

# VISIT VANCOUVER WASHINGTON



## DESTINATION MASTER PLAN

DEVELOPED IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE CITY OF VANCOUVER AND FUNDED BY LODGING TAX FUNDS



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Visit Vancouver WA would like to thank the regional community leaders who gave their time and expertise as they served on the Steering Committee, providing guidance, leadership and support of the development of the Destination Master Plan.

## STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

**Jennifer Baker**, Columbia River Economic Development Council

**Jordan Boldt**, Vancouver Farmers Market

**Teresa Brum**, City of Vancouver Economic Development Department

**Mike DiFabio**, Fortside Brewing Company

**Stacey Donovan**, City of Vancouver Parks Department

**Linda Glover**, Vancouver Historic Trust

**Heidi Griggs**, Pepper Bridge Winery & Amavi Cellars

**Kim Harless**, Vancouver City Council & Lodging Tax Advisory Committee Chair

**Ryan Hart**, Port of Vancouver USA

**Mike McLeod**, Hilton Vancouver & Visit Vancouver Board of Directors Chair

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**Jennifer Sandstrom**, WSU-V School of Hospitality Business Management

**Rick Takach**, Vesta Hospitality

**Michelle Thana**, State of Washington Tourism

**Michael Walker**, Vancouver's Downtown Association

This plan has been endorsed by the City of Vancouver's Lodging Tax Advisory Committee (LTAC) and approved by Visit Vancouver's Board of Directors.

## LODGING TAX ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

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**Carla Rise**, Sonesta ES Suites

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# PROJECT TEAM

Visit Vancouver WA would like to thank members of the project team who worked collaboratively to develop a vision for tourism in our community to move this project forward over the course of a one-year period. We would like to acknowledge the partnership with our project partner, MMGY NextFactor, the lead agency on the project. This team brought knowledge, experience, and tourism industry expertise to the destination master planning process to help evaluate existing strengths and meaningful future growth opportunities for Vancouver as a vibrant community and visitor destination. This plan is a living document that will serve as a guidepost for the Vancouver community as we proceed with implementation to carry out the vision and strategies that have been identified as priorities for Vancouver throughout this process.



## VISIT VANCOUVER WA:

**Cliff Myers,**  
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# IMAGINE IT'S THE YEAR 2033

Imagine it's the year 2033. With so many rich experiences to choose from, visitors to Vancouver often choose to extend their trip to the area — or quickly make plans for a repeat visit.

Values like environmental sustainability, diversity, inclusivity, accessibility, historical reverence, respect, and kindness are easy to find reflected throughout Vancouver's built environment and are readily apparent to visitors. A walk down iconic Main Street, among beautiful public parks, or through any one of the city's award-winning public spaces speaks to these values by incorporating thoughtful elements of design and aesthetics. Vancouver's rich creative arts scene can be seen and felt throughout the city, highlighting community values and reflecting the region's heritage and pride of place.

Upon arrival, all visitors feel welcomed into this community by its attentive and friendly people. Tips about beloved local restaurants, which trailheads are accessible through transit or favorite attractions in town are enthusiastically shared by locals. Residents take pride in sharing their city with visitors and feel that their voices have helped shape the tourism industry in Vancouver.

Visitors take notice of the newly renovated downtown Main Street, the biggest downtown infrastructure investment since the Vancouver Waterfront. The unique Main Street renovation boasts accessibility for all abilities, unique lighting and design features, and a plethora of locally owned retail and restaurant establishments. The new Main Street entices visitors to walk, bike, or roll through downtown to enjoy Vancouver's historic ambiance. Main Street offers more than just a new streetscape — many visitors and locals consider a visit to Main Street to be a must-do experience and a unique way to experience Vancouver.

Visitors have no trouble finding their way around Vancouver thanks to user-centered design elements, navigable streets and an exceptional public transportation system that provides ample connectivity and mobility options. The city has become well-known for innovative, modern transportation solutions that provide critical connectivity in the region while incorporating the importance of the natural environment, support for the regional and national economy and transportation equity.

Small businesses flourish thanks to the steady flow of visitors attracted to the area to check out Vancouver's signature events, food and beverage scene and entertainment options. Vancouver locals and folks from around the Pacific Northwest look forward to attending multicultural events and festivals that take place in neighborhoods across Vancouver throughout the year, paying homage to the region's cultural heritage, rich history and traditions from across all walks of life. Those raising families here take pride that Vancouver is welcoming and inclusive to a diversity of people and cultures. Residents value the vast representation of perspectives and identities found throughout the community.

