energy or other sustainable technology investment	Research and evaluate with local government and industry partners the available and suitable lands for sustainable technology investment.

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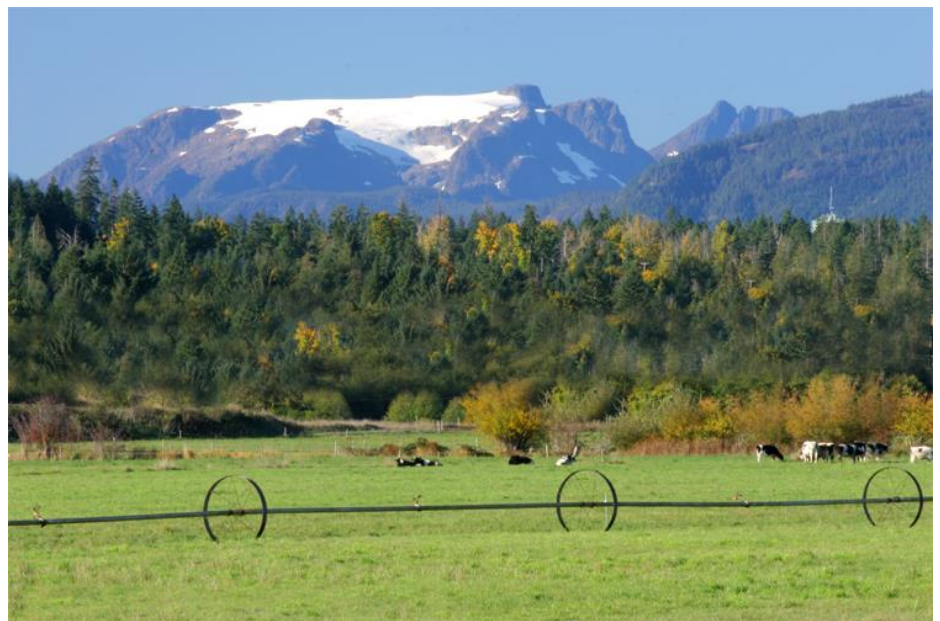
Focus Area	5 Year Plan Reference (19)	Program Name (22)	Priority	Tactic (106)	Task	Status / Outcome	Completion
	5.5 Resident & Entrepreneur Relocation	2.5 Western Canada "lifestyle & relocation campaign"	Medium	Create Western Canadian Lifestyle and Relocation Campaign	Develop and implement a multimedia campaign to drive increased awareness and interest in the Comox Valley from targeted Alberta segments, in partnership with key business sectors including tourism, developers, employers and the Airport.	Preliminary campaign budget, marketing medium and campaign flat sheet prepared and circulated for stakeholder input. Campaign pending approvals and commitment of key partners for spring 2015 implementation.	In Progress
		2.6 New Immigrant, Skilled Worker & Entrepreneurial Recruitment opportunities	Medium	Investment Opportunities Profiled	Provincial nominee program qualifying opportunities are loaded to the provincial Opportunities BC Database System.	PNP opportunities have been loaded and maintained on a monthly basis in the provincial Opportunities BC System.	Ongoing
5.7 Visitor Services Opportunities		2.7 Visitor Services Opportunities	Ongoing	VIVC Marketing Awareness Campaign	Develop and implement campaign, targeted to BC and Western provinces, to drive increased usage of the VIVC services.	The VIVC integrated as main call to action in all major event based campaign marketing and communications tactics, some targeted to Alberta. Due to budgets, a stand alone VIVC campaign was not developed, although some select ads were taken with a focus on the VIVC services.	Ongoing
		2.7 Visitor Services Opportunities	Ongoing	Comox Valley Welcome Sign Project	Support the activities of the Committee and project by implementing launch of a fundraising campaign, design contest to support increased funding and awareness of project.	Fundraising campaign ongoing and design contest completed. Over \$15,000 cash and significant in-kind support confirmed. Sign location approved in principal by MOT. Final sign design and final budget being completed.	In Progress
		2.7.2 Comox Valley Visitor Services Opportunities Program	Ongoing	Launch 2014/2015 Comox Valley Visitor Services Program	Research best practices in visitor servicing tools, input provided via the VIVC to establish product and pricing. Acquire quotes, establish sales targets & contact databases to achieve sales and marketing objectives and increase the number of businesses participating in the program.	Program drafted and input provided by the VIVC and key stakeholders. Launched September 15th, 2014; first month sales targets surpassed. Vacation Guide sales 75% completed	In Progress
		2.7.2 Comox Valley Visitor Services Opportunities Program	Ongoing	Launch the 2015 Vacation Guide	Ensure VIVC marketing systems coincide to support new and expanded festivals by gathering community and events information to create an enhanced counselling tool.	Quotes received and budgets completed for updated and refreshed Vacation Guide based on VIVC and DMAC needs and strategies, for launch in April 2015. Layout commenced. Sales to be completed Feb 15, 2015	In Progress
		2.7.1 Visitor Survey's and Tracking	Ongoing	Value of the Visitor Survey Review and Implementation	Review Value of the Visitor Survey to determine development of new survey's through the VIVC and key attractions.	Review completed. Visitor Centre is currently tracking significant data, and consideration is being given to partner in an Island wide visitor survey project with other DMO's in 2015. Budget review required before committing.	Completed
				2015 CV Vacation Guide Review and Analysis	Analyze Guide effectiveness and consider possible partnerships with other print publications to reach objectives for future guides.	Preliminary meeting held to explore potential Guide partnerships for 2016.	Completed

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Focus Area	5 Year Plan Reference (19)	Program Name (22)	Priority	Tactic (106)	Task	Status / Outcome	Completion
Economic Development Coordination, Facilitation, and Communication	6.1 K'omok First Nation Liaison	3.1 First Nations Economic Opportunities	Ongoing	Support K'omoks First Nation Development Opportunities	Provide support to the K'omoks First Nation owned Pentlach Seafoods in their application for tenure expansion.	Have provided support to Pentlach Seafoods in meetings with Minister of International Trade as well as other senior levels of government concerning the elimination of barriers to expanding the shellfish industry.	Completed
	6.2 Communications & Media Relations	3.2.1 Tourism Media and Communications	High	RFP to Contract Media Relations Firm	Develop and circulate RFP for media and design services for 2015 year, and establish review sub committee to evaluate responses.	Preliminary draft developed. Release to be determined.	Pending
		3.2 External & Internal Communications & Media Outreach	High	Increase Awareness of Municipal & Business Announcements	Communicate municipal and business announcements, opportunities and updates via CVEDS communications mechanisms; press releases, online communications, and media hosting and outreach.	Increased focus on regular press releases, industry e-newsletters and online posting relative to business and local government initiatives including new hospital, airport and CFB statistics, and Town of Comox Marina Enhancement project	Ongoing
				Increase Awareness of CVEDS Programs, Initiatives and Services	Communicate CVEDS initiatives, projects and services via CVEDS communication mechanisms press releases, online communications, and media hosting and outreach.	Increased focus on regular press releases, industry e-newsletters and online posting relative to CVEDS.	Ongoing
	6.3 Land & Development Impact Analysis	3.3 Land & Economic Impact Analysis Model	High	Facilitate the development of an economic impact model for developments	Create a standard model to be used in development application process by local government.	Produced 6 sample model outputs for developments in the City of Courtenay and methodology reports.	Completed
				Respond to DP and Rezoning Referrals	Provide response to local government policy and development referrals concerning economic importance and items that may hinder economic growth.	Responded to the CVRD's policy amendment request for agriculture and aquaculture industries.	Completed
		3.4 Industrial & Commercial Lands Development Strategy	Low	Industrial Lands Strategy	Coordinate a workshop for elected officials to discuss and understand industrial land strategic planning and analysis.	Hosted an Industrial Lands Workshop for elected official and senior government staff which featured presentations on best practises for industrial development as well as discussion on future development of "employment land" within the Comox Valley.	Completed
	6.4 Economic Profile & Information	3.5 Online Resources Maintenance	Ongoing	Update Data and Resources on Invest Website	Research current market statistics from BC Stats, Stats Can, BC Assessment, VIREB, CMHC for posting on the Invest Comox Valley website.	2 Quarterly Reviews complete, 4 updated reports posted online.	Ongoing



Comox Valley Regional Economic Development Strategic Plan Update



April 2013

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Executive Summary

The mission of the Comox Valley Economic Development Society (CVEDS) is:

Encourage responsible expansion of the economic base of the Comox Valley with the intent of enhancing wealth and employment opportunities.

Like many arms-length organizations of government departments in communities throughout North America and around the world, CVEDS pursues its mission through a variety of programs and initiatives. The two priority outcomes of CVEDS activities are **employment** and **investment**.

Employment is a targeted outcome, not just in terms of an increased number of jobs, but also improving the range and quality of employment opportunities for all Comox Valley residents, including through higher wages. **Investment** is a targeted outcome because it supports employment, both directly through development related activity (such as new business start-up, investment, or expansion) and indirectly by improving the region's productive capacity.

Regional Approach and Alignment

The Comox Valley functions as a single economic unit. The individual communities within the Valley are highly integrated and from a strictly economic perspective, the internal political boundaries are largely meaningless. Integrated communities like the Comox Valley often see residents live in one municipality or rural area, work in another, shop in a third and enjoy recreational activities in a fourth. The integrated nature of the Comox Valley economy is the rationale for having the Comox Valley Economic Development Society operate on a regional basis.

Yet economic development activities do occur in a political context and it is vital for the Regional Economic Development Strategic Plan to be in alignment with other key regional initiatives, including the Comox Valley Sustainability Strategy, the Regional Growth Strategy, and the Official Community Plans of the individual municipalities. A key component in the development and update of this Plan was to identify and create linkages between economic development programs and these broader regional plans.

Outcome-based Approach

The Plan utilizes an outcome-based approach, meaning that each program has a clearly-identified goal that the program is intended to achieve. It also has a series of detailed actions that will be implemented by CVEDS and its partners through annual work plans, as well as a set of concrete performance measures that will help to track progress and success in achieving the intended outcomes.

There are three key Strategic Focus Areas that organize the plan: (i) Business Retention and Expansion, (ii) Investment Attraction and Promotion, and (iii) Economic Development Coordination, Facilitation and Communication. Each Focus Area contains multiple Programs, some defined as ‘core services’, which denotes CVEDS as the primary lead, while other Programs are defined as ‘support services’, recognizing the importance of the Program to the regional economy, with CVEDS undertaking a supportive role. A further analysis was done to prioritize and rank the Programs as ‘Primary’, ‘Secondary’, and ‘Tertiary’, reflecting the Programs ability to impact on the regions economy. It should be noted that these rankings do not correspond to resource allocations.

Core Service Programs	Business Development	Marketing & Communications	Rank
4.1 Labour Force Readiness	X		Primary
4.4 Business Visitation and Entrepreneurship	X		Primary
5.1 Agrifood Investment and Land Utilization	X		Primary
5.2 Destination Marketing		X	Primary
6.2 Communications and Media Relations		X	Primary
4.2 Food Security Enhancement	X		Secondary
4.5 Export Development	X		Secondary
5.3 Sustainability-Related Business Opportunities	X		Secondary
5.7 Visitor Services Opportunities		X	Secondary
6.3 Land and Development Impact Analysis	X		Secondary
4.3 Tourism, Arts, Culture and Heritage		X	Tertiary
4.6 Downtown, Waterfront and Local Area Enhancement	X		Tertiary
5.5 Resident and Entrepreneur Relocation		X	Tertiary
6.4 Economic Profile and Information	X		Tertiary

Support Service Programs	Business Development	Marketing & Communications	Rank
5.4 Air Service Support		X	Primary
6.1 K'omoks First Nation Liaison	X		Primary
5.6 Health Services	X		Secondary
6.6 19 Wing Program		X	Secondary
6.5 Regional Business Development Collaboration	X		Tertiary

Process

The updated Comox Valley Regional Economic Development Strategic Plan was developed over the period from September 2012 to March 2013. It included extensive consultation with community groups, industry sector representatives, local governments and the CVEDS Board through workshops, focus groups, online surveys and a public open house. It also included statistical analysis of the regional economy and a literature review of past research, studies, strategic plans, regional and provincial level plans.

1. Introduction

The Comox Valley Regional Economic Development Strategic Plan Update has been prepared to guide economic development activities in the Comox Valley over the five-year period from 2013 to 2017.

It was prepared as part of the 5 Year Agreement between Comox Valley Economic Development Society and the Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD), as the contracted agency responsible for economic development services in the CVRD. The strategy will be successfully implemented with the continued participation and joint efforts of the region's municipalities (Courtenay, Comox and Cumberland) and Regional District, K'omoks First Nation and many other partners in the public and private sectors.

The plan is the result of an intensive period of community consultation, research and analysis through the fall of 2012. It reflects the community's interests, combined with strategic analysis of regional assets and competitive advantages, in order to establish priorities for the highest-impact economic development initiatives. It is also recognized that conditions evolve and new opportunities will emerge over the five-year timeframe; CVEDS and partners will be flexible in adapting annual work plans to reflect these new realities.

1.1. Defining Economic Development

Arms-length organizations or government departments are working in support of economic development in nearly every community or region of any size throughout North America and in many locales around the world. The strategic approach to economic development varies significantly from place to place; while the objectives of the economic development function are similarly wide-ranging. Creating jobs, raising incomes and growing the local tax base are common objectives, but other goals like helping local industries, revitalizing specific geographic areas, developing local resources, increasing exports, encouraging new business start-ups, raising the level of innovation, increasing the financial return on public assets, increasing the number of visitors, preserving environmental values, improving local public and commercial services, and assisting disadvantaged social groups are just some of these alternative goals.

While each of these objectives may be worthwhile at a particular time and place, they are really only a means to an end. Increasing exports, for example, may be a desirable goal but only because it is associated with job growth, greater innovation and higher incomes, not because having more exports is inherently better. Even the most basic objectives of well-paying jobs and a healthy local tax base are desired not as the end goal, but because they provide the means for individuals and communities to achieve a higher quality of life.

Any myriad of potential economic development objectives can ultimately be boiled down to the essential goal of making people's lives better; however, that might be defined by each person. This is similar to the focus of the United Nations' Human Development Index, which has three key dimensions - health (long and healthy lives), access to knowledge (schooling) and standard of living (incomes). Human development is defined very well by Mahbub ul Haq (1934-1998), the founder of the Human Development Report (emphasis added):

The basic purpose of development is to enlarge people's choices.... People often value achievements that do not show up at all, or not immediately, in income or growth figures: greater access to knowledge, better nutrition and health services, more secure livelihoods, security against crime and physical violence, satisfying leisure hours, political and cultural freedoms and sense of participation in community activities.

1.2. Mission of Comox Valley Economic Development Society (CVEDS)

The CVEDS mission statement is:

Encourage responsible expansion of the economic base of the Comox Valley with the intent of enhancing wealth and employment opportunities.

The Society's constitution defines five core purposes:

- a) To promote, market and generally facilitate economic development in the Comox Valley;
- b) To develop and implement economic strategies for the Comox Valley;
- c) To develop and assist in the development of properties and facilities for the purpose of creating new economic activities and expanding existing economic activities in the Comox Valley;
- d) To develop information on the economic activity in the Comox Valley;
- e) To promote business information services for the Comox Valley.

The fundamental purpose of CVEDS was discussed through several meetings with the Society's Board during the process of updating the strategic plan. The two **priority outcomes** that emerged from the discussion are **employment** and **investment**.

Employment is a targeted outcome, not just in terms of an increased number of jobs, but also improving the range and quality of employment opportunities for all Comox Valley residents, including through higher wages. Higher incomes are desirable both as an end goal and because they are often associated with other quality employment attributes, including greater personal autonomy, quality benefits, and safe working conditions.