Thanks to input from its residents, as well as strong alignment of the local tourism industry and its partners, Vancouver has become an enviable place to live and visit. Many of the features that have contributed to the buzz about Vancouver can be attributed to the Destination Master Plan and its resulting collaborations that launched in 2023.





## A MESSAGE FROM VISIT VANCOUVER WA

Vancouver and the Clark County area has matured as a visitor destination, attracting travelers from all walks of life to our corner of the Pacific Northwest. Increased visitation to our area brings a new set of tourism challenges and opportunities for our community, and as such it is incumbent upon us as a community to examine our tourism strategy and determine an appropriate path forward that considers the needs of all Vancouver residents.

Our organization's intention with this plan is to guide and advocate for responsible tourism growth that balances quality of life and economic prosperity with stewardship of our natural resources and cultural values. It is our hope that this plan will catalyze Vancouver's tourism potential and set a responsible course for action that honors the place we call home while strengthening our position as a visitor destination.

The work of this Destination Master Plan is the outcome of a community-driven process initiated by Visit Vancouver WA and the City of Vancouver and guided by a Steering Committee of local community leaders. It sets a new direction for Vancouver's tourism industry and visitor economy. A key focus of developing this plan has been to align with the City's priorities to increase sustainability and be inclusive of all residents. This plan is a strategic, long-term initiative to help our city focus on a collective vision and action plan to achieve short-, mid- and long-term goals to support a thriving, sustainable and well-balanced quality of life.

Vancouver's Destination Master Plan is the beginning of a long-term collaborative effort to preserve and enhance the place that we love. Collectively, we can build a stronger visitor economy, achieve a new vision for our city, and create outstanding, thoughtful and memorable experiences for our visitors.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Cliff Myers", written in a cursive style.

**Cliff Myers**  
President & CEO  
Visit Vancouver WA





# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since the early 2000s, the fabric of Vancouver has been shifting. In connection with the opening of Vancouver Waterfront Park in 2018, business investments, infrastructure improvements and community efforts have moved the needle and quietly grown this corner of the Pacific Northwest into a place that people are talking about more than ever before.

According to 2020 census data, Vancouver saw an 18% population increase between 2010-2020. Not only has Vancouver seen a boom in residential growth in recent years, but it has become a dynamic visitor destination with so much to offer visitors from all walks of life. Vancouver's growing reputation has landed it as a place to visit on many people's travel bucket list, and an increasing number of visitors are making the trip. Vancouver is the second largest city in the Portland region and stands on its own with its own unique history, rich heritage as the largest city on the Columbia River, and unique attractions.

There's no doubt that businesses and residents have benefited from the growing interest in Vancouver and increases in its visitor economy. While this growth has brought an exciting new chapter in Vancouver's story, of equal importance to that growth is preserving and enhancing residents' quality of life. The local visitor economy has the power and potential to support our community by creating much-needed jobs and income for underserved communities, entrepreneurs, artists and local makers, offering new employment opportunities for people from all walks of life. By increasing awareness of Vancouver's uniqueness, the local visitor economy can also help preserve local heritage and foster cultural awareness and pride. However, increased visitation can also have an unintentionally negative impact by aggravating income inequality and contributing to the overuse of natural and cultural resources.

To balance the impacts of increased visitation and to prioritize preservation of these resources, it's important that future growth is managed responsibly so residents can continue to enjoy a high quality of life in the place they call home. This plan seeks to enhance Vancouver and the local area's visitor economy and ensure residents reap its benefits by empowering them to improve their livelihoods, share their heritage, and contribute to sustainable economic development.



With an eye toward a responsible, equitable and inclusive future for Vancouver’s tourism economy, Visit Vancouver WA and the City of Vancouver are excited to introduce Vancouver’s first ever Destination Master Plan.

This plan is intended to serve as a 10-year framework to guide tourism strategy, investment and opportunities for community partners and business leaders, and provide a common vision for the future of tourism in Vancouver. It will provide guidance to engage both new and traditional visitors, as well as strategies and tactics to grow, empower, and diversify Vancouver and the surrounding area’s tourism industry.

**FROM THE ONSET OF THE DESTINATION MASTER PLANNING PROCESS, THE GOALS OF THIS PROJECT WERE TO:**

- Facilitate an inclusive process to engage existing and non-traditional stakeholders.
- Provide an aligned road map that will respond to the needs of residents, visitors, and stakeholders.
- Generate ideas to improve the visitor experience, target new audiences and set a course for sustainable, responsible growth.
- Analyze new funding opportunities.