Investment is a targeted outcome because it supports employment, both directly through development related activity (such as new business start-up, investment or expansion) and indirectly by improving the region's productive capacity. The range of desirable investments includes:

- Investments in infrastructure that make both private and public sector organizations more efficient and expand their trading opportunities.
- Investments in buildings, machinery, equipment, and technology that make companies and workers more innovative and productive and lead to higher-value production and increased incomes.
- Investments in public goods that enhance the region's quality of life for residents and make it more attractive for visitors and migrants.

- Investments by new residents in making the Comox Valley their home, which includes direct investment in housing and possible business-related investments, with the further benefit of expanding the region's human capital and entrepreneurial capacity.
- A diversity of investment across industry sectors, helping to cushion the Comox Valley economy from downturns in any single sector.

1.3. Alignment with Regional Plans

In recent years the Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) has completed a Sustainability Strategy and the Regional Growth Strategy, which together help to establish the regional policy framework for managing future growth. Each municipality also has an Official Community Plan (OCP) to govern growth within its boundaries.

High-level references to economic development in the Regional Growth Strategy, Sustainability Strategy and two of the three municipality's Official Community Plans (Cumberland is undergoing an update to their OCP during the completion of this plan) are summarized below and are consistent with the existing focus of CVEDS. As the economic "department" for the regional government as well as the individual municipalities, CVEDS can use its expertise and track record to determine the specific programs and actions that are most likely to achieve these regional objectives, in the areas over which CVEDS has influence.

Regional Growth Strategy

More specifically, the Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) vision makes explicit mention of the importance of a vibrant local economy:

The Comox Valley will continue to evolve as a region of distinct, well-connected and well-designed urban and rural communities. As stewards of the environment, local governments, the K'ómoks First Nation, public agencies, residents, businesses and community and non-governmental organizations will work collaboratively to conserve and enhance land, water and energy resources and ensure a vibrant local economy and productive working landscape.

The RGS has eight inter-related policy goals, two of which are particularly relevant for the Comox Valley Regional Economic Development Strategic Plan:

- **Goal 3 for Local Economic Development:** *Achieve a sustainable, resilient, and dynamic local economy that supports Comox Valley businesses and the region's entrepreneurial spirit.*
- **Goal 6 for Food Systems:** *Support and enhance the agricultural and aquaculture sectors and increase local food security.*

Other RGS goals for housing, transportation, and infrastructure also relate to some of the programs in this Strategic Plan and are referenced in the discussion of each program where appropriate.

Comox Valley Sustainability Strategy

The Sustainability Strategy was completed in 2010 during the update process for the Regional Growth Strategy. It expresses global and Comox Valley visions for sustainability, as well as vision, goals and actions in eight topic areas, including:

- **Vision for local economic development:** *The Comox Valley has a diverse and sustainable economy and is a leader in innovation, cooperation, and a managed response to growth.*
- **Food system vision:** *The Comox Valley has a prosperous local food economy that provides for a significant amount of local food needs, celebrates a rich culture of local food, keeps natural ecosystems healthy, and includes a high degree of food security and accessibility to food.*

Integration with Economic Development Strategic Plan

The Regional Economic Development Strategic Plan is intended to integrate with these regional growth and sustainability visions. Each of the programs outlined in chapters 4-6 contains a specific reference to a regional objective or strategy, if relevant. This helps the reader understand the many linkages and complementary initiatives contained in this plan and the other regional documents.

A more detailed section-by-section commentary on the regional plans with respect to economic development can be found in Appendix A. Even though the Regional Economic Development Strategic Plan is supportive of the high-level vision and objectives of the regional plans, the appendix outlines some specific strategies and measurements assigned to CVEDS that could be altered, either because the recommended measurement is impractical or because an alternative strategy is believed to be more effective.

1.4. Previous Economic Development Plans

Economic development activities in the Comox Valley since 2005 have been guided by the Comox Valley Economic Development Strategy and Implementation Plan, completed in 2005, and, more recently, the Comox Valley Economic Development 2011 Work Plan.

The 2005 Plan had four principal components:

1. Business facilitation: enhancing economic development potential
2. Business retention and expansion (BRE)
3. Strategic sectors/opportunities action plan
4. Effectively branding/marketing the Comox Valley

This initial division into four areas evolved over time into the three strategic focus areas that were used in the 2011 Work Plan and are maintained in this plan (see section 2.2 for an explanation). A detailed review of the individual strategies in the 2005 Plan is contained in Appendix C.

Status of 2005 Plan

Nearly all of the initiatives recommended in the 2005 plan are either ongoing or have been fully completed, while a small number were not implemented for various reasons.

The ongoing initiatives include; the business visitation program, several initiatives relating to the development of the agrifood sector (such as the annual Growers Guide, working toward a permanent farmers market, partnering with North Island College on agriculture training and attracting external investment into agricultural land), liaison and support of K'ómoks First Nation (formalizing the relationship with KFN having representation on the CVEDS Board), continuing to focus on tourism and cultural product development, and continuing to work toward waterfront and harbour development (including the addition of floatplane service).

Some of the completed initiatives include development new sector based branding, developing the Visitor Centre, activities related to the 2010 Winter Olympic Games, and attracting resort investment.

The initiatives that were not implemented include:

- Development of a conference centre, which has not proceeded due to lack of resources and a shift to other priorities. It is also not included in this Plan, although a renewed focus is possible in the future as the Comox Valley's limitations in attracting meetings and events are recognized.
- Attracting port of call pocket cruise ships, which was not pursued based on further assessment of the market opportunity and recognition of the challenges experienced by Campbell River and Nanaimo in pursuing this industry.

Status of 2011 Work Plan

The 2011 Work Plan is organized into the same three strategic focus areas that are used in this Plan (see section 2.2), with five programs under each focus area. The most recent progress report summarizing the implementation status of the plan is in Appendix C.

Of the 15 programs in the 2011 Work Plan, 14 are continued to some degree in this Plan, with updated rational, strategic actions and performance measures. The Sister City and International Dignitary Coordination and Support Program activities will still occur as part of CVEDS administrative activities and can be supported through other programs on an as-needed basis.

The 2011 Work Plan established a series of performance measures based on program outputs. This approach has been expanded upon with the updated Strategic Plan via a higher-level strategic focus on measurable economic outcomes for each program, while maintaining the performance measures for individual actions under each program. The transition to an outcome-based approach provides a superior lens to evaluate the success of economic development initiatives over time.

1.5. Update Process

An update of the Comox Valley Regional Economic Development Strategic Plan was initiated in August 2012. It builds on the completed 2005 Economic Development Strategy and retains much of the structure of CVEDS' 2011 Work Plan. Elements of the update process include:

- Updated statistical analysis of the regional economy, labour market and demographics
- Extensive literature review of previous documents from the Comox Valley and Vancouver Island
- Workshops with the CVEDS Board in September and October 2012 and January 2013 (and an update presentation at the December 2012 Board meeting)
- Consultation meetings with industry groups and local government representatives in October and November 2012
- Additional meetings with Town of Comox staff, a presentation at a Comox Committee of the Whole meeting and one-on-one meetings with Council members (in support of the Town of Comox Economic Development Plan that is part of the overall regional plan)
- Online business survey completed in November and December 2012
- Initial draft report distributed to the Board and local government Chief Administrative Officers in January 2013
- Final draft report distributed in February 2013
- Presentation of final draft report to CVEDS Board on March 7, 2013
- Public open house on March 18, 2013
- Completion of final project report

2. Strategic Framework

2.1. Overview

In general terms, employment and investment are pursued either by (a) building on the Comox Valley's competitive advantages and capitalizing on the employment-generating and/or investment opportunities they create, or (b) removing or minimizing barriers that are restricting employment and investment opportunities.

Each of the programs in this plan can be traced back to one of these two concepts - either building on advantages and opportunities or removing/minimizing barriers.

Employment

While there is a desire to increase a wide range of employment opportunities, special focus is required on supporting higher-value employment. As subsequent analysis in this report show, the Comox Valley has among the lowest average employment incomes of any region in British Columbia.

The only means to achieve sustained long-run increases in wages is to increase the value of the work being completed on a per-person basis (that is, increase labour productivity). Productivity can be improved by working harder (more hours, greater intensity) or smarter (more educated or skilled workforce, superior workflow organization). However, the greatest improvements in productivity are typically achieved through access to machinery and equipment, including advanced technology, which has the potential to dramatically increase the volume or quality of the good or service being produced.

This is the rationale for programs relating to workforce development, as well as business counselling or education, that increases management knowledge about effective business practices and productivity-enhancing technologies. For example, export development programs are an indirect way to encourage higher productivity, as research shows that exporting firms (including those that export across provincial borders) are consistently more productive than similar non-exporting firms.¹ This is consistent with the idea that increasing exposure to more and different competition forces firms to become more productive in order to succeed.

Investment

All else being equal, lowering the barriers to investment will increase the amount of investment that occurs. Barriers may include:

- Regulatory barriers - there is no suggestion that necessary environmental or land use regulations should be relaxed, but simply that the investment process be improved;
- Information barriers - potential investors in the Comox Valley may be unaware of the possible opportunities, or may not have sufficient information to proceed;

¹ John R. Baldwin and Beiling Yan (March 2012), *Market Expansion and Productivity Growth: Do New Domestic Markets Matter as Much as New International Markets?*, Statistics Canada, Economic Analysis (EA) Research Paper Series.

- Physical or infrastructure barriers - there may be insufficient land or leasable space available, or a deficiency in infrastructure or transportation connections that, if resolved, would allow investment to proceed.

Programs that result in the lowering or removing of these barriers will encourage additional capital investment in the Comox Valley, leading to employment creation, higher business revenue and labour income, and more tax revenue to support public services.

Other programs are focused on leveraging the Valley's unique advantages and pursuing investment in targeted areas (these include the programs focusing on agrifood, tourism, sustainability-related industries, health services and residential attraction). CVEDS and partner organizations have limited financial and human resources, so there is a need to prioritize among possible opportunities and targets. This prioritization should be based on a) the potential payoff in terms of investment and jobs if the opportunity is fully realized, and b) the probability of success. Opportunities with lower potential payoffs may be better targets if there is a significantly higher probability of success.

This is one of the reasons business retention and expansion (BRE) programs might be prioritized over investment attraction programs. Encouraging additional investment from companies that are already operating in the Comox Valley will often have a greater chance of success than attracting investment from outside the region. However, other than the probability of success, there is no need to make a distinction between local and external sources of investment. If there is an economic development opportunity in the Comox Valley, the necessary investment to capitalize on it could come from anywhere and will have similar impacts in terms of expanding productive capacity, supporting more employment and income, and expanding the tax base.

The Comox Valley's specific competitive advantages also needs to be taken into consideration. This was the approach taken in 2004 during the first phase of the Comox Valley's previous Economic Development Strategy. An extensive evaluation process was undertaken to determine the sectors that were the best targets for attracting investment. Ship and boat building, for example, was a sector that could reasonably operate in the Comox Valley, but there was no compelling advantage for the Comox Valley over other Vancouver Island locations, so it was dropped from the final list of possible targets.

2.2. Strategic Focus Areas

The targeted outcomes of employment and investment are pursued via three strategic focus areas described below, covering;

- (i) an internal focus on strengthening businesses and growth conditions within the Comox Valley;
- (ii) an outward focus on selling the Comox Valley to the world and attracting external investment, visitors and new residents; and
- (iii) a liaison focus that ties together partners and stakeholders, dedicates resources to joint pursuit of economic development objectives, and communicates both achievements and messages in support of economic development goals.

These focus areas are complementary in that they are ultimately working toward the same ends and there is some overlap between the areas on given projects and initiatives. But they also provide a useful functional division for CVEDS staffing and budgeting purposes and for

communicating to the public and stakeholders, what CVEDS does. Each of the programs in the economic development strategic plan are contained within one of the three focus areas, as shown in Chapters 4 to 6.

Strategic Focus Area One: Business Retention and Expansion (Chapter 4)

Business retention and expansion (BRE) is a core focus of many economic development organizations. Analogous to the clear benefit of supporting existing businesses is the notion where, for a given business, the costs of retaining an existing customer are far lower than the costs of acquiring a new customer. The share of employment growth from BRE is estimated in various places from 60% to 90% (a recent estimates reported by the University of Minnesota is 86%).

Programs within Focus Area One are directed toward supporting existing companies and industries and helping them expand. It also includes programs that provide the building blocks for economic growth, including workforce development.

Strategic Focus Area Two: Investment Attraction and Promotion (Chapter 5)

The investment attraction and promotion programs all have an element of generating awareness about the Comox Valley outside the local area. This takes multiple forms, including the proactive attraction of investment in priority areas (agrifood, air services, health services, sustainability-related) where there is believed to be a strong competitive advantage with significant potential benefits. This includes the attraction of new residents, who bring many benefits to the region as workers, entrepreneurs and consumers.

Destination marketing of the Comox Valley to tourists is also included (where there are also significant benefits and a strong product to sell), along with a program for the Vancouver Island Visitor Centre, which focuses on maximizing the value of those visitors by showing all the possibilities of the region and providing on-site bookings.

Strategic Focus Area Three: Economic Development Coordination, Facilitation and Communication (Chapter 6)

CVEDS is regularly engaged in partnerships with other organizations in the Comox Valley in order to successfully implement most of the programs in the Strategic Plan. As a publicly-funded agency there is also a certain degree of interest from the public and the local media about CVEDS activities.

Communicating the Society's activities and successes is an important activity both to keep partners and stakeholders informed but also to raise the profile of economic development in the region. There are also programs under this focus area relating to specific partnerships (K'ómoks First Nation, 19 Wing Comox, regional partners across Vancouver Island) as well as a program involving partnering with land owners, possible developers and local governments to facilitate land development.

2.3. Core Versus Support Programs

The programs outlined in Chapters 4-6 can be described as either “core” or “support” programs. Core programs are those where CVEDS has lead responsibility and applies significant focus. The majority of the programs fall into this category, as shown in the table below.

Support programs address issues of significant importance for the region’s economic development, but the CVEDS role is to provide support to one or more other lead agencies or organizations. The time and resource commitment by CVEDS is typically smaller for these programs.

Table 1. Core and Support Programs in Comox Valley Regional Economic Development Strategic Plan Update

Core Programs	Support Programs
4.1 Labour Force Readiness	5.4 Air Service Support
4.2 Food Security Enhancement	5.6 Health Services
4.3 Tourism, Arts, Culture and Heritage	6.1 K’omoks First Nation Liaison
4.4 Business Visitation and Entrepreneurship	6.5 Regional Business Development Collaboration
4.5 Export Development	6.6 19 Wing Support
4.6 Downtown, Waterfront and Local Area Enhancement	
5.1 Agrifood Investment and Land Utilization	
5.2 Destination Marketing	
5.3 Sustainability-Related Business Opportunities	
5.5 Resident and Entrepreneur Relocation	
5.7 Visitor Services Opportunities	
6.2 Communications and Media Relations	
6.3 Land and Development Impact Analysis	
6.4 Economic Profile and Information	

2.4. Regional Approach to Economic Development

The most relevant geographic unit for regional economic analysis is the local labour market area or commutershed. This is an area where most people living in the area also work in the area and it usually consists of a central urban area and surrounding rural areas, often covering multiple individual municipalities and/or unincorporated areas. The Comox Valley functions as a separate economic unit in exactly this way.

From a strictly economic perspective, the political boundaries within the region are largely meaningless, other than a few differences in local policies. Integrated communities like the Comox Valley often see residents live in one municipality or rural area, work in another, shop in a third and enjoy recreational activities in a fourth. Metropolitan areas are the same, whether they are politically fragmented (e.g., Metro Vancouver, Greater Victoria) or mostly a single political entity (e.g., City of Calgary, City of Winnipeg).

The integrated nature of the Comox Valley economy is the rationale for having the Comox Valley Economic Development Society operate on a regional basis. The table below shows commuting data from the 2006 Census that helps to illustrate the degree of economic integration between the separate communities in the region. Note that Area K (Denman and Hornby Islands) of the old Comox-Strathcona Regional District still existed at that time.

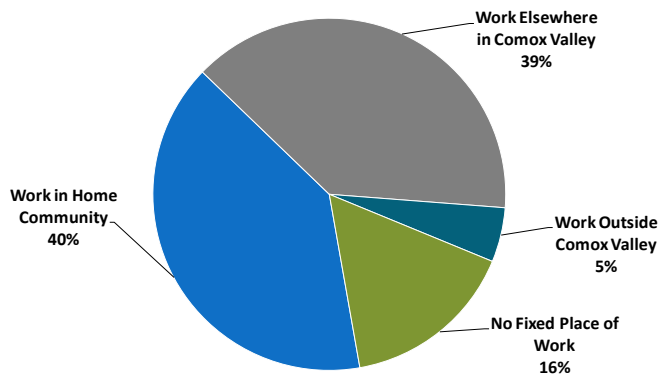
Table 2. Place of Work of Employed Residents, Comox Valley Communities, 2006

	Work in Home Municipality/ Electoral Area	Work Elsewhere in Comox Valley	Work Outside Comox Valley	No Fixed Place of Work
Courtenay	54%	26%	4%	16%
Comox	42%	40%	4%	14%
Cumberland	26%	50%	5%	19%
Area A	28%	48%	5%	19%
Area B	23%	59%	6%	12%
Area C	23%	53%	5%	19%
Area K	61%	6%	10%	24%
Total	40%	39%	5%	16%

Source: BC Ministry of Community, Sport and Cultural Development

Only 40% of employed residents of the Comox Valley had a regular place of work in their home community while almost as many (39%) went to work in a different part of the Valley. A further 16% of employed residents with no fixed place of work (which is common in sectors like construction) also regularly work across municipal boundaries within the Comox Valley and potentially beyond.

Place of Work of Comox Valley Residents, 2006
(Source: Statistics Canada Census)



3. Competitive Analysis of Comox Valley Economy

The competitive analysis of the Comox Valley economy provides the factual underpinning of the rest of the strategic plan. It is based on several components that are summarized in this chapter of the report, including an economic analysis of key trends and regional characteristics, a literature review of previous studies completed in the Comox Valley or throughout Vancouver Island, a series of consultation meetings and workshops with industry groups and key stakeholders in the region, and lastly, an online survey of Comox Valley businesses.

3.1. Economic Analysis

Statistical and economic analysis in support of this Strategic Plan update was completed and presented at several Board workshops and industry consultation meetings during the study process. This detailed material is contained in Appendix C: Economic Analysis. Also as part of the process the Comox Valley Investor Profile, which includes significant statistical benchmarking against BC regions and similar-sized communities across Canada, has been updated.

The key outcomes of this analysis that are particularly informative for the Strategic Plan update include the following:

- The Comox Valley has been one of the faster-growing regional districts in BC. With population growth of 6.8% from 2006 to 2011, it ranks 5th fastest in growth rate among the 29 regional districts.
- Population growth is projected by BC Stats to remain strong, averaging 1.3% per year through 2036, the 2nd fastest rate among comparable BC regional districts.
- Strong growth averaging 1.2% per year is also projected in the prime working-age population of 25 to 54-year-olds. An increasing supply of working-age residents is a critical asset for growing the regional economy and will help to mitigate labour shortages that are expected to be a growing problem nationwide.
- Average and median incomes in the Comox Valley are lower than in BC. The average of all types of income is lower than average except pension income.
- Pension income in 2009 averaged \$23,000 per person (among those who had pension income), ranking 2nd highest in BC among the 29 regional districts (only the Capital RD is higher). Employment income averaged \$30,500 per person (among those who had employment income), ranking 21st in BC.
- Employment and self-employment accounted for just over half (53%) of total reported income in the Comox Valley in 2009. Only two other regional districts had a lower share of income from employment, emphasizing the Comox Valley's increasing role as a retirement location.
- The three sectors with lowest average weekly wages in BC are accommodation and food services, agriculture and retail & wholesale trade, each of which is more concentrated in

the Comox Valley than in the BC economy overall. This helps to explain the region's lower employment incomes.

- Resource-based industries (forestry, fishing, mining) tend to pay the highest wages but have been in decline in the Comox Valley. Public administration also pays well and is a strength in the Comox Valley with presence of 19 Wing Comox. Professional, scientific and technical services are also well-paying but less present in the Comox Valley than BC overall.
- Post-secondary educational attainment among the Comox Valley working-age population compares quite favourably to similar-sized areas across BC and Canada, suggesting there is potential for more higher-value services production.
- Housing prices have increased significantly in the Comox Valley over the last decade, rising from below-average on Vancouver Island to about average (they are still lower than average prices in the Parksville / Qualicum and Nanaimo areas), but higher than other Vancouver Island locations. All Island housing prices are high relative to typical prices in larger cities elsewhere in Canada, such as Edmonton, Winnipeg, and Montreal and can therefore be a deterrent to attracting new residents from locations with lower housing costs.

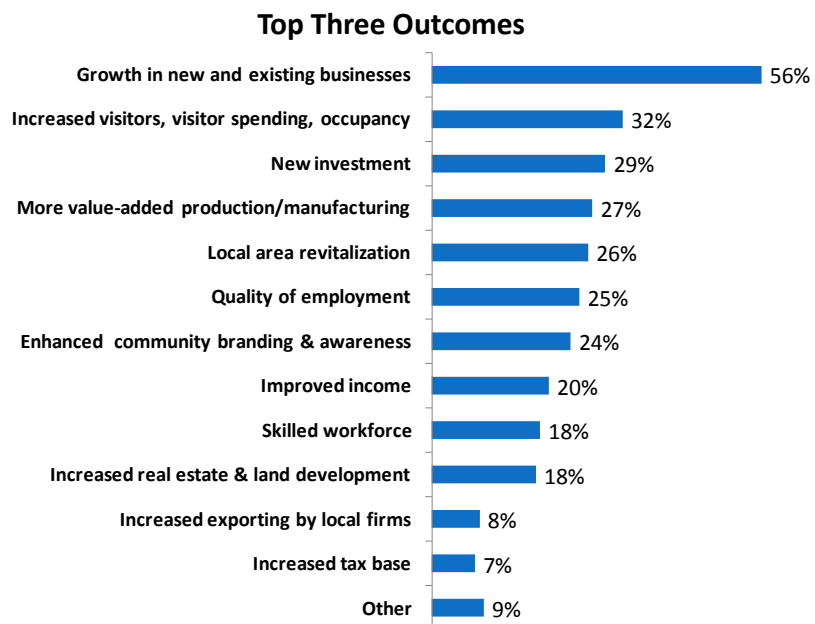
3.2. Business Survey Summary

An online survey was prepared and publicized among the Comox Valley business community in order to collect additional feedback on key business issues in the region. A total of 143 responses were received and the full results are shown in Appendix D.

Some of the key survey results that provide insight into key competitive issues facing the business community are summarized below.

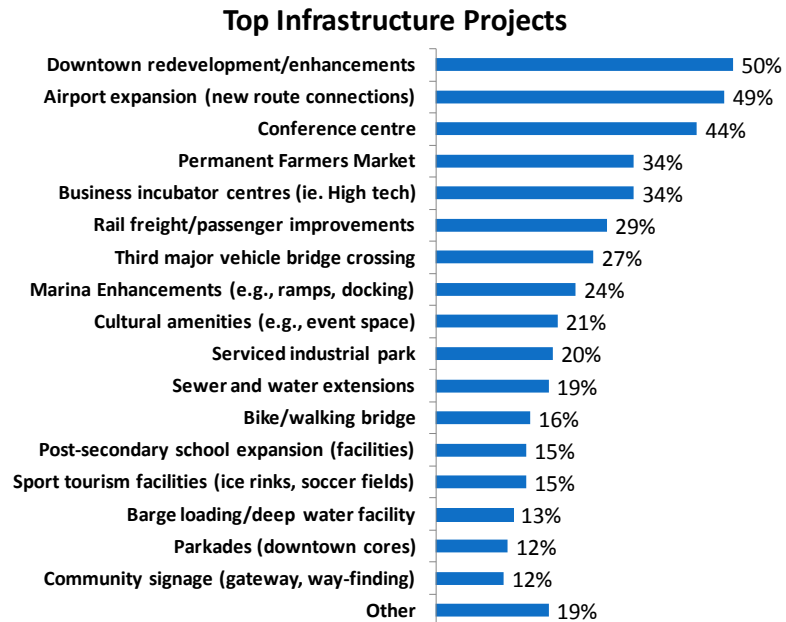
Question: *Economic Development activities, within a given region, are undertaken to influence and/or create economic outcomes. Please choose the top three outcomes you see as the most important to the future health of the Comox Valley's economy.*

Supporting growth in new and existing businesses is by far the most popular outcome among the business community respondents. Several tourism-related outcomes were also popular, including increasing visitor spending and enhancing community branding and awareness. The desire for more value-added manufacturing and for local area revitalization also received support from just over one-quarter of respondents, as well as the more general outcomes of new investment and quality of employment.



Question: The following public and/or private sector major infrastructure projects have been discussed as being important for the future growth of the Comox Valley economy. Select the top 5 projects you feel would have the most positive economic impact to the region.

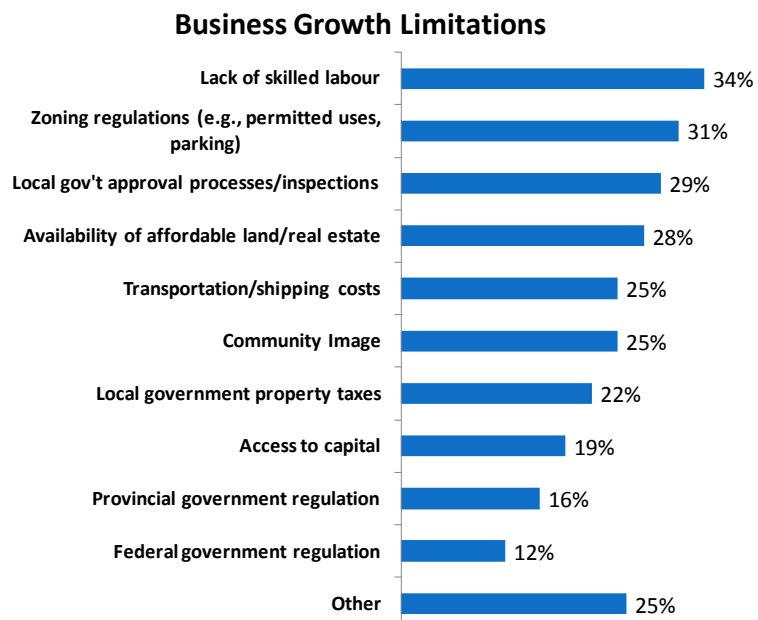
A variety of possible projects received support, but the clear top three are downtown



redevelopment/enhancements, airport expansion and a conference centre.

Question: Is your business growth limited by any of the following factors?

Lack of skilled labour was identified as a barrier to growth by about one-third of respondents, ranking just ahead of two local government-related challenges (zoning regulations and approval processes/ inspections). Availability of affordable land and/or real estate was also identified by more than one-quarter of respondents.



3.3. Strategic Advantages and Disadvantages

This summary of strategic advantages and disadvantages for the Comox Valley is not intended to be a lengthy list of all possible issues, but rather a focused and strategic summary of the most important issues as they relate to the Comox Valley's future economic development prospects. The issues are taken from all of the background work, including the economic analysis, the business survey, the literature review, and the extensive consultation (which included several workshops with the CVEDS Board, meetings with local and regional government staff, interviews with local politicians, particularly from the Town of Comox, and multiple industry focus groups and one-on-one meetings).

Key Strategic Advantages

- Fast-growing population (and growing working age population)
- Available and under-utilized land (although not as affordable as some businesses would prefer)
- Attractive tourism/recreational market
- Airport (connections & runway) as well as complementary floatplane and Courtenay Airport services
- Baynes Sound conditions for shellfish
- High quality but under-utilized agricultural land
- Stable economic generator of 19 Wing Comox and related economic benefits of retired military personnel
- Education sector, including growing international connections at both secondary and post-secondary level
- Health services expansion with new Comox Valley Hospital and possible repurposing of St. Joseph's Hospital

Key Strategic Disadvantages

- Island location, which increases transportation costs and time for moving goods by road
- High reliance on public sector (generating about 30% of regional income (potential threat))
- Lack of serviced, available industrial land
- Multiple governmental jurisdictions and varied developmental regulations of the region
- Shortage of labour for some businesses
- Relatively high housing costs in Vancouver Island context and relative to relatively low employment incomes

4. Strategic Focus Area: Business Retention and Expansion

4.1. Labour Force Readiness Program (Core)

Population aging throughout most of the developed world will lead to increased competition for labour and the possibility that growth in some locations and some industries will be hampered by the lack of available workers. A BC Stats forecast for the Vancouver Island/Coast region suggested there would be about 150,000 job openings in the region from 2010 to 2020, 80% of which would be caused by retirement or death (and the remaining 20% caused by growth). Utilities and health care & social assistance are expected to have the fastest employment growth, but worker shortages are predicted to be most severe in the lowest-skill positions, including retail and tourism-related fields (sales clerks, food counter attendants, kitchen helpers). Technical and professional positions in health care will be the fastest-growing occupations, but at least according to BC Stats, there will be fewer shortages in these fields. At a provincial level an estimated 78% of job openings through 2010 will require some type of post-secondary training.

The prognosis for the Comox Valley is mixed. BC Stats is projecting the Valley will continue to have strong population growth, including growth in the number of adults of prime working age (25 to 54). But with an advanced age profile, the Comox Valley is already experience negative natural increase, meaning there are more deaths than births each year. All of the projected population growth is therefore due to migration, which is much more volatile in response to economic conditions. On the other hand, the business survey completed for this Strategic Plan identified “lack of skilled labour” as the most common factor limiting business growth (cited by 34% of respondents).

The Comox Valley attracts relatively few international immigrants but large numbers of interprovincial and intraprovincial migrants. Ensuring a continuing supply of new workers is covered by the Resident and Entrepreneur Relocation Program (5.5) but improving access to education and skills training for existing residents is a priority. This includes programs for older workers to upgrade or learn new skills. The baby boom generation is expected to have a higher labour force participation rate in retirement than previous generations, which will also help to offset labour shortages.

With respect to skills attainment, the Comox Valley has post-secondary educational attainment levels that are generally higher than most similarly-sized communities across Canada, but lower than major metropolitan areas. The region’s skills shortages are especially acute for advanced university degrees, which over the long run might limit the region’s competitiveness in some advanced service industries.

North Island College is a key partner in labour force readiness for the Comox Valley. In addition to a growing list of post-secondary educational programs, the College also provides contract training services to large companies or industry groups with a defined need. If the College does not have the training expertise on staff, they will bring in subject matter experts to help deliver the training that is required. The College and School District 71 also help to boost international immigration and investment through their international student programs.

Alignment with Regional Plans

RGS Objective 3-B: Increase regional job base.

Program Goal

The Comox Valley's skilled and unskilled labour meets the needs of existing and emerging high growth potential industries.

Measurable Outcome

Surveys of the business community and other major employers show a decreasing percentage of respondents citing labour shortages as an operating challenge or barrier to growth.

Actions and Performance Measures

#1 Develop labour force readiness communication and feedback tool.

Performance Measure:

- Implementation of a survey tool to obtain ongoing feedback from local employers.

#2 Maintain an ongoing and effective labour force readiness communication and feedback tool that provides detailed information on recruitment opportunities, labour market trends, local needs and opportunities for addressing skills gaps.

Performance Measure:

- Tools, information and resources provided are specific to shortening the recruitment time of employees for local employers.
- Completion of annual labour force survey to collect information on labour market needs.