This Destination Master Plan will guide tourism development by providing an aligned road map that responds to the needs of all residents, visitors, and representatives of the tourism industry, local and regional economic development interests, and long-term planning efforts in the Vancouver/Clark County area.

Destination master planning is about taking a strategic, rather than organic, approach to establishing a vision for the Vancouver visitor economy. The strategic goals outlined in this plan provide a framework to inform decision making regarding tourism investments in service of the vision outlined by the Steering Committee and project team because of this project.

**FIVE STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS WERE IDENTIFIED AS GOALS FOR VANCOUVER AS AN OUTCOME OF THIS PROCESS:**

#	STRATEGIC GOAL
1	DEVELOP VANCOUVER’S EXPERIENTIAL INFRASTRUCTURE.
2	ENGAGE LOCALS.
3	ENHANCE ACCESS, MOBILITY AND EASE OF MOVEMENT FOR PEOPLE OF ALL ABILITIES.
4	STRENGTHEN OUTDOOR RECREATION TOURISM OPPORTUNITIES TO CONNECT ALL PEOPLE WITH THE OUTDOORS.
5	ARTICULATE VANCOUVER’S DESTINATION IDENTITY & BRAND PROMISE.

These goals, and the subsequent initiatives to help achieve them, are articulated in further detail beginning on [page 18](#).





# STATE OF THE INDUSTRY

## LOCAL STATE OF THE INDUSTRY

Tourism provides strong benefits to our local economy and creates positive effects that ripple throughout the entire community. Benefits of tourism include:

- Creates local jobs and strengthens the local economy.
- Increases appreciation for the conservation of natural and historic sites.
- Tourism dollars can be reinvested in infrastructure such as parks, roads, cultural facilities which benefit local residents.
- Tourism creates a cultural exchange between tourists and local citizens.
- Allows entrepreneurs to establish new products and services.
- Gives the area a sense of unique identity.

By the end of 2023, hotel inventory in Vancouver & Clark County will reach over 3,600 rooms, reflecting a nearly 44% increase over the past 10 years. Additional hotels are in the development pipeline, which is positive news for Vancouver's visitor economy as growth in hotel room supply will support the continued growth of visitors to the area.

The economic impact of Vancouver's visitor economy cannot be denied. In 2021, Clark County welcomed over 4.1 million visitors to the area, who generated a daily economic impact of \$1.42 million and created \$285.9 million in total job earnings.

These numbers will continue to grow as Vancouver matures as a destination.



## GLOBAL STATE OF THE INDUSTRY

Our planning process incorporated insights from tourism communities across the globe and from the broader tourism industry.

In 2021, MMGY NextFactor conducted the largest global survey of tourism industry leaders, with 709 tourism executives from 50 countries participating. Three transformational opportunities for our industry emerged that all relate directly to the Vancouver Destination Master Plan — and to the future of our destination:

- |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| <b>1. Destination Alignment:</b><br>aligning the public, private and civic sectors to drive destination performance. | <b>2. Sustainable Development:</b><br>destination development should marry people, profit, planet, and policy. | <b>3. Values Based Marketing:</b><br>Community values, goals and energy are the new competitive advantage. |
|--|--|--|

The survey also identified the top strategies and trends in the tourism industry, and many align with the strategic direction for Vancouver’s visitor economy.

Despite global impacts to the tourism industry after the COVID-19 pandemic beginning in 2020, travel has resumed to pre-pandemic levels. Data from the U.S. Travel Association shows travel spending continues to steadily increase and was 4% above 2019 levels in January 2023. According to the latest edition of MMGY Travel Intelligence’s 2023 Portrait of American Travelers study (March 2023), 7 in 10 U.S. adults plan to take a vacation in the next 12 months. In this study, Washington was ranked #12 of states that travelers are interested in visiting in the next two years. Travelers indicated that scenery, safety, and a destination’s food & beverage offerings are the most influential factors in determining where they will travel.

Based on recent data insights, it is clear that sustainability considerations are not diminishing anytime soon and will continue to be a priority for many travelers. The Portrait of American Travelers study indicates that sustainability is an important factor for travelers when making trip-related decisions. 8 in 10 (81%) of travelers are willing to change their own travel behaviors to reduce their environmental impact. This focus on sustainability continues to be especially true for younger generations and those with children. About 8 in 10 Gen-Zers (84%), Millennials (78%) and parents (78%) are willing to pay more to patronize environmentally responsible service providers, and about 9 in 10 Gen Zers (93%), Millennials (90%) and parents (89%) are willing to change their travel behavior to reduce their environmental impact. About one-third (35%) of travelers believe it is important for travel companies to provide an inside look at how they are becoming more sustainable. 6 in 10 travelers are willing to pay more to patronize travel providers who demonstrate environmental responsibility.