#3 Develop and provide local delivery of training and explore labour force needs related to emerging or future growth areas.

Performance Measure:

- Training opportunities are provided that fit current and anticipated needs of local employers.

Economic Indicators (for ongoing tracking)

- Percentage of working-age population with post-secondary credentials
- Percentage of working-age population with post-secondary credentials in mathematics, science and computer science
- Number of post-secondary students in the Comox Valley each year (at North Island College and other post-secondary institutions)
- Number of post-secondary graduates in the Comox Valley each year (at North Island College and other post-secondary institutions)
- Percentage increase in Comox Valley working age population

Priority Ranking

Primary

Partnerships

North Island College, School District 71, Local Workforce Organizations

4.2. Food Security Enhancement Program (Core)

Increasing local food production and enhancing food security have been identified as priorities in several Vancouver Island studies in the past five years and they are specific priorities in the Comox Valley Regional Growth Strategy and Sustainability Strategy.

The agrifood sector has shifted, expanded and diversified in the Comox Valley and on Vancouver Island over the past decade. Dairy, shellfish, and cranberries are still the main commodities produced locally but there has been a sharp increase in value-added, niche market and direct market operations, especially those linked to local cuisine and agritourism. Distribution and market access for this wide range of products is extremely variable.

Globally, the impact of climate change, access to irrigation water, and increases in demand for quality food in emerging economies suggests that there is an opportunity (possibly a need) for increased food production. The Comox Valley has the climate, soils, and water to produce a wide range of agriculture, aquaculture, and beverage products; and the potential to significantly increase the economic value of production. The sector is diverse but there are many common issues and opportunities.

This program will focus on developing the resource capacity needed to increase food production. This includes expanding capital and infrastructure, improving overall management capacity, improving access to markets, and increasing the intensity and efficiency of production in local agrifood businesses. This is not about limiting trade in food and eating only what we produce. It is about developing a vibrant, diverse and economically sustainable agrifood sector that has the capability to efficiently produce to the full potential of the land and water.

Alignment with Regional Plans

RGS Policy 3B-2: Protect and enhance ALR lands with the intent to grow and diversify the base of agricultural activities.

RGS Policy 3B-4: Explore initiatives that support value-added, community-based business development, including, but not limited to, local food processing, specialty forest products and other value-added production manufacturing.

RGS Policy 3C-1: Work with the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands and the Agricultural Land Commission to develop strategies and actions to increase the amount of actively farmed agricultural lands, and reduce barriers to agricultural viability in *Agricultural Areas*.

RGS Policy 3C-2: Encourage the development of infrastructure to help increase agricultural production such as irrigation water and regional drainage improvements.

RGS Policy 3C-3 Work to develop policy that limits country estate residential impact but supports small-scale agricultural operations to enable new farmers to enter the industry.

RGS Policy 3C-7: Support regional aquaculture industries and collaborate with them on developing foreshore land use and water management policies that protect and steward on-shore and off-shore shellfish beds and marine water quality.

Sustainability Strategy Goal 6.1: Support a diverse and thriving local agriculture system.

City of Courtenay OCP Goal 4.5.2, #2: To promote the expansion of the agriculture industry in the Comox Valley.

City of Courtenay OCP Policy 4.5.3, #2: The City supports expanding the processing of locally produced agricultural products.

Town of Comox OCP Objective 2.1.9.2: To protect the agricultural land base and marine foreshore for food production and encourage future growth that is environmentally sustainable

Program Goal

Local food production companies will have the resources to increase capacity through expanded capital, infrastructure, management expertise, access to markets, or productivity enhancements.

Measurable Outcome

80% of known local companies with food production facilities are approached under the business visitation program and information is shared on steps needed to increase production capacity and the tools and resources available.

Actions and Performance Measures

#1 Develop improved monitoring local food production.

Performance Measure:

- Database improvements made that measures and monitor the number of primary agriculture, primary aquaculture and value added enterprises.

#2 Develop a system that ensures effective and timely flow of relevant information between CVEDS and agrifood producers.

Performance Measure:

- Number of producer contacts, or connections to the office, and producer participation in initiatives.

#3 Organize specific focus groups and opportunities for engaging experts to explore private or industry-wide capital investment projects.

Performance Measure:

- Number of focus groups, or opportunities provided.

#4 Prepare background materials, tools and resources specific to highlighting and communicating key regulatory requirements.

Performance Measure:

- Number of issues and magnitude of issues responded to.

Economic Indicators (for ongoing tracking)

- Percent change in value of agrifood revenue (based on Census of Agriculture every 5 years and production statistics compiled by the Province, where relevant)
- Intensity of land use within the ALR
- Farm gate revenue per ha in the ALR

Priority Ranking

Secondary

Partnerships

Comox Valley Farmers Institute, Comox Valley Farmers Market, Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Beverage Canada

4.3. Tourism, Arts, Culture and Heritage Development Program (Core)

An outcome of the 2007 Cultural Capitals of Canada funding for the Comox Valley was the creation of a Cultural Development Plan. It defined the sector's opportunities, challenges and economic impact for the region, which was estimated to be \$75 million in total economic output per year. The plan includes a range of strategies and actions to address cultural capacity issues that may otherwise limit the region's ability to attract and retain investment, skilled labour, and a creative economic class.

Event attraction and expansion has been identified as a strategic tourism development opportunity in numerous previous studies, including the Cultural Development Plan, but also the Visitor Services Strategy, Comox Valley Tourism Plan, Sport Tourism Marketplace Workshop, and the Comox Valley Additional Hotel Room Tax Business Plan. It has been identified again through sector meetings and the online business survey undertaken for this Strategic Plan update (a conference centre was the third most popular response to a question about major infrastructure projects that would help support economic growth).

Past events like the BC Seniors Summer Games, or existing destination-level events like the Filberg Festival and MusicFest, are consistently used as examples for the region to expand upon. Yet despite favourable accessibility to major markets, an expanded accommodation sector, and improving attractions, the region is hindered in its ability to attract many conferences and sporting events by a lack of meeting, conference and sports infrastructure. The Comox Valley is at a competitive disadvantage relative to BC communities that have prioritized infrastructure improvements and event attraction, including Prince George and Nanaimo. The multiple political jurisdictions and corresponding variances in regulations in the Comox Valley has been identified as a challenge; any new region-serving infrastructure that might be built in one of the municipalities is unlikely to be financially supported by the other local governments.

Alignment with Regional Plans

RGS Policy 3B-9: Encourage tourism, including cultural and eco-tourism opportunities, within the Comox Valley.

Sustainability Strategy Objective 5.4.2: Enhance sports and recreation infrastructure

Sustainability Strategy Objective 7.5.1: Promote arts and culture capacity in the Comox Valley

City of Courtenay, OCP, Bylaw No. 2387, 4.1 Downtown

Town of Comox OCP Bylaw 1685, 2.1.5 Commercial Neighbourhood and Tourist

Town of Comox OCP Bylaw 1685, 2.1.8 Parks, Trails, and Open Space

City of Courtenay, OCP, Bylaw No. 2387, 4.1 Downtown #6

City of Courtenay, OCP, Bylaw No. 2387, 4.8 Culture

City of Courtenay, OCP, Bylaw No. 2387, 4.9 Heritage

Program Goal

The region has successfully attracted new destination level events, and expanded existing ones, while tourism products are being developed/enhanced that reflect and leverage key attributes and assets of the region thereby supporting the attraction of more visitors.

Measurable Outcome

- a) Event hosting infrastructure barriers are removed or reduced, supporting increased or expanded events.
- b) New or expanded tourism products, including the Comox Valley Heritage Experience, support increased length of stay and expenditures.

Actions and Performance Measures

- #1 Barriers to event attraction are identified and integrated into community planning and long term infrastructure priorities are defined.

Performance Measure:

- Summary of identified infrastructure issues completed, referencing current and past studies, research and surveys; summary updated as they are addressed.

- #2 Develop and implement strategies to secure potential events/conferences.

Performance Measure:

- Create database of potential events/conferences that would drive economic benefit to the region in the form of overnight stays and are a reasonable target for the Comox Valley market, and determine regional interest and resources to pursue or support.

- #3 Provide or support annual professional and/or product development opportunities to the sector to enable increased capacity and market ready product experiences to be marketed and sold.

Performance Measure:

- Opportunities for professional and product development are evaluated and where there is a fit with the industry and local companies, are hosted or supported, with goal of 1-2 sessions annually.

Economic Indicators (for ongoing tracking)

- Visitation counts
- Sales volume at Vancouver Island Visitor Centre
- Number of overnight stays
- Revenue per available room (RevPAR)
- Visitation at key tourism attractions (where publicly available)
- Passenger counts at Comox Valley Airport

Priority Ranking

Tertiary

Partnerships

Regional tourism, arts, heritage and cultural stakeholders and attractions

Destination Level Events

Public and Private Sector Event Facilities

Local Governments

K'ómoks First Nation

4.4. Business Visitation and Entrepreneurship Program (Core)

Existing businesses are the source of the majority of new investment and employment growth, providing more than 80% of job growth in a typical community (according to a recent study reported by the University of Minnesota). Regular contact with businesses through site visits and detailed interviews is required in order to obtain business intelligence on their opportunities and challenges and to ensure they are continuing to operate successfully and reinvest in the region.

The ongoing success of private businesses is important not just for employment and investment reasons, but also because they are a vital source of municipal property tax revenue for local governments. The residential class pays the most taxes in total, but business (Class 6) tax rates are several times higher than residential rates for a property of equivalent value, despite research in other communities showing that residential properties place a heavier burden on municipal service than commercial properties.

The business visits by CVEDS staff involves personal interviews with business owners and managers to discuss challenges and opportunities they are facing. This allows CVEDS to stay abreast of emerging trends and issues in the local economy and to identify common issues across companies or industries that might require a coordinated response. An example might be a transportation or labour training issue that is beyond the ability of a single company to influence but with coordination and assistance by CVEDS bringing together the concerns of multiple companies, effective change can be delivered.

The entrepreneurship component of the program includes the resource materials and advice available to anyone accessing the CVEDS office. In addition, workshops and seminars aimed at new entrepreneurs are also facilitated by CVEDS when they are made available through senior government agencies or other community partners (e.g., Community Futures).

Alignment with Regional Plans

RGS Objective 3-A: Support local business retention, development and investment.

Sustainability Strategy, Objective 8.3.2., action b: Continue to provide information resources and support to local businesses and entrepreneurs to establish businesses in the Comox Valley.

Program Goal

- #1 Growth in business activities occurs as a result of responsiveness by local government and economic development partners to challenges and opportunities faced by local business.

Measurable Outcome

- a) Business feedback through the visitation program shows a decreasing citation of specific challenges and barriers over time, including local government regulations.

Actions and Performance Measures

- #1 Promote the Business Visitation Program to the business community.

Performance Measure:

- Key information is included on the program website and online information is available.

- Number of onsite visits to local employers and presentations to business groups or associations are conducted.

#2 Provide timely and up to date information for businesses, entrepreneurs and investors.

Performance Measure:

- Information resources are updated on an annual basis or as data becomes available.

#3 Utilizing information obtained through business interviews, identify common challenges, issues and barriers and develop effective responses in partnership with appropriate agencies or government departments.

Performance Measure:

- Summary of identified issues summarized and presented at least annually and responses documented.

Economic Indicators (for ongoing tracking)

- Total annual business (Class 6) property tax revenue is increasing as a result of new investment and expansion (versus tax increases or market assessment increases)
- Number of business licenses renewed, number of new business licenses
- Number of commercial/industrial building permits
- Value of commercial/industrial building permits

Priority Ranking

Primary

Partnerships

Local Government

Economic Development Association of BC

4.5. Export Development Program (Core)

Canada is a trading nation with extensive integration into global supply chains and many sectors of the economy are oriented toward export sales. British Columbia has a similar profile and has benefited from proximity to fast-growing Asian markets over the last decade. From 2001 to 2011 the share of BC commodity exports to the United States fell from 70% to 43% while China increased from 2% to 15% and South Korea from 2% to 8%. Japan increased slightly from 13% to 14%.

Natural resources are the province's main commodity exports, although the mix of products has shifted considerably in the last decade. Wood products declined from 32% to 17% of the total while coal increased from 5% to 22%. The Comox Valley is no longer a significant producer of natural resource commodities so export opportunities are more likely to be found in agrifood products (which have maintained 8% of provincial commodity exports in the last decade) or high-value services such as those produced by the growing number of independent technology workers in the Comox Valley who are employed remotely or as contractors for large companies elsewhere, including internationally.

Encouraging Comox Valley companies to expand their sales into export markets creates economic benefits for not just the exporting company but more broadly in the regional economy. Exporting companies tend to have higher-value production, partly because accessing larger markets allows for economies of scale in production. It also allows companies to target niche markets with more specialized, higher-value products that would not find a sufficient market in the local area. (And as noted in Section 2.1, exporting companies have been shown to have higher labour productivity than non-exporting companies).

By moving into higher-value production, exporting companies tend to invest more in machinery and equipment and productivity-boosting technologies and therefore require more skilled workers that are paid higher wages. Expansion of exporting is therefore an effective strategy for the Comox Valley to realize gains in average employment incomes.

These positive economic outcomes can be realized by exporting within Canada and British Columbia, but the focus of most senior government programs to help companies are understandably focused on international exporting.

Alignment with Regional Plans

RGS Goal 3: Achieve a sustainable, resilient and dynamic local economy that supports businesses and the region's entrepreneurial spirit.

Program Goal

An increasing number of Comox Valley companies successfully export goods and services outside the local area while existing exporters increase the value of their exports.

Measurable Outcome

- a) An increasing number of Comox Valley companies indicate they are exporting beyond the local area.

Actions and Performance Measures

#1 Develop and maintain a database of exporting companies in the local area.

Performance Measure:

- Number of companies in the export database.
- Quarterly communications on exporting specific information is provided to exporting firms.
- Annual "Report on Exporting Capabilities" is produced that allows for baseline analysis and a determination on the economic status of exporting in the Valley.

#2 Exporting companies are supported and included in inbound buying and external trade missions organized by provincial and/or federal agencies or industry associations.

Performance Measure:

- Number of times information on inbound buying and external trade missions is provided to candidate firms and participating firms are supported.

#3 Coordinate the delivery of export-related workshops, seminars/webinars, and specific export outreach within.

Performance Measure:

- Resources and tools are delivered where there is a fit with local company capabilities and export agency partners.

Economic Indicators (for ongoing tracking)

- Percentage of business survey and business visitation program respondents who indicate they are exporting internationally, out of province but within Canada, and out of the local area but within BC.

Priority Ranking

Secondary

Partnerships

- Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Innovation
- Vancouver Island and Coast Economic Developers Association
- Economic Development Association of BC
- Economic Development Association of Canada
- Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade
- Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters

4.6. Downtown, Waterfront and Local Area Enhancement Program (Core)

Local area planning has long been an important concept in community development and in many centers has become a standard mechanism for engagement with the community, setting neighbourhood or small-area zoning and other regulations, and also encouraging increased economic activity. Common local area business focused efforts by communities that are currently in place in the Valley include the Business Improvement Associations which are enacted under local bylaws for the downtown Comox and downtown Courtenay areas.

In addition to these distinct geographic regions, there are multiple comprehensive development areas within each of the Comox Valley government jurisdictions and many smaller settlement nodes within the Regional Growth Strategy that can be looked at as opportunities for further focus as nodes of economic activity. There are compelling economic, social and environmental benefits to having concentrated economic activities occurring in these areas and to provide planning and programs that support their specific needs.

The downtown cores of the three municipalities in the Comox Valley are key commercial and civic centres for the region. The rationale for encouraging healthy and vibrant downtown areas includes:

- Providing community gathering places that provide a range of public and private services in close proximity.
- Providing a focal point for tourists and possible residential migrants.
- Providing, in many cases, small leasable spaces for start-up businesses to get established.
- Encouraging business vitality and innovation through proximity to other businesses and professionals, increasing the likelihood of innovative partnerships and cross-pollination of ideas.
- Providing, in some cases, more economically efficient development locations that capitalize on existing infrastructure and provide related benefits of density, such as support for transit services.
- Through mixed-use development of multi-family housing, providing an alternative housing form that will appeal to some residents who value close proximity to services and the convenience of smaller homes.

The waterfront is a defining characteristic of the Comox Valley and an important part of its economic development history, allowing for the efficient movement of goods and people and access to ocean resources. There is a lengthy list of important regional waterfront assets that support tourism, aquaculture, forestry and recreation. These include Comox Harbour (including a municipally-owned marina, a federal Small Craft Harbours facility and the private-owned Comox Valley Marina, which includes the region's float plane terminal), Courtenay Slough Marina, the log sort in Union Bay, various marine sites along Baynes Sound (including the recently upgraded Fanny Bay Harbour), the BC Ferry Terminal, and the boat launch at Point Holmes. Key adjacent sites include Kitty Coleman/Bates Beach, Saratoga Beach, and waterfront industrial sites, such as the vacant Field sawmill site.

Other local areas that don't fit either the downtown or waterfront category include the commercial/residential nodes in the Regional District, including Union Bay, Saratoga Beach, and Mount Washington.

One issue raised in multiple meetings is that development cost charges (DCCs) are levied at the same rate in areas with existing infrastructure, like downtowns, and greenfield development sites that require all new infrastructure. Reducing DCCs for downtowns and possibly other areas with existing infrastructure creates a financial incentive for more sustainable forms of development featuring higher density and easier access to transportation connections like bike trails.

Further, the Downtown Courtenay Business Improvement Association is launching a Façade Improvement Program Grant to support business and property owners enhancing their storefronts and buildings to “create a more appealing and marketable environment on the street attracting people and businesses to the area.”

The Downtown Courtenay Business Improvement Association and Comox Business In Action have also identified the need for assistance with dealing with available lease space and the infilling of empty lots.

Alignment with Regional Plans

RGS Policy 3A-4: Work with the CVEDS to focus investment and business development in *Town Centres*.

RGS Policy 3B-1: Support the intensification of mixed-use office, retail and other commercial employment activities in *Town Centres* located within *Core Settlement Areas*.

City of Courtenay, OCP, Bylaw No. 2387, 4.2 Commercial #5

City of Courtenay, OCP, Bylaw No. 2387, 4.6.5 Greenway Strategy #3

City of Courtenay, OCP, Bylaw No. 2387, 4.6.6 Courtenay Riverway

Town of Comox OCP Bylaw 1685, Objectives 2.1.3 (1): To provide a compact vibrant centre for Comox with a broad range of commercial activities at ground level.

Program Goal

Increasing focus by CVEDS, in partnership with local governments, business and community organizations, supports new initiatives that result in improved economic activity including increases in core area population, business start ups and revitalization initiatives.

Measurable Outcome

- a) Increased business counts and property assessment in defined local areas, including downtowns.
- b) Increased population in the defined local areas that include residential development.

Actions and Performance Measures

#1 Identify and report on downtown and waterfront enhancement and redevelopment incentive programs.

Performance Measure:

- Potential programs and policies are identified that directly and positively impact the competitive position of downtown for business and residential expansion, investment and redevelopment.

#2 Engage in 1-2 strategic regional and provincial initiatives, to determine harbour-related marketing and infrastructure improvement opportunities.

Performance Measure:

- If appropriate regional or provincial initiatives are identified, resulting in participation in those initiatives.

- #3 Support the expansion or enhancement of harbour infrastructure, in the form of review/assessment of economic impacts of potential improvement proposals, that results in increased marine based vessel traffic including additional moorage, offloading and shipping facilities, and expansion of seaplane based facilities.

Performance Measure:

- Support provided for expansion projects and connectivity initiatives.

- # 4 Support initiatives to enhance connectivity between waterfront areas and nearby shopping districts and the redevelopment or improvement of public or private sites.

Performance Measure:

- Support provided for expansion projects and connectivity initiatives.

Economic Indicators (for ongoing tracking)

- Downtown or local area populations (from Census) as a share of total regional population
- Number of business license renewals and new licenses issued in defined areas
- Number of building permits issued for business renovations in defined areas
- Number of new residential housing permits issued in defined areas
- Changed property assessment in defined areas

Priority Ranking

Tertiary

Partnerships

Local Governments

Local Downtown BIA's

5. Strategic Focus Area: Investment Attraction and Promotion

5.1. Agrifood Investment and Land Utilization Program (Core)

Increasing local food production and food security have been identified as both opportunities and priorities in several recent food plans and studies on Vancouver Island, as well as the Regional Growth Strategy and Sustainability Strategy in the Comox Valley.

The Comox Valley has significant potential to increase food production. Only about 30% of the land in the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) is used to produce food and the areas that are currently being farmed could be farmed more intensively. Revenue per hectare in the ALR in the Comox Valley is about 15% of what is generated in the Fraser Valley.

There is similar potential to expand the shellfish industry through expansion of tenures (for example, the First Nation-owned Pentlatch Seafoods has applied for 515 hectares of additional tenure for geoduck beds) and creation of higher-value seafood processing. The Comox Valley is the centre of the provincial shellfish aquaculture industry, which is currently producing about \$20 million per year of farmgate value compared to more than \$50 million being produced in Atlantic Canada (according to Statistics Canada figures). The BC industry added about \$2.5 million in value over the 10-year period from 2001 to 2011 (+15%) compared to a \$14 million increase in Atlantic Canada (+34%). Global market demand for farmed shellfish is strong as populations grow, incomes increase in key target markets in Asia, and the supply of wild fish is fixed or falling.

The key to increased agrifood investment and land utilization is to find new business-oriented producers who have the capital and management capacity to either develop new agrifood businesses or strengthen existing businesses, allowing aging farmers and shellfish growers to retire. This will occur by continuing to improve information flow and networking with potential investors, ensuring that the right people are aware of the local potential and opportunities. The program will build on previous efforts which have generated investment leads and enquiries from all over the world.

There are believed to be opportunities to target Asian investment, particularly in aquaculture and possibly in value-added agrifood. The best targets for investment in land-based agrifood are in metropolitan BC and Europe. Agriculture conditions, including costs and the type of growing environment, is similar to Europe and there is strong interest in emigrating out of Europe.

Alignment with Regional Plans

RGS Policy 3B-2: Protect and enhance ALR lands with the intent to grow and diversify the base of agricultural activities.

RGS Policy 3B-4: Explore initiatives that support value-added, community-based business development, including, but not limited to, local food processing, specialty forest products and other value-added production manufacturing.

RGS Policy 3C-1: Work with the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands and the Agricultural Land Commission to develop strategies and actions to increase the amount of actively farmed agricultural lands, and reduce barriers to agricultural viability in *Agricultural Areas*.

RGS Policy 3C-2: Encourage the development of infrastructure to help increase agricultural production such as irrigation water and regional drainage improvements.

RGS Policy 3C-3 Work to develop policy that limits country estate residential impact but supports small-scale agricultural operations to enable new farmers to enter the industry.
 RGS Policy 3C-7: Support regional aquaculture industries and collaborate with them on developing foreshore land use and water management policies that protect and steward on-shore and off-shore shellfish beds and marine water quality.
 Sustainability Strategy Goal 6.1: Support a diverse and thriving local agriculture system.

City of Courtenay, OCP, Bylaw No. 2387, 4.5 Agricultural
 City of Courtenay, OCP, Bylaw No. 2387, 4.1 Schools
 City of Courtenay, OCP, Bylaw No. 2387, 5. Transportation
 City of Courtenay, OCP, Bylaw No. 2387, 7. Implementation
 City of Courtenay, OCP, Bylaw No. 2387, 8. Development Permit Areas
 City of Courtenay, OCP, Bylaw No. 2387, 9. Local Area Plans
 City of Courtenay, OCP, Bylaw No. 2387, 10. Planning for Climate Change / Objective 2

Program Goal

New business-oriented investments into agricultural land or in shellfish tenure, support increased use within Agriculture Land Reserve and foreshore areas, resulting in an increase in food production and an increase in intensive processing.

Measurable Outcome

- a) The percentage of land in the ALR that is used to produce food increases
- b) Revenue per hectare in the ALR increases
- c) Shellfish tenure areas are increased where environmentally suitable to do so and new species are approved by the appropriate regulatory agencies.

Actions and Performance Measures

- #1 Ensure that specific land and marine based investment opportunities (new or existing expansions) are catalogued into investor-ready marketing profiles suitable to the industry and the Provincial Nominee Program and a system for distribution created.

Performance Measure:

- Six profiles created and distributed to appropriate regional, provincial and federal partners.

- #2 Identify and attend key international trade-specific shows, while supporting inbound delegations or other defined initiatives relating to potential agrifood investments.

Performance Measure:

- Attend two regional and two international shows and/or other initiatives participated in, as well as project-specific measurements such as number of prospects identified and supported.

- #3 Actively support industry or government-led efforts to identify and resolve areas of policy and regulation that appear to delay or inhibit new investment in the land or marine base and increased food production opportunities.

Performance Measure:

- Participation in regulatory review initiatives.

Economic Indicators (for ongoing tracking)

- Same as the Measurable Outcomes noted above.

Priority Ranking

Primary

Partnerships

Food and Beverage Canada

BC Shellfish Growers Association

Ministry of Jobs, Tourism, and Innovation

5.2. Destination Marketing Program (Core)

As one of British Columbia's leading economic sectors, tourism has impacted on British Columbia's economy in many ways. During the last decade, tourism in BC grew more rapidly than the economy as a whole, despite difficulties in the international economy and major world events like the 9/11 attacks and SARS outbreak. In addition to being a significant contributor to the Canadian and BC economies, it has also expanded very quickly in the Comox Valley in the last decade. From 2000 to 2009 room revenues in the Comox Valley grew by 79% compared to 26% growth on Vancouver Island and 21% growth in BC in that time period.

While some destination marketing has occurred to attract visitors to the Comox Valley, much of the growth can be attributed to the arrival of WestJet and the new connectivity to the Alberta market, along with new and expanded resorts, hotels and attractions. While these trends are favourable, the region's ability to market its accessibility and attractions was falling behind the dozens of BC communities that had implemented the Additional Hotel Room Tax (AHRT) since 2005, providing them the resources needed to keep their region top of mind in key markets. The result is today, despite many successes, the Comox Valley remains a relatively unknown destination in BC. A disconnect between local visitor services and destination market activities, as well as a global economic slowdown and ongoing uncertainty that has depressed international visitation, have also hampered recent growth in the sector.

Recent initiatives have laid the foundation to change tourism's economic impact in a profound way over the coming years. The approval of the AHRT in Courtenay (effective March 2013) will more than double destination marketing resources for the region, while the construction of the Vancouver Island Visitor Centre and the development of integrated strategies (including the Comox Valley Tourism Plan and Visitor Services Strategy) have laid the framework for integrated marketing of key product focus areas, sales fulfillment approaches and systems.

AHRT revenues, despite currently being collected only in Courtenay at present, are expected to reach \$195,000 per year. These funds will be leveraged by current CVEDS (the regional Destination Marketing Organization) destination marketing resources, and further expanded by the private sector, to drive increased overnight visits to the region.

Tourism's ability to achieve significant economic and employment potential depends on marketing partnerships at all levels. In addition to an AHRT Advisory Committee and new multi-sector Destination Marketing Advisory Committee, ongoing partnerships with the Vancouver Island Visitor Centre, Tourism Vancouver Island, Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training, the newly established Destination BC and the Canadian Tourism Commission will be critical.

As destination marketing defines the 'face' of the region, further partnerships were identified through consultation with non-tourism industry sectors including developers and real estate, that defined the opportunity to expand the destination marketing message, to promote the region as a place for relocation as a way to drive increased investment (Residential Relocation Program).

These new and established partnerships, increased resources, coupled with the expanded connectivity at the Comox Valley Airport and Harbour Air, places the Comox Valley in a stronger strategic position to compete in a provincial-level tourism marketplace and drive increased economic impact by attracting new visitors to the region.

Alignment with Regional Plans

RGS Policy 3B-9: Encourage tourism, including cultural and eco-tourism opportunities, within the Comox Valley.

Program Goal

Expanded and enhanced destination marketing initiatives result in increased visitation and overnight stays to the Comox Valley; recognized as the premier, year round Island destination.

Measurable Outcome

- a) The region sees improved awareness of the destination and its attractions, demonstrated by increased visitor volumes and overnight stays.
- b) Increased partnerships with industry businesses leverage marketing resources to extend the reach and further improve the awareness of the region.

Actions and Performance Measures

- #1 Development and implementation of destination marketing tactics that target defined markets and product to support increased overnight stays and extend length of stays in the region.

Performance Measure:

- Increased number of measurable marketing programs reach and results (e.g., web hits, contest entries, bookings), room revenue, participating businesses in marketing initiatives, and visitors accessing key gateway points (e.g., Comox Valley Airport, VIVC and Mount Washington Alpine Resort).

- #2 Expanded partnership opportunities are developed in conjunction with industry sector business and Provincial and National level destination marketing organizations.

Economic Indicators (for ongoing tracking)

- Overnight stays and rev par (revenue per available room)
- Earned media (values)
- Marketing results (web visits, VIVC inquiries, social media followers)
- AHRT revenues

Priority Ranking

Primary

Partnerships

Local and regional private sector businesses, events, attractions and associations

Comox Valley Airport

Local and regional Governments

K'ómoks First Nation

Tourism Mount Washington

Tourism Vancouver Island

Destination BC

Canadian Tourism Commission

5.3. Sustainability-Related Business Opportunities Program (Core)

The Sustainability Strategy and Regional Growth Strategy have established a strong direction for sustainability initiatives in the Comox Valley. These plans touch upon most aspects of life but also provide the impetus to explore new economic development opportunities related to sustainability.

As an example, the RGS has an objective to “plan for renewable energy generation”, while the Sustainability Strategy recommends promoting “eco-industrial development that turns wastes into resources and builds cooperative relationships amongst businesses and industrial and other land uses.” The Regional Solid Waste Management Plan also echoes these sustainability objectives by targeting significant reductions in the amount of per capita waste for disposal in landfills.

A waste energy plant converts non-recyclable waste materials into usable heat, electricity or fuel. There were more than 80 such plants constructed in the United States to incinerate municipal waste through the 1980s, but these were huge plants with upfront capital costs of \$100 million or more. More advanced technologies now allow for more flexible and smaller systems that are being installed at remote locations, including in British Columbia (e.g., Kelly Lake Métis Settlement in the Peace River region). Europe may provide better models to consider as there are more than 400 waste energy plants that currently process more than 20% of household waste, converting it into electricity and heat.

An extensive feasibility analysis would be required to determine waste sources, which could be municipal wastes and also include industrial waste (from forestry operations, agriculture, etc.), as well as uses for the generated energy (connect to the Vancouver Island grid, be used for some sort of co-located facility like a greenhouse, etc.).

Waste energy is only one possibility and the development of other “green” or “sustainable” technologies or projects may also emerge. These could include a wide range of professional and technical services that support sustainable development, “green” construction, alternative energy generation, including the Comox Strathcona Waste Management Service.

Alignment with Regional Plans

RGS Policy 3B-7: Encourage green jobs and technology to locate in the Comox Valley.

RGS Policy 3C-9: Encourage renewable energy generation and related jobs.

Sustainability Strategy Objective 4.2.1, Action i: Develop a bio-fuels strategy in partnership with technology providers and stakeholders who have access to organic waste streams as part of a zero waste or organic waste reuse strategy.

Sustainability Strategy, Goal 8.2: Innovative industries that support sustainable development are encouraged in the Comox Valley.