## REGIONAL CONTEXT

The Vancouver Destination Master Plan was created within the context of existing City, County and regional plans, policies, and regulations. We recognize and respect the work already done in Vancouver and consider it a strong foundation to build upon. The following is a list of specific planning documents referenced during the project engagement:

- City of Vancouver Comprehensive Plan
- City of Vancouver Strategic Plan
- Vancouver City Center Vision & Subarea Plan
- Clark County Economic Development Plan and Strategic Initiatives
- City of Vancouver Climate Action Framework
- Visit Vancouver 2022 Annual Tourism Report
- Visit Vancouver 2023 Annual Tourism Report
- Port of Vancouver 10 Year Strategic Plan
- Columbia Play Project Economic Impact Report



# MASTER PLANNING PROCESS



From the onset of this Destination Master Planning process, the goals of this project were to:

- Facilitate an inclusive process to engage existing and non-traditional stakeholders.
- Provide an aligned road map that will respond to the needs of residents, visitors and stakeholders.
- Generate ideas to improve the visitor experience, target new audiences and set a course for sustainable, responsible growth.
- Analyze new funding opportunities.

The 12-month process included a robust, inclusive stakeholder engagement effort to engage stakeholders who live and/or work in Vancouver representing a diverse range of perspectives and identities. The project team conducted a range of virtual and in-person stakeholder engagement activities throughout summer and fall 2022 to seek feedback and validation from residents, visitors, and partners.

Engagement activities included a resident survey distributed broadly to the Vancouver and Clark County community; one-on-one interviews with 14 key local and regional stakeholders, including representatives from the Port of Vancouver, Greater Chamber of Commerce, Vancouver Downtown Association, Vesta Hospitality, Vancouver Farmers Market, State of Washington Tourism, among others; a series of focus groups with hospitality, entertainment/sports and travel partners as well as business, economic development, arts and culture organizations, and individual business/property owners and community leaders; and a visioning workshop.





### STEERING COMMITTEE

A Steering Committee of 16 community leaders from Vancouver was formed to guide the process, advise on key considerations, and champion the Master Plan both through development and into implementation. The Steering Committee met for three in-person working sessions throughout the process.

### STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

MMGY NextFactor and PointNorth met with over 35 stakeholders through a series of 7 focus groups and conducted 14 in-depth interviews, all of which took place between August and November 2022. The primary purpose of this engagement was to identify key opportunities and challenges for Vancouver’s future as a visitor destination and a quality place for residents to live, work and play.

### INTERVIEWS

MMGY and PointNorth conducted 14 in-depth, one-on-one interviews with community leaders who provided specific insights into different components of the local economy, community values and lifestyle.

### FOCUS GROUPS

Focus groups included stakeholders from the following sectors including:

- Lodging
- Attractions & Cultural Resources
- Culture, Art, & Museums
- Restaurants, Food & Beverage
- Venues
- Meeting Planners & Event Organizers
- Transportation
- Economic Development
- Municipal Leaders
- Small Business & Retail
- Outdoor Recreation



## DESTINATIONNEXT ASSESSMENT

MMGY NextFactor conducted a detailed assessment of the Vancouver visitor economy utilizing a comprehensive stakeholder survey that measures destination strength and destination alignment, based on a series of 24 variables. The results were then used to plot Vancouver into a Scenario Model, which shows the specific opportunities for Vancouver and its partners to build upon.

123 stakeholders responded to the online assessment, including those representing the tourism industry, municipal government, community leaders, customers, the Visit Vancouver WA Board of Directors and others.

### DESTINATION STRENGTH VARIABLES



Attractions and Experiences



Arts, Culture & Heritage



Dining, Shopping & Entertainment



Outdoor Recreation



Conventions & Meetings



Events & Festivals



Sporting Events



Accommodation



Local Mobility & Access



Destination Access



Communication Infrastructure



Health & Safety

### DESTINATION ALIGNMENT VARIABLES



Business Support



Community Group & Resident Support



Government Support



Organization Governance



Workforce Development



Hospitality Culture



Equity, Diversity & Inclusion



Funding Support & Certainty



Regional Cooperation



Sustainability & Resilience



Emergency Preparedness

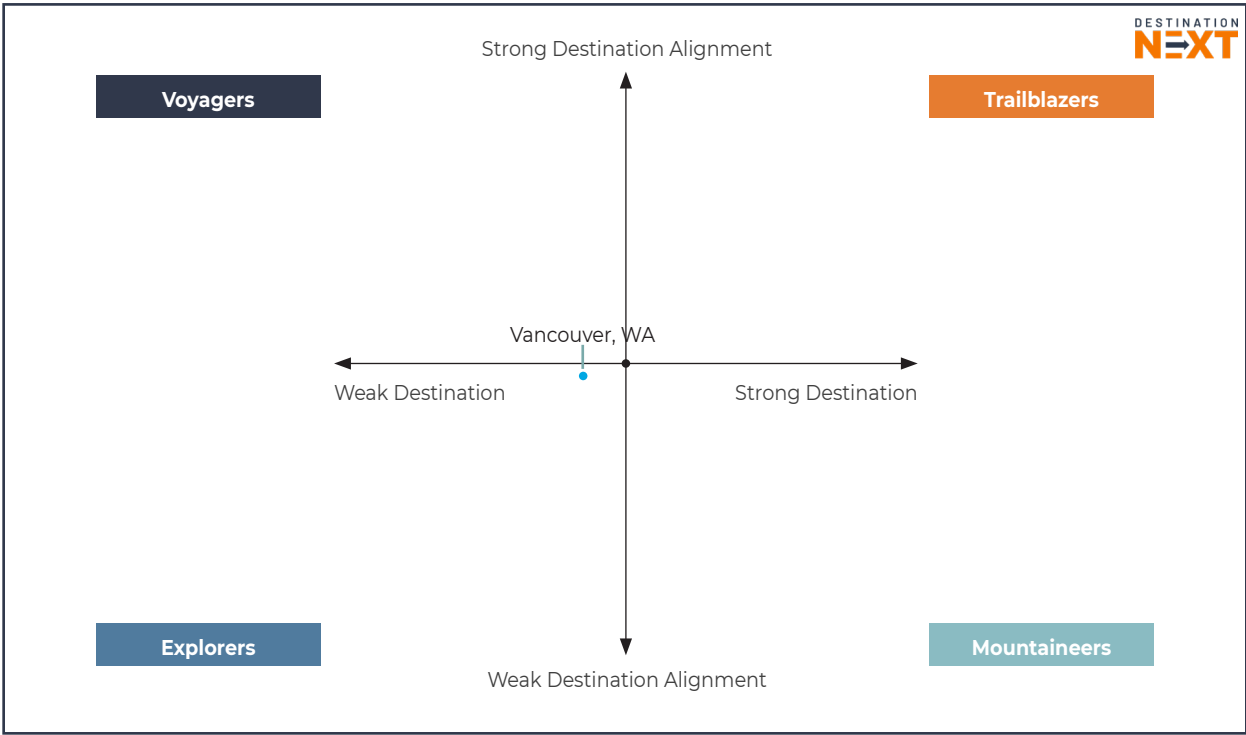


Economic Development



From a destination strength perspective, stakeholders perceive Vancouver to be strong in outdoor recreation, accommodations, access, and communication infrastructure, however lacking in attractions and experiences, sporting events, events and festivals, and arts, culture and heritage.

From a destination alignment perspective, stakeholders perceive Vancouver to be strong in economic development, organizational governance, sustainability, and resilience, however lacking in workforce development, emergency preparedness, hospitality culture, funding support and certainty and community and resident support.



Overall, Vancouver landed in the Explorer quadrant of the DestinationNEXT scenario model, with below industry average scores for both destination strength and destination alignment. This indicates that there is room for improvement for Vancouver as a visitor destination in terms of building community alignment & tourism-focused partnerships and developing tourism products and infrastructure to support visitation. As an emerging destination, this Master Plan will support the development of both experiences to strengthen the destinations and alignment with all members of the community.





## RESIDENT SURVEY

In consultation with Visit Vancouver WA, MMGY NextFactor developed an online resident survey to identify and understand local sentiment on a variety of key characteristics regarding tourism.

This research aims to answer the following questions:

- What do residents think of their city as a place to live?
- What are the most important attributes of a resident's quality of life?
- How do residents view the tourism industry and its impact on their county?

More than 600 residents of Vancouver participated in the survey.

Nature and parks were identified as the most important attributes to quality of life as a Vancouver resident, followed by dining, outdoor activities, and health and wellness.

Residents felt the best features of living in Vancouver were the geographic location, outdoors spaces, climate, and friendly people. The survey revealed that homelessness, safety and crime, lack of diversity, and housing availability are some of Vancouver's least favorable aspects of Vancouver residency.