City of Courtenay, OCP, Bylaw No. 2387, 10. Planning for Climate Change

Program Goal

New investment in land and capital is occurring on industrial lands within the Comox Valley including renewable energy production, waste energy facilities and other sustainable energy or technological based companies.

Measurable Outcome

- a) Vacant industrial lands within the Valley and specifically the Village of Cumberland are identified for potential investment.
- b) Industrial land development and servicing is planned for companies and individuals are targeted for sustainable energy production.

Actions and Performance Measures

#1 Work in partnership with local Comox Valley governments and the Comox Strathcona Waste Management Service to develop a means to evaluate the specific potential for waste energy and other sustainability-related business development / investment opportunities.

Performance Measure:

- 3-5 key investment opportunities are developed into marketing prospectus.

#2 Establish a process that specifically documents the investment opportunities for development related to the landfill and local government waste resources.

Performance Measure:

- Landfill related options for energy production from local and regional waste are tested against market potential.

#3 Ensure that the Comox Valley is represented and involved in federal and provincial initiatives in the area of sustainable technologies (energy or otherwise).

Performance Measure:

- Sustainable energy and technology programs and initiatives at senior government levels are documented and provided to local companies.

Economic Indicators (for ongoing tracking)

- Property assessment from sites identified as hosting sustainability-related business developments.

Priority Ranking

Secondary

Partnerships

Local Government

5.4. Air Service Support Program (Support)

By providing outstanding air connectivity between the Comox Valley, Vancouver and Alberta (as well as seasonal flights to the Caribbean), the Comox Valley Airport has a positive economic impact on virtually every sector of the regional economy, especially tourism.

The business survey conducted as part of this Strategic Plan Update showed that airport expansion (through new route connections) is the second most popular major investment or initiative that respondents feel would enhance the growth of the Comox Valley economy. This topic also came up repeatedly in the industry consultation - for example, Comox Valley residents working in technology industries would benefit from direct flights to Seattle.

The Comox Valley Airport Commission takes the lead on all airport-related initiatives with CVEDS providing assistance and support where appropriate. The airport's visual sight requirements have recently been increased due to tree growth and runway repair work, which increases the probability of low cloud cover making it impossible to land. This issue will need to be resolved before serious efforts to attract new air carriers can resume and there is a risk of diminished service from existing carriers if too many cancellations occur. Clearly given the huge importance of the airport to the regional economy, the inability to resolve the tree issue would have a significant negative impact on the region.

According to an economic impact study by InterVISTAS Consulting, the addition of a new, daily trans-border flight would attract an additional \$9.7 million per year in spending to the Comox Valley economy. If a daily domestic service was lost due to the increased unreliability of the airport, there would be a decline of about \$20 million per year in revenue for regional businesses.

Float plane service at Comox Harbour is another component of the region's available air services. It provides direct access to downtown Vancouver and Richmond that can be faster and more convenient for some users rather than going through airports on both ends of the flight.

The Courtenay Airpark is a small public airstrip located near downtown Courtenay. It is used primarily by recreational fliers but is also available for private business use. The Airpark is managed by a volunteer organization and includes some amenities like a flight school, aircraft maintenance shop, and aircraft charter businesses.

Efficient and affordable air services are increasingly important for mobile workers and entrepreneurs. They should regularly be incorporated into economic development and regional planning initiatives in order to provide ongoing support to the continued success of each of the Comox Valley's air service facilities. This includes synergies with the Vancouver Island Visitor Centre and expanded tourism marketing efforts through the Additional Hotel Room Tax, as well as regional planning issues like signage, onsite tools and airport infrastructure improvements.

Alignment with Regional Plans

City of Courtenay, OCP, Bylaw No. 2387, 4.2.3 Policies (5): Airport / Marina Commercial.
Town of Comox OCP Bylaw 1685, Policy 2.1.6.3(c): Industrial development capable of supporting aeronautically oriented industries is encouraged, including businesses reliant on ready access to air cargo, given the proximity of land designated light industrial to the Comox Valley Airport.

Program Goal

- #1 Air passenger loads, additional scheduling and new routes provide net increases of visitors, business travelers, and residents to the Comox Valley annually.

Measurable Outcome

- a) Increase in air passenger volume, additional scheduling and new routes.

Actions and Performance Measures

- #1 Document, support and communicate to investors the critical role and economic impact of the Comox Valley Airport and the Comox-based float plane facilities to the local and regional economy.

.. .

Performance Measure:

- Research completed and included in annual work plans.

- #2 Provide supporting guidance, research and facilitation to ensure that barriers to ongoing success of air service facilities within the Comox Valley are resolved, with the objective of timely resolution and removal of challenges that are found to be impacting passenger travel and safety.

Performance Measure:

- Support provided to initiatives as required.

- #3 Support Comox Valley Airport Commission and airline-led marketing projects and other initiatives that support the maintenance of existing passenger volume at Comox Valley Airport and the Comox float plane facility and support service increases in new routes, air carriers and destinations that can be accessed by direct flights.

Performance Measure:

- Support provided to initiatives as required.

Economic Indicators (for ongoing tracking)

- Passenger volumes at Comox Valley Airport and Comox float plane facility

Priority Ranking

Primary

Partnerships

Local and regional private sector businesses, events, attractions, business and industry associations and service providers, Comox Valley Airport and tenants, CFB 19 Wing Comox, Local, Provincial and Federal Governments, K'ómoks First Nation, private land owners, air service providers

5.5. Resident and Entrepreneur Relocation Program (Core)

With the long-term evolution in the global economy away from the production of physical goods toward the production of services, especially in advanced economies like Canada's, the importance of human capita becomes more and more critical. Technology-based and business and professional services companies have a huge portion of their asset value reliant on the accumulated know-how and technical ability of their skilled workers. This is also increasingly true for the economic potential of a community and as a result, competition between communities is more and more based on the attraction and retention of human capital.

Ideal targets include new residents who either possess advanced skills and can work for existing Comox Valley companies or public sector organizations, as well as entrepreneurs who will start a business that ultimately employs other residents. A variant of these groups is a "lone wolf" who works independently as a remote employee or contractor, a description that applies to many of the attendees at the technology sector focus group and others involved in the growing tech community in the Comox Valley. Tapping into the linkages between the Valley's existing tech community and their networks in larger centres, with the goal of attracting similar individuals and companies (or company divisions), is another possible target.

Having more residents creates other economic benefits. First, they are consumers and expand the local market for various shops and services. This impact is enhanced if the new resident has a significant non-employment source of income, such as pension or investment income as a retiree. The economic analysis (see Appendix B) shows the Comox Valley with one of the lowest income shares from employment in the province, demonstrating how much these non-employment income sources are already supporting the regional economy.

Not all retirees are necessarily senior citizens, however. Many military personnel from 19 Wing Comox retire in their 40s or 50s with many productive work years ahead of them, yet still have the benefit of a fixed pension income. Targeting retired military personnel from across the country who have been posted to 19 Wing Comox at one point in their career is a possible market to tap into. Some retirees are no longer interested in day-to-day involvement with a business, but can provide financial resources and management advice in support of other local companies and entrepreneurs.

All of these possible economic roles provide justification for the strong sentiment that was expressed across a range of industry meetings that attracting more permanent residents to the Comox Valley is a better strategy than focusing on any particular sector. As an example, the communications and branding sessions defined the opportunity to move beyond a primary focus on external tourism product marketing and communications to include positioning the Comox Valley as a place for relocation, business expansion and focused investment. Discussion in the branding workshop suggested that the current CVEDS brand of "Wildly Sophisticated. Economically Unconventional." generally supports a reorientation toward resident attraction but it was suggested the brand message could be reflected more in the marketing.

The sources of these potential new residents are many and include immigrant investors, international students either staying in the Comox Valley after their studies or moving back after a period of years away, skilled entrepreneurs, retirees, "pre-retirees" who will start second businesses or second careers, former military personnel, and amenity migrants/lone wolves who work independently or at a distance and choose the Comox Valley for its lifestyle attributes. The latter segment is growing as the Valley's air connections provide a convenient location for workers

in oil and gas or major project development in northern British Columbia and Alberta to commute back and forth to work relatively easily.

Attracting more residents has linkages to a variety of other economic development programs and issues, including business succession and the need for aging business owners to find willing buyers of their businesses, the attraction of skilled workers to counteract the aging population, and further development of the Comox Valley's international trade linkages by encouraging more international immigration. The latter point can be significantly influenced by North Island College through its attraction of international students.

Residential growth also has a logical connection to the issue of housing. Rising housing costs were raised in several consultation sessions as a potential barrier for attracting skilled workers and retaining both skilled youth and retirees. Housing costs are considered a competitive advantage in attracting people from the Lower Mainland, but a competitive disadvantage when attracting people from across Canada. Efforts to provide a wide range of housing options and different price points is an important component to residential attraction and retention initiatives.

Alignment with Regional Plans

Town of Comox OCP Bylaw 1685, Objective 2.2.2 (1): To create a desirable location for people of all ages to live, work, and retire.

Program Goal

Inbound immigration of new immigrants, retirees, entrepreneurs, and skilled young professionals are driving population growth in the Comox Valley.

Measurable Outcome

- a) Census data on migration shows an increase in new immigrants, retirees, entrepreneurs, and skilled young professionals as a percentage of population growth.

Actions and Performance Measures

#1 Partnership agreements and protocol created with post-secondary institutions.

Performance Measure:

- Number of student alumni contacted and provided with information.

#2 Market Provincial Nominee Program-specific and other suitable investment opportunities.

Performance Measure:

- Number of investment opportunities profiled.
- Project-specific measures (e.g., number of prospects identified through events).

#3 Ensure that "lifestyle-based" amenities are maintained/improved.

Performance Measure:

- Number of "lifestyle amenity" improvement projects supported.

- #4 Analyze and market the ongoing spectrum of the Valley's housing market and support policy changes or efforts to ensure a wide-range of housing options are available.

Performance Measure:

- Number of recommended policy changes or other initiatives identified in support of housing options.

- #5 Support the increase in scope and reach of Professional networking groups.

Performance Measure:

- Instances of support provided to networking groups.

- #6 Develop and distribute marketing materials for resident attraction.

Performance Measure:

- Development of resident marketing products and measurements.

Economic Indicators (for ongoing tracking)

- Population growth in total and in target demographic groups
- Number of Provincial Nominee Program files opened and value of investments
- Number of registered pensioners who are ex-Canadian Forces
- Self-employment income in total and as a share of overall Comox Valley income

Priority Ranking

Tertiary

Partnerships

Private sectors businesses, developers, investors and service providers.

5.6. Health Services Program (Support)

Health care is already a significant economic generator in the Comox Valley, accounting for an estimated 12% of all employment and supporting an estimated 9% of all personal income in the Valley. The existing St. Joseph's Hospital alone accounts for 3% of regional employment.

There are two main components to the health services program. First is related to opportunities at the new Comox Valley Regional Hospital. There will be significant short-term impacts from the development on the construction sector and related services, based on the \$400 million construction budget, plus the additional development of medical offices and related facilities that is expected to occur in the surrounding area. In addition the potential will be explored with health care officials, developers and North Island College to attract new and specialized services that would complement the new facility. These may be related to medical research, the training of medical professionals and other health care workers, or the delivery of new health services to an aging population.

The second aspect of the program relates to the current St. Joseph's Hospital site. This facility provides a tremendous economic development opportunity to attract a major new economic driver to central Comox. There are many options to be explored within the realm of health services, from more extended care and long-term care to lab work or research spaces. There are also possible synergies with School District 71 over the use of an excess school site across the street.

The vacant hospital site has the potential to provide the Comox Valley with a key competitive advantage in attracting a significant new health care operation (compared to alternative locations that would require the construction of expensive new facilities). The existing hospital site can also be viewed as a complement to the new hospital as all of the new growth in related and support services does not necessarily need to occur in the area immediately surrounding the new hospital. All of these options will be explored with health authorities, local governments, and the hospital site owners.

Alignment with Regional Plans

Town of Comox OCP Bylaw 1685, Objectives (3): To encourage the redevelopment of the St. Joseph's General Hospital site to retain health care and other complimentary uses.

Program Goal

Employment impacts from the medical services and health care industry are increased as a result of a new hospital facility and associated private sector spending and renewal and repositioning of the health care services provided from the St Joseph's hospital site.

Measurable Outcome

Employment in health care increases.

Actions and Performance Measures

- #1 Support and facilitate a process with Town of Comox in conversations with the Diocese of Victoria, Vancouver Island Health Authority and other stakeholders that provides opportunities to identify future potential uses for the current hospital site with the goal of it continuing to support health services.

Performance Measure:

- Support provided to the opportunity-identification and analysis process.

- #2 Provide marketing, economic data and support services that contribute to the development of health-oriented facilities, office space and new employment through recruitment of health professionals and service providers to the region.

Performance Measure:

- Support provided to influence the recruitment of health care professionals.

Economic Indicators (for ongoing tracking)

Health-related employment.

Property tax revenue on health sector properties.

Priority Ranking

Secondary

Partnerships

Local Government

Vancouver Island Health Authority

St. Josephs Hospital

5.7. Visitor Services Opportunities Program (Core)

The 5 year strategy for tourism in BC described the importance of visitor information and visitor services as critical to a region's ability to derive economic impact:

Exceptional visitor experiences are built on accurate and timely information, outstanding customer service and products, and by exceeding visitors' expectations. Exceptional experiences will lead visitors to increase spending by participating in more activities, extending their trip in BC, returning for another trip and/or recommending BC to others.

BC's is recognized as having one of the most effective Visitor Services Programs in North America. With 100 visitor centres in its network, the Hello BC reservation systems generated over \$6 million in industry revenue and over 48,000 transactions in 2008.

With the opening of the Vancouver Island Visitor Centre (VIVC) in early 2012, owned by CVEDS, the Comox Valley moved to a sales-focused approach tied to the region's destination marketing tactics, which is still a relatively rare system in BC communities. For the first time, direct sales of accommodations, attractions and activities occurred through the visitor centre and the VIVC demonstrated its capacity by attracting more true "visitors" and extending length of stay and per diem expenditures, as demonstrated with sales in excess of \$100,000 while surpassing 2011 visitor volumes, all in less than a year of full operation.

At the same time, the majority of Island Visitor Centres have seen year-over-year declines in visitor volumes and are struggling to maintain funding levels and relevance in today's environment, with the increasing use of smart phones, TripAdvisor, and any number of resources and tools available to a visitor. Early in the project development phase, CVEDS and the project partners understood the "build it and they will come" approach would not work, and that despite the award-winning and innovative construction, services and attraction that the VIVC is today, it would take continually focused resources, planning and tactics to ensure it fully leverages visitor volumes and thereby economic benefit for the area.

The new Visitor Services Marketing Opportunities Program packages the sales of VIVC marketing opportunities, including racking and screen advertising, ensuring the private sector has a system in place with which to leverage the Centre to drive increased economic activity. With the Memorandum of Understanding established in 2012 between the Comox Valley Airport (YQQ) and CVEDS to include YQQ advertising sales and connectivity to the VIVC for visitor services support, the region has moved towards a more in-depth and integrated approach to visitor services in the region.

With the first year of the VIVC completed, a Visitor Services Strategy in place, the Visitor Services Marketing Opportunities Program expanded, and new destination marketing resources provided through the Additional Hotel Room Tax, the region is better equipped than ever to proactively drive an expanding tourism sector through a marketing sales fulfilment based approach.

Alignment with Regional Plans

City of Courtenay, OCP, Bylaw No. 2387, 4.1 Downtown / #10

Program Goal

Increased awareness of the Vancouver Island Visitor Centre programs and services, results in the facility being one of the most successful Centers in BC, both in its ability to leverage sales to visitors, and in providing a vehicle for expanded reach by industry & businesses.

Measurable Outcome

- a) *VIVC is reporting increased visitation, business engagement and product sales as a result of enhanced awareness of its services and improved sales capacity.*

Actions and Performance Measures

- #1 Increase business and industry awareness and participation in the VIVC sales and Visitor Services opportunity programs.