Nature and parks were rated as the highest quality experience currently available in Vancouver, followed by outdoor activities, breweries, and historic sites and landmarks. Respondents rated sports participation & viewing, nightlife, and museums as the lowest quality experiences.

According to almost half of the respondents, Vancouver attracts too few tourists. There is a strong belief among respondents that an increase in tourism will create opportunities for local businesses and create employment opportunities for residents.

The compiled data, along with key findings and recommendations, were presented to the Steering Committee in a working session during this project.





## KEY FINDINGS

Feedback from the engagement was analyzed and summarized into 13 key findings surrounding the management and development of tourism in Vancouver.

1. Vancouver's outdoor recreation opportunities are key to attracting visitors and residents.
2. There needs to be greater awareness and opportunity to connect visitors to outdoor recreation opportunities.
3. Vancouver has an opportunity to grow its hosting & experiential infrastructure.
4. Vancouver needs an articulated identity and clear brand.
5. Sustainability & stewardship are priorities in Vancouver and need to be better integrated into the visitor economy.
6. Additional attractions and experiences for residents and visitors should be prioritized.
7. Arts, culture, history and heritage need to be amplified and experiences developed.
8. Transportation, mobility and access need to be considered for visitors and residents, particularly with the upcoming Interstate Bridge construction.
9. More wayfinding, signage and destination information is needed.
10. There's an untapped local maker and producers market to be amplified and shared.
11. Residents need to understand the value of tourism.
12. Funding for destination development needs to be addressed.
13. Investment in attracting and hosting sporting events is needed.



## VISIONING SESSION

The insights and feedback gathered through these research activities were used in a visioning workshop with the Steering Committee to collaboratively imagine the future of Vancouver's visitor economy and to develop strategic priorities to be addressed as an outcome of this project.

## VALIDATION SESSION

As a result of the visioning workshop session, priorities identified by the Steering Committee were then analyzed, synthesized, and compiled into a list of Draft Recommendations that was presented to the Steering Committee and project team for feedback and validation of these priorities.

## FUNDING ANALYSIS

In 2022, Visit Vancouver WA received \$700K from the City of Vancouver's lodging tax collections to support the growth of tourism in the area. As part of this one-year pilot program, Visit Vancouver WA used a portion of these funds to embark on the destination master planning process, and acted as liaison to the LTAC Grant process. Additionally, Visit Vancouver WA receives benefit of a Tourism Promotion Area (TPA) fee assessed to all guests of area hotels with more than 40 total rooms. In 2022, the TPA generated \$1.2 million for Visit Vancouver WA.

To identify new funding opportunities for tourism development, Civitas Advisors conducted a comprehensive funding analysis of Vancouver's policies and opportunities to support recommendations of this plan.

According to Civitas Advisors, private funding amounts fluctuate and, in bad economic times, are likely to decrease significantly. Securing public funds can be a challenge when tax revenues are not dedicated to tourism marketing and development. Industry-led funding mechanisms, like Tourism Improvement Districts ("TIDs") and Tourism Promotion Areas ("TPAs"), are becoming more recognized as the future for destination marketing organizations as a secure and stable funding source.

TID's and TPA's create a mechanism for a partnership between destination management organizations, hotels, stakeholders, and the municipality to levy an assessment on room nights sold and collectively leverage funding for programs to increase additional demand for overnight visitation for the destination. TIDs and TPAs create a platform for the industry to establish an "industry-led" revenue stream that bolsters a collaborative environment to raise all boats within a community.

Based on our research, as a short term goal, Visit Vancouver should seek to increase the current \$2 per occupied room TPA assessment in conjunction with current state law. The implementation of a TID would be the ideal medium- to long-term goal to increase Visit Vancouver Washington's available funding. A TID is recommended to work toward establishing a secure, stable supplemental revenue stream for future organizational resilience.

The complete Funding Analysis by Civitas Advisors can be found in Addendum A.



# VISION

## IN THE YEAR 2033, VANCOUVER IS THE BEST PLACE TO LIVE AND VISIT IN THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST.



The Steering Committee and project team evaluated community priorities and tourism opportunities during the visioning session through the lens of an ideal future state for Vancouver. This group developed a shared vision for Vancouver as an aspiration for the year 2033.

It's often said that what is good for the resident is good for the visitor. During the engagement phase of this project, all stakeholders expressed the importance of preserving the quality of life that Vancouver residents currently enjoy. By taking an intentional approach to Vancouver's tourism growth and investing in enhancements that add value to the resident experience, Vancouver will continue to build its reputation as a desirable place to live and visit.