Performance Measure:

- Increased business participation in VIVC and Visitor Services Programs.

- #2 Identify barriers to increasing bookings and sales, and determine specific tasks that would address these barriers.

Performance Measure:

- Increased sales of bookable products and services.
- Barriers to sales are identified and specific tasks determined that would address these barriers.

- #3 Plan ongoing events and activities for the VIVC in partnership with tourism, arts, culture and industry, as a way to drive increased visitation and usage of the VIVC and awareness of the participating partners.

Performance Measure:

- Monthly events hosted, with participation levels tracked.

- #4 Develop, evaluate and implement marketing and communications technology, tools and displays to enhance the ability of the VIVC to drive visitation and communicate sales opportunities that assist in conversion of sales.

Performance Measure:

- Number of sales technologies & tools implemented, maintained and updated.

Economic Indicators (for ongoing tracking)

Same as Measurable Outcomes above.

Priority Ranking

Secondary (but funding commitment guaranteed through contract for services)

Partnerships

Local and regional private sector businesses, events, attractions and associations, Comox Valley Airport, local and regional governments, K'ómoks First Nation, Tourism Mount Washington, Tourism Vancouver Island, Destination BC, Canadian Tourism Commission

6. Strategic Focus Area: Economic Development Coordination, Facilitation and Communication

6.1. K'ómoks First Nation Liaison Program (Support)

First Nations are an increasingly important player in economic development throughout British Columbia. First Nations business development is occurring throughout the province, often in traditional resource industries like forestry and fishing as well as tourism and a wide variety of other industries. The K'ómoks First Nation (KFN) is no exception with Pentlatch Seafoods, the I-Hos Gallery, Puntledge RV Campground, and K'ómoks Forestry Corporation.

Many current and future economic development opportunities in the Comox Valley will be realized only with the participation of the K'ómoks First Nation (KFN). CVEDS has a role to maintain regular communication with the Band on economic development opportunities of mutual interest, to facilitate partnerships that will enable the Nation's opportunities to be fully realized, and to promote Band-related opportunities when appropriate. CVEDS may also have a role in assisting the Band with selecting project partners, such as doing a screening of initial applicants to a Request for Qualifications.

As an example of how CVEDS can provide assistance, the Band is currently growing its seafood processing business and might benefit from connecting with Provincial trade officials in Asia that CVEDS has worked with in the past, or working jointly to resolve regulatory challenges relating to the expansion of shellfish tenure areas.

KFN is also exploring development opportunities for the Puntledge Reserve in the short term. It is already zoned for commercial use (by the KFN) and there is potential for high-density residential and commercial development. It also currently contains a small gravel pit, sawmill, and log home facility.

There are other longer-term opportunities being explored on proposed treaty settlement lands and some adjacent fee simple lands the Band has acquired. Some of these are adjacent to the proposed Kensington Island Properties (KIP) development and has potential for residential development. Other treaty settlement lands are near the base of Mount Washington at the intersection with the new Island Highway. This site has potential for economic opportunities associated with Mount Washington Report, along with significant timber values, commercial and retail development and a gravel pit. This type of project would require KFN to partner with a developer and CVEDS could help facilitate finding the right partner.

Alignment with Regional Plans

RGS Policy 3A-2: Ensure the creation of regional economic development plans include multi party process involving all local governments and economic development stakeholders, including the K'ómoks First Nation, and relevant non-government.

RGS Policy 3A-5: Support economic objectives and initiatives of the K'ómoks First Nation, including future economic opportunities, where appropriate, on K'ómoks First Nation lands.

Program Goal

K'ómoks First Nation (KFN) is a leading economic development driver in the Comox Valley in areas of land development, tourism, and shellfish aquaculture and seafood processing.

Measurable Outcome

KFN-owned and managed companies provide employment and economic opportunities throughout the region.

Actions and Performance Measures

#1 Regular communications and contact is made with K'ómoks First Nation through formal and informal channels to identify opportunities of mutual interest for development opportunities.

Performance Measure:

- Regular schedule of contacts and dialogue is maintained.

#2 Establish a framework for partnering with KFN on lead generation, development partner review process, and other assistance and facilitation efforts that lead to increased options for economic development.

Performance Measure:

- Framework established.

#3 Inclusion of First Nations cultural attraction and aboriginal tourism activities into regional destination marketing, communication and visitor services activities.

Performance Measure:

- Attractions and activities incorporated into marketing and communication products and tools.

Priority Ranking

Primary

Partnerships

KFN

6.2. Communications and Media Relations Program (Core)

The very nature of the CVEDS constitution, board of directors, and CVRD contract structure requires regular reporting of critical information to local governments, elected officials and senior staff on an ongoing basis. Consultation with industry groups as well as the CVEDS Board identified the need for improved communication as a critical priority arising from this updated Strategic Plan.

With the completion of the 2005 Economic Development Strategy, there was a focus on the development and implementation of tools to support enhanced communication around the Valley's investment and tourism opportunities, as well as communicating CVEDS services within the region. This resulted in newly branded websites, social media portals, print and display collateral and e-newsletters.

A communications and media agency of record was secured with a focus initially on culinary and agritourism, and expanded with a focus on tourism and destination product that was integrated into the region's destination marketing efforts.

A Communications Session that was held as part of the Strategic Plan update process presented a number of community best practices in communications and defined a desire to ensure not only tourism opportunities were being communicated, but were expanded to include driving awareness around the region for its investment and relocation opportunities. This includes tactics focused on entrepreneurs, the expansion opportunities at 19 Wing Comox and the new Comox Valley Regional Hospital, as well as the food and beverage sector, active retirees and airport expansion.

Further, as an entity representing the region as a whole, CVEDS can support the communication of initiatives that occur via local governments, K'ómoks First Nation, 19 Wing, Comox Valley Airport and other regional partners. This helps ensure cohesive and extensive awareness and understanding of the various initiatives and the related economic impacts they bring to the wider region.

Through regular interaction with local governments, CVEDS should also take the opportunity to educate, inform and provide training to elected officials on economic development, key issues and growth opportunities. Together with the Land and Development Impact Analysis Program (section 6.3), these efforts will help to ensure that the economic implications of various public decisions are better understood.

Alignment with Regional Plans

Agreement – CVRD and CVEDS, Annual Objectives, Core Activities / Actions; Support local government elected officials with understanding of community economic trends, forecasts.

Program Goal

- #1 Investors, visitors and potential residential migrants are aware of the Comox Valley as a leading location for livability, relocation and business expansion.
- #2 CVEDS stakeholders are aware of the organization's mandate, ongoing activities and areas in which CVEDS can assist.

Measurable Outcome

- a) Surveys of the business community and CVEDS stakeholders show an increased awareness and knowledge of CVEDS and its activities.
- b) Communication of CVEDS activities is completed according to the terms of its contract with the Comox Valley Regional District.
- c) Increased earned media and media visits result in enhanced awareness of the areas unique investment, relocation and visitor attributes and request for information via CVEDS.

Actions and Performance Measures

#1 Target media to highlight key investment opportunities and messages, including those relating to tourism, agriculture and resident attraction.

Performance Measure:

- Project-specific results in terms of distribution of materials, number of website hits, qualified leads generated, etc.

#2 Develop and implement communications tools, collateral and data around the promotion of the region's strategic advantages, as well as to present CVEDS programs and services.

Performance Measure:

- Number of communications tools including online backgrounders, facts sheets, and releases that are produced or updated.

#3 Connect leads generated from communications efforts to CVEDS programs and portals.

Performance Measure:

- Communications tools developed/updated; supported by benchmark survey regarding awareness of CVEDS programs and services.

Priority Ranking

Primary

Partnerships

Local and regional private sector businesses, industry, attractions and associations
 Comox Valley Airport
 Local and regional Governments
 K'ómoks First Nation
 Tourism Mount Washington
 Tourism Vancouver Island
 Destination BC
 Canadian Tourism Commission

6.3. Land and Development Impact Analysis Program (Core)

There is a sense in the region, as expressed through consultation with many groups (both public and private sector), that there are key pieces of land in the Comox Valley with potentially significant economic development value that are not being developed. In some cases the reasons are known and others not, but either way there is a role for CVEDS to facilitate discussions with landowners, local government, other regulatory agencies (e.g., Ministry of Environment), and potential investors and developers to identify one or more possibilities to realize the full value of the site. The CVEDS role would occur very early in the process as a catalyst to generate ideas and spur movement but would not continue once a formal development application process was initiated.

The potential value of these sites may be measured in employment supported, property taxes generated, commercial or residential units constructed, or some other measurement of value. A site's value may also be fully or partially realized through achieving some social objective, such as affordable housing.

Consultation feedback also strongly suggested that the potential economic and municipal financial impacts of project applications are not being clearly articulated or understood by either the local governments making decisions or the public at large. CVEDS regularly provides one-off economic impact analyses for projects on an as-needed basis, but could formalize a standard model and report template that provides this information as an additional piece of information to be considered in the development approval process. CVEDS currently received referrals from the City of Courtenay for all development applications but has no standard mechanism to provide meaningful input.

The envisioned "economic and financial impact" report would not be provided for all applications, but only those that meet some to-be-determined minimum size or other threshold. The intent of this activity is not for CVEDS to be seen as an advocate for development proceeding, but to use its expertise to provide valuable information that is not currently being generated and therefore not fully considered, by local government and the community at large. The expectation is that over time, as the standard report is refined, it will come to be an expected and valued piece of input by all parties to the process. Some of the expected outputs of the impact report will include:

- Long-term net financial impact on the local government, calculated based on the expected increase in property tax from the development (which will be calculated based on the estimated increase in property value and multiplied by prevailing tax rates), less the estimated increase in the lifecycle operating, maintenance and replacements costs for any new public infrastructure and any increased costs on existing services and infrastructure.
- Employment generated on the project site, including both short-term construction-related impacts as well as long-term employment impacts if the site has commercial or industrial activity. Consideration will be required of whether the site is helping to spur new job creation in the Comox Valley or simply shifting employment from an existing location to a new and better location (which is also an economic benefit, albeit not as large as a project with all new job creation).
- Short-term revenue impacts on the local government through permitting and application fees.

Achieving the greatest possible value from the Comox Valley's limited land base is consistent with the regional commitment to sustainability. For example, working to fully realize the potential value of key brownfield sites in the region would allow growth to be more concentrated in areas with pre-existing servicing, likely with closer access to amenities and transportation routes.

This type of activity is a regular, core service in many economic development departments within local governments and the most significant example of this type of focus is likely the historic efforts to both designate the Bevan Road industrial lands, and then to provide a preliminary planning design program for their potential and future use. That process included extensive road network and transportation planning, hydrological, geotechnical and site specific layout and design concepts, that may support future value from this land base. Recently, there has been progress in providing a mechanism for improving the road network and corridor for truck traffic to the land fill site which, if it occurs, provides greater opportunity for realizing the potential of these industrial sites for either traditional use or more sustainable waste energy and other concepts discussed within the solid waste management planning process.

Specific sites that have been mentioned through the consultation process as currently under-developed and possibly in need of this type of facilitation include lands adjacent to the landfill in Cumberland, Field Sawmill site, airport-adjacent lands, Courtenay Central Builders site, former School District 71 junior high school, Comox Works Yard, Comox Golf Club and others. Other development ideas, such as the technology incubator project currently under development in downtown Courtenay, could also be evaluated using this framework as the basis to help determine the appropriate level of public support.

Alignment with Regional Plans

RGS Policy 3A-3: Promote supportive development and business-permitting standards.

City of Courtenay, OCP, Bylaw No. 2387, 4.1 Downtown
City of Courtenay, OCP, Bylaw No. 2387, 4.2 Commercial
City of Courtenay, OCP, Bylaw No. 2387, 4.3 Industrial

Program Goal

1 The economic value and impact of key lands and developments are promoted.

Measurable Outcome

- a) Development sites within the Valley are identified and confirmed with local government and prioritized for marketing and communication to investment prospects.

Actions and Performance Measures

- # 1 Identify sites on an ongoing basis where CVEDS can initiate discussions with landowners, local governments and other relevant authorities in order to assist with the "packaging " of development opportunities that can be promoted by CVEDS, local governments and the private sector.

Performance measure:

- Number of sites that are "packaged" as a result of the facilitation process.

- #2 Using a standardized CVEDS Economic and Financial Impact Model, provide analysis of development applications on a regular basis to ensure information on these impacts is taken into consideration in local government decision-making.

Performance measure:

- Number of analyses completed.

- #3 Encourage greater uniformity in approach to the development review process by the individual local governments in the Comox Valley, including identifying and communicating best practice tools and process improvements from other jurisdictions and participating in any government-led regulatory or process review initiatives.

Performance measure:

- Number of best practices identified and communicated and other instances of supporting development review process improvements.

Economic Indicators (for ongoing tracking)

- Number of building permits issued by category
- Value of building permits issued by category

Priority Ranking

Secondary

Partnerships

Private Developers / Investors

Local Government

6.4. Economic Profile and Information Program (Core)

The Economic Profile and Information Program includes the standard information tools that are regularly prepared on the regional economy. It includes the Comox Valley Statistical Profile and Comox Valley Investor Profile and Benchmarking Analysis.

This program is closely associated with the Communications and Media Relations Program, which frequently uses the information contained in these documents to demonstrate the depth of economic activity and opportunities, and forms part of the reference library component of the Business Visitation and Entrepreneurship Program.

Preparing this type of information is a standard expectation of an economic development organization, although increasingly general community profiles are provided only on the internet and not via expensive, printed and designed documents. This allows for more regular updates and easier incorporation of parts of the profile into various other marketing and communication initiatives.

The most important components of a community profile are the parts that are unique to the local area, such as lists of leading employers, summaries of available land, descriptions of labour training opportunities, lists of community amenities, etc. Standard statistical profiles from agencies like Statistics Canada and BC Stats should be included for completeness, but serious external investors will typically access that type of information from its source and rely on the local agency for the more qualitative and descriptive information on the region.

Alignment with Regional Plans

RGS Objective 3-A: Support local business retention, development and investment.

Program Goal

New investment and business start-ups, relocation clients and other key stakeholders that contribute to economic investment and employment are utilizing the information provided by CVEDS in their applications, business planning and decision processes.

Measurable Outcome

Measured downloads of materials and resources from investcomoxvalley.com are increasing and formal and informal feedback from stakeholders confirms the information products are provided in useful formats for including business plans, presentations and marketing documents.

Actions and Performance Measures

#1 Comox Valley Investor Profile and Benchmarking Analysis is utilized in making community comparisons by a wide range of researchers, stakeholders and clients that are interested in business start-ups, expansion and relocations.

Performance Measure:

- Regular update schedule for information products is maintained.

#2 The economic development online business resource library is current and utilized daily by clients and stakeholders.

Performance Measure:

- Quarterly reporting on tools and resources usage.

Priority Ranking

Tertiary

Partnerships

Small Business BC

BC Stats

Local Governments

6.5. Regional Business Development Collaboration Program (Support)

CVEDS has a long history of partnering with organizations both within the Comox Valley and at a regional and provincial level in order to deliver services locally or participate in broader initiatives that fit the Comox Valley's strategic direction.

Regional economic development partners have enabled CVEDS to engage in larger projects such as the Export Peer Mentorship Group pilot and the Vancouver Island Agriculture Show, which allow the society to further the business and economic priorities of the area.

Alignment with Regional Plans

Town of Comox OCP Bylaw 1685, Policy 2.5.4.2 (1): Inter-Jurisdictional Supporting Policy.

Program Goal

Economic development programs and associated activities, projects, campaigns and efforts are supported and improved by partnerships with multiple organizations within and outside the Comox Valley.

Measurable Outcome

Program activities are reported on with an indication of the degree of partner and stakeholder involvement in each activity and the overall success of the effort.

Actions and Performance Measures

#1 Recognizing the role of partnerships and multiple stakeholders in success of economic development, CVEDS attends and participates in events, initiatives and other business or professional associations on projects aligning with the strategic plan.

Performance Measure:

- Number of events or initiatives in which CVEDS participates and any project-specific measurements associated with those initiatives.

#2 Coordination of networking and professional development events for local business organizations allowing for regular information sharing, and development of ongoing business and professional relationships with the community, economic development profession and key economic development departments of senior levels of governments.

Performance Measure:

- Number of events coordinated and any event-specific measurements such as attendance and commitments of partnership resources.

Priority Ranking

Tertiary

Partnerships

- Comox Valley Chamber of Commerce
- Cumberland Chamber of Commerce

- Community Futures Development Corporation of Strathcona
- Comox / Courtenay DBIA's
- Vancouver Island and Coast Economic Developers Association
- Economic Development Association of BC
- Economic Development Association of Canada
- Vancouver Island Economic Alliance

6.6. 19 Wing Support Program (Support)

The presence of 19 Wing Comox creates significant and ongoing economic impacts for the Comox Valley. Data provided by the Base shows that it currently employs more than 1,600 people who earn about \$55 million per year. Annual spending on ongoing maintenance and repair, as well as some significant infrastructure upgrades (e.g., \$26 million for a new mess building) will average an additional \$40 million per year for the next five years.

A simple input-output analysis based on these figures suggests the total employment impact from the base, including all of the indirect and induced impacts, is about 2,100 permanent jobs in the Comox Valley. The significant infrastructure improvements in the next few years will support an estimated 120 full-time-equivalent jobs per year, depending on exactly how much of the spending goes to local contractors and suppliers. Total annual economic output generated by the Base in the next five years will be about \$170 million per year in BC, much of this spent in the Comox Valley. Further, the federal government paid about \$2.4 million in PILT (payment in lieu of property taxes) to the Town of Comox in 2011, the majority of which is from 19 Wing. This is a significant contribution to local government finances (although the Town only captures a portion of these funds with some allocated to school taxes, hospital district, etc.).

In addition to these impacts, the Wing is the reason the Comox Valley has such an exceptional airfield and it leases land for the civilian Comox Valley Airport, which has its own very substantial economic impacts not just in the Comox Valley but throughout central and northern Vancouver Island.

There are also an estimated 3,000 retired military personnel residing in the Comox Valley, many of whom start second careers or make significant contributions to the community by volunteering their time and expertise. The pension income from military personnel is also a significant benefit to the Valley's economy (as noted elsewhere in this report, average pension incomes in the Comox Valley are 2nd highest in BC among regional districts and the military pensions are a major reason why).

While 19 Wing has long been a part of the Comox Valley community, there is a sense from some of the consultation interviews that the Base is not fully appreciated. While its future in the Comox Valley is secure as long as the essential search and rescue functions are required, there is the potential for greater engagement between the Wing, local governments and CVEDS to help facilitate greater mutual understanding and to ensure the region is prepared if and when there is an opportunity to make the case to the Department of National Defence that additional squadrons or training programs or other services can be attracted to Comox. The Wing very much operates in the context of the entire community as many enlisted members live off-base, all members take advantage of local recreational and shopping opportunities, local companies provide services to the Base, there are synergies with local educational institutions, and many other ways that the broader community and 19 Wing complement and enhance each other.

Alignment with Regional Plans

Town of Comox OCP Bylaw 1685, Objective 2.1.10.2 (1): To support the continued use of Department of National Defence lands for a combination of the Canadian Forces air base and associated housing, the Comox Valley Airport, and the Comox Air Force Museum.

Program Goal

Comox Valley governments, stakeholders and potential investors and new residents are aware of the importance, magnitude and economic impact of 19 Wing Comox.

Measurable Outcome

Surveys of the business community and stakeholders show increased success in identifying 19 Wing Comox as a primary driver of the regional economy.

Actions and Performance Measures

#1 Annual meetings occur between 19 Wing, CVEDS, the Town of Comox and other local governments to share information on enhancements to Wing infrastructure, opportunities and challenges that may be present.

Performance Measure:

- Number of meetings that occur with a focus on wing infrastructure, opportunities, and challenges.

#2 Utilize both newly-arrived military spouses and recently retired wing personnel in support of programs focused on enhancing and improving labour force availability, entrepreneurship based opportunities, and generating increased relocation of military personnel from across Canada that may have spent time at the Wing or participated in programs at HMCS Quadra.

Performance Measure:

- A committee of knowledgeable individuals such as retired Wing commanders is struck to support increased media outreach and communication on the economic impact of the Wing in conjunction direction and outcomes from annual meeting process.

Economic Indicators (for ongoing tracking)

Summary of Wing employment, local expenditures and other indicators as provided by the Wing.

Priority Ranking

Secondary

Partnerships

19 Wing
Local Governments

SUMMARY OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEFINITION, ROLE, ACTIVITIES

Background

The Comox Valley Economic Development Society was established by local governments in 1988 to deliver community economic development programs for the Comox Valley region which is currently defined geographically with the same boundaries of the Comox Valley Regional District locally, and as School District 71 Comox Valley provincially.

The Society's constitution defines five core purposes:

- a) To promote, market and generally facilitate economic development in the Comox Valley;
- b) To develop and implement economic strategies for the Comox Valley
- c) To develop and assist in the development of properties and facilities for the purpose of creating new economic activities and expanding existing economic activities in the Comox Valley;
- d) To develop information on the economic activity in the Comox Valley;
- e) To promote business and information services for the Comox Valley.

Each year the CVEDS Board of Directors and staff develop an Annual Work Plan, with industry and stakeholder input, which is guided by the 5 year Comox Valley Regional Economic Development Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan includes high level connectivity to local governments' Official Community Plans and their respective departments, as well as the Regional Growth Strategy and the Sustainability Strategy. This is done in recognition of the fact the Comox Valley functions as a single economic unit and CVEDS acts as a department of local governments. A component of the Annual Work Plan includes the Destination Marketing Plan, which addresses Visitor Services activities, event development and attraction, and destination marketing tactics.

Definitions of Economic Development

A short definition provided by the International Economic Development Council suggests that "the main goal of economic development is improving the economic wellbeing of a community through efforts that entail job creation, job retention, tax base enhancements and quality of life.

Role of Economic Development

Economic development activities are linked directly to the two concepts of employment and investment, which in turn are factors in contributing to sustainable growth in local government tax base to support the communities and citizens quality of life. As noted in the 2014 five year economic development strategy these two concepts are "pursued either by (a) building on the Comox Valley's competitive advantages and capitalizing on the employment-generating and /or investment opportunities they create, or (b) removing or minimizing barriers that are restricting employment and investment opportunities.

Economic development is critical to sustaining local governments' primary revenue source – the property tax. The direct link to local property assessments and eventual property tax revenue from residential, commercial and industrial development alongside the economic impact from new or expanding developments and businesses and the activities and strategies put in place to support sustainable growth comprise the main role of local economic development.

CVEDS provides decision makers with reliable information and tools to evaluate development opportunities - encouraging private sector investment that is aligned with market demand and community goals. The goal is to create property tax base growth to fund community services, strategically manage assets and appropriately finance longer-term liabilities.

CVEDS assists in the evaluation of new growth opportunities and revitalization options that capitalize on existing community strengths - providing information about competitive advantages, applying models for economic impact analysis and policy tools to examine revitalization. This includes marketing and communicating these competitive advantages externally.

Development related activities

Linkages with local governments and ideally the entire economic development strategy should be an integral part of the broader strategic planning process for a municipality or a region. In many if not most cases, the economic development office works directly with clients and on files or projects that are either priorities of local government strategic plans, or development related applications or policy review processes. An example of economic development integration with local government departments in areas where efforts can be jointly made to build on the competitive advantage of the community or minimize barriers that may be restricting employment and/or investment opportunities is as follows:

- 1) Land development advocacy and local government development approval referral agency
 - a. Provide ongoing support for increasing uniformity/standardization and best practice in approvals process and timing.
 - b. Ensuring that Comox Valley remains competitive with neighboring communities and facilitate decreasing of barriers to development
 - c. Identify, through ongoing evaluation of potential development projects, those that are supportive of economic vitality and long term sustainability of good paying jobs in the Comox Valley, including projects in value-added industries and other priority sectors.
 - d. Act as third party mediator, providing support to both developers and local governments through the development approval process.
 - e. Attract building investment of specific types – in line with the desires and aspirations of the local governments.
 - f. Assist developers with pro-formas, economic impact studies, and referrals and other assistance with the local government approval process.
 - g. Engage with local government staff in support of policy updates and reviews, including Official Community Plans (OCPs), the Regional Growth Strategy (RGS), and others as requested.

- 2) Support and assistance with economic development-related municipal projects
 - a. Provide administrative and general support for municipal projects such as downtown revitalization, marina expansion, etc., such as identifying and applying to external funding sources and providing economic and demographic data to support a business case.
 - b. Conduct an economic impact assessment to help secure public or funding agency support.
 - c. Undertake research into best practices for similar projects elsewhere.
 - d. Assist with project communication to the general public and other local governments, supporting the notion that successful projects in one municipality are a benefit to the entire region.
 - e. Act as liaison between local government and private sector stakeholders, which may include the development community, affected industry groups, local merchants, or others.
 - f. Identify key lands in the region as prime or strategically important development sites.

FIVE YEAR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

Background

The five year economic development planning process is a collaborative process lead by the Society in partnership with the four local governments, K'ómok's First Nation, industry, small business and the public resulting in the official community economic development plan for the contributors to the service. (Comox Valley Regional District, City of Courtenay, Town of Comox, Village of Cumberland).

The objective of the plan and process is to ensure alignment with local official community plans, regional level strategies and where appropriate, local area plans, sector specific plans and policies; while adhering to accepted academic and industry and professional association standards for development and delivery of local government regional economic development services. The five year economic development plan is intended to act as a unifying and guiding strategy whereby implementation will support a sustainable and growing economy, and allow for clear communication to community members, developers, industry sectors, small business and elected officials of opportunities and activities that the communities may undertake.

Scope

The Society will develop for consideration, input and approval of local governments, the scope of work, budgets, requests for proposals, evaluation matrix and all other materials and requirements to coordinate and manage the contractual requirements for the completion of the plan.

The general framework of the economic development planning process will include, but not necessarily be limited to, the following items for consideration:

1. Extensive statistical analysis of the regional economy, development trends, population density and demographic data with an update of community economic profiles, real estate databases, and investment data requirements and industry targeting requirements.
2. Updating, and review of accepted definitions of Economic Development
3. Opportunities to encourage long term development of industry sectors that have current or future importance and impact on the Comox Valley regional economy.
4. Policy and by-law changes or considerations that may directly improve economic activity in terms of development, small business or other areas of importance as outlined within OCP's, new research, and input from industry and community.
5. Broad Community, industry and stakeholder engagement in the form of public open houses, surveys, online and traditional media, workshops, focus groups, press releases, etc.
6. Presentations to CVRD board, local councils, business and industry associations.
7. Literature reviews of past and relevant research, studies, strategic regional and provincial level plans.
8. Review of OCP, Local Area Plans (LAPs) Regional Growth Strategies, and other related local government required documentation.
9. Society, CVRD board, council and senior staff level training, policy workshops and training on community economic development, the economy and the development of long term economic development plans and strategies for local governments.
10. Comparisons of delivery options, activities and costs across a peer group of communities.
11. Review of reporting, and completion of past five year plans and service agreements with the CVRD or local governments.
12. Client feedback surveys and engagement.

EMPLOYMENT LANDS STRATEGY
TERMS of REFERENCE DRAFT
FOR DISCUSSION

Background:

Within the 5 year Comox Valley Regional Economic Development Strategic Plan, the desire to develop an Industrial Lands Strategy (also known as an Employment Lands strategy) was identified as a priority and requirement to achieving the greatest possible value from the Comox Valley's limited land base. This objective is consistent with the Comox Valley's regional commitment to sustainability and is a regular core service in many local government economic development programs.

In June 2014 the Comox Valley Economic Development Society hosted a facilitated workshop attended by elected officials and senior government staff, to explore options and discuss the importance of employment lands strategies. This workshop highlighted the need for further research into areas of land availability, location factors, servicing and infrastructure, and industry targeting related to key Comox Valley strengths.

Areas of opportunity were identified such as rural resource and agricultural lands, marine lands, airport adjacent areas, Bevan Road industrial lands, and key commercial areas within the municipalities. This session included industrial land strategic planning process and analysis, as it relates to the future development of employable lands, identified within each of the official community plans, resulting in a preliminary understanding of what an employment lands strategy would require and likely include for the Comox Valley.

Preliminary Draft Employment Lands Strategy Scope:

Role of CVEDS:

The Society will develop, with input from local governments via planning department leads in each municipality and the regional district, the scope of work, budget, and request for proposal, evaluation matrix, and all other materials and requirements to coordinate and manage the completion of an employment lands strategy for the Comox Valley.

Purpose:

The term "employment lands" refers to properties (both privately and publicly owned) with land uses that employ people in a variety of jobs in institutional, industrial, commercial and other sectors. An Employment Land Strategy is an informed and connected set of actions to be taken by respective local governments in accordance with official community plans, economic and regional growth strategies, over a longer term to ensure that employment lands are available and used to full potential for the community's benefit and economic development.

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An in-depth Employment Lands Strategy will also assist in positioning, informing and guiding future investment in the community for business development, expansion and new investment. It is accepted that as population increases, job opportunities must also be created or attracted to maintain and improve the ratio of jobs to residents via a supply of employment lands that are suitably located, regulated, serviced, promoted and available for uses that employ people. A completed strategy will allow for increased community capacity to effectively target companies, partner with and leverage existing Foreign Direct Investments and participate with Provincial and Federal International Trade staff to promote the region.

Components of an Employment Lands Strategy:

Employment lands strategies connect the communities land baseⁱ to local policies and plans with the intention of maximizing the opportunity for job sustainability and growth over time. Typically this level of work is completed as part of, or shortly after, the completion of Official Community Plans, Regional Growth Strategies, and base line economic development plans.

The general components of the employment lands strategy will include, but are not limited to, the following items for consideration:

1. Policy Context
2. Regional Competitiveness Analysis
3. Profile of Employment Lands
4. Lands Supply Analysis
5. Proposed Conversions
6. Employment Forecast and Employment Land Demand
7. Long-Term Employment Land Needs Analysis
8. Policy Recommendations

They include analysis on the competitiveness and market readiness of the region in context with provincial, national and in some cases global economic and market trends, i.e. the Comox Valley's aquaculture industry is driven at a high degree by global trade regulation and market forces. An overview and inventory analysis of the types of employment land and water lot areas will be completed with a focus on barriers to future development (and thus employment). Long term vacant lands are considered for the purpose of determining options to enhance the potential of future investment. For example, ALR land not in production, industrial designated lands that have not yet been serviced, long-term vacant commercial properties, brownfield sites, or lands designated for purposes such as airport related investment, or marine development. Employment forecasting over long term planning horizons will be completed and related to projected land needs. Employment densities, as well as potential strategies for specific expansion and development of lands to support job growth are completed.

Consideration of employment land demand and supply will include an assessment of the degree of availability of land to accommodate various types of industrial, commercial, and aqua/agriculture activity in different areas of the Comox Valley, distinguishing between vacant, underutilized and available lands. Assessments will be undertaken to determine if employment lands have the necessary infrastructure, labour, services, and market or customer base for development, and any limitations that may reduce the potential of the land i.e. regulatory, environmental, financial parcel size, etc.

The Employment Lands Strategy will include a medium and longer term demand based forecast for different land uses and establish if there is sufficient land for specific forms of industry within the region and consider opportunities for non-traditional industrial activities such as renewable technologies, innovation, and creative sectors, as they relate to employable lands within the region.

ⁱ Land base is understood to include water lots and land covered by water.