Strengthening the availability and quality of experiences in Vancouver will raise the city's profile as a competitive destination that stands out amongst its neighbors as a preferred location to host and attend events, invest in new business, and call this place home.

Improving connectivity and accessibility of the local transportation system will create ease for residents and change the way that visitors interact with the Vancouver landscape. Additionally, wayfinding signage and rideshare services will support both visitors and locals.

Investing support in our outdoor recreation market will play a key role in realizing our vision of becoming the preferred city in this region for locals and visitors. When visiting recreationalists and their families are in town, it increases revenue to our visitor services such as hotels, restaurants, and retail. By ensuring we have the infrastructure to further support and entertain this market, we will benefit businesses and create jobs.

Finally, engaging locals to support and champion the destination brand will create enthusiasm for welcoming visitors and sharing all that Vancouver has to offer.

This vision balances responsible visitor growth with our community's values and quality of life.



# STRATEGIC GOALS

The five strategic goals established through the Destination Master Planning process will provide a framework to guide tourism related decision-making and efforts to enhance Vancouver's visitor economy. These goals offer guidance on how to bring the project vision to life and establish Vancouver as a competitive visitor destination.

#	STRATEGIC GOAL
1	DEVELOP VANCOUVER'S EXPERIENTIAL INFRASTRUCTURE.
2	ENGAGE LOCALS.
3	ENHANCE ACCESS, MOBILITY AND EASE OF MOVEMENT FOR PEOPLE OF ALL ABILITIES.
4	STRENGTHEN OUTDOOR RECREATION TOURISM OPPORTUNITIES TO CONNECT ALL PEOPLE WITH THE OUTDOORS.
5	ARTICULATE VANCOUVER'S DESTINATION IDENTITY & BRAND PROMISE.



# GOAL #1 – DEVELOP VANCOUVER’S EXPERIENTIAL INFRASTRUCTURE



Travelers today are increasingly seeking a unique, authentic travel experience. Memorable travel experiences create repeat visitors who share their recommendations with friends and family, therefore strengthening destination perception and building brand awareness.

To support positive visitor experiences, successful destinations provide a wide range of activities, attractions, and experiences to meet the needs of a variety of travelers with varying interests and backgrounds. A robust experiential infrastructure also includes services and experiences to support and entertain multiple visitor markets. Offering a variety of opportunities to experience Vancouver will benefit the long-term health and development of the region, including quality of life for residents, Vancouver's destination brand, jobs, talent attraction and retention, economic development, and the visitor economy.

## INITIATIVES:

- **1.1:** Collaborate with Interstate Bridge program to incorporate an experience in final design
  - Connect with Interstate Bridge Replacement program regarding opportunities for input regarding user experience design.
  - Identify potential specific experiences that may be proposed as an experience on the bridge.
- **1.2:** Develop more pedestrian/all-user friendly multicultural events & festivals in neighborhoods to encourage visitors and locals to explore all areas of Vancouver
  - Native American history, storytelling and cultural representation needs to be respectfully developed to appropriately represent the heritage of this land.
- **1.3:** Advocate for venues and facilities which appeal to visitors and also prioritize cultural and sustainability initiatives
  - Potential new development (i.e. multi-use sports facility, performing arts facility, children's museum, cultural arts center, etc.)
  - Existing venues and facilities (i.e. Vancouver Waterfront, Clark County Historical Museum, The Historic Trust, Vancouver National Historic Preserve, etc.)
- **1.4:** Partner with local authorities and social service agencies to support safety, security & accessibility measures
- **1.5:** Develop partnership with the City of Vancouver to encourage and support pilot experiences and events that drive visitation and incorporate sustainability initiatives, such as event recycling programs or tourism facilities that incorporate sustainable practices, such as solar power, recycling rainwater, “conservation volunteering,” etc.
- **1.6:** Evaluate possible increases in funding mechanisms for Visit Vancouver WA, including but not limited to Tourism Promotion Area (TPA) funding assessment, a Tourism-Business Improvement District (TID-BID), and/or other public funds (i.e. City, County, Port, State) to ensure Visit Vancouver WA's ability to support and influence



## GOAL #2 – ENGAGE LOCALS



Engaging and supporting our residents, community leaders and elected officials is an important part of tourism planning. To achieve true sustainability, we must balance all aspects of the triple bottom line—people, place, and economy. Of equal importance to a destination’s economic growth and stewardship of place, its people must also be prioritized, acknowledged and consulted along the way to success. Community members want to have a say in the future of their home when it comes to tourism.

Tourism impacts everyone, and so it must be developed and managed in a way that is equitable and brings all voices to the table. As we look ahead toward enhancing the future of tourism in Vancouver, there must be an ongoing and proactive effort to prioritize meaningful engagement with locals representing all identities and backgrounds across Vancouver’s diverse resident population.

By listening to all Vancouver voices, will ensure a responsible path of tourism growth that is right for Vancouver, and therefore right for the visitor economy. Throughout the implementation of this plan, we will bring community members along in pursuit of becoming an equitable and inclusive destination that respects the needs of both locals and guests alike.

### INITIATIVES:

- **2.1:** Ensure that all existing and new Visit Vancouver WA programming is inclusive and representative of all identities.
  - Conduct a diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility audit of existing tourism assets and attractions.
  - Develop and share an equity framework for visitor-facing businesses and tourism assets.
- **2.2:** Develop and execute a consistent, equitable engagement and communication strategy to create awareness and understanding of the value and contribution of tourism in Vancouver.
- **2.3:** Develop a program to engage frontline tourism and hospitality employees to increase their knowledge and first-hand experiences of Vancouver’s attractions and highlights.
- **2.4:** Expand local-focused programs like Dine the Couve that encourage locals to participate in the visitor economy.

# GOAL #3 – ENHANCE ACCESS, MOBILITY AND EASE OF MOVEMENT FOR PEOPLE OF ALL ABILITIES



As a destination, we must connect our neighbors and visitors with access to reliable transportation options that support healthy, independent living and easeful navigation around Vancouver. How locals and visitors arrive and move around Vancouver needs to evolve to meet the needs of all users. A vibrant visitor economy must contain connections that are equally vibrant, creating a sense of continuity of the visitor experience throughout the entire region.

Expanding Vancouver's transportation infrastructure to incorporate the visitor perspective will help support and grow the visitor economy. Transportation safety, equity and regional connectivity are important components in the design of new transportation connections to support mobility throughout the region. Tourism and the visitor economy should also be considered in tandem with transportation developments such as the new Interstate Bridge, expanded public transit and infrastructure improvements that support alternative modes of transportation.

Residents and visitors also need to be well informed about the availability of existing public transit systems, and appropriate transportation and directional signage should be incorporated throughout Vancouver to support effective navigation for users of all abilities.

## INITIATIVES:

- **3.1:** Foster public-private partnerships with Ryd, REV Rides, CTRAN and others that align with City of Vancouver sustainability priorities to encourage visitors to use them to move around Vancouver and the local area
- **3.2:** Partner with the Port of Vancouver to evaluate future expansion of river cruises as a priority market with the appropriate infrastructure, room blocks and dining, shopping and cultural experiences for groups
  - Obtain metrics/data on current river cruise operations to understand volume, schedule, and visitor metrics.
  - Quantify the current economic impact of river cruises on this section of the Columbia River.
- **3.3:** Engage with Interstate Bridge program to ensure appropriate and accessible walkways, bike lanes and transit connections are added
- **3.4:** Collaborate with City of Vancouver to develop and/or update signage and maps to support visitors during upcoming construction projects (i.e. Main Street Promise, Interstate Bridge Replacement Program, etc.) which may be impactful to visitors and residents
  - Ensure that all new signage meets the needs of users of all abilities and transportation modes.



# GOAL #4 – STRENGTHEN OUTDOOR RECREATION TOURISM OPPORTUNITIES TO CONNECT ALL PEOPLE WITH THE OUTDOORS



Vancouver's proximity to the natural world as well as its breadth and quantity of outdoor experiences makes it an outstanding destination for outdoor recreation tourism. Outdoor recreation draws visitors and residents to the Vancouver area every year. Opportunities to hike, walk, bike, roll, fish, climb, camp and paddle in the region's beautiful landscapes makes Vancouver an attractive home base for outdoor enthusiasts and a top destination for visitors from all over the world.

To catalyze this strength and connect people to the great outdoors, a recreation infrastructure to support outdoor activities is needed. Outfitters, guides, transportation connectivity, accessibility for all users and information about outdoor opportunities will help connect locals and visitors to the great outdoors and enhance appreciation of natural beauty and outdoor life.

The outdoors is a place for all users, and outdoor recreation means something different to everyone. To strengthen Vancouver's outdoor culture, we must take intentional steps to become a welcoming place that encourages and supports all users for a variety of activities. By understanding what recreation looks like for all users and how to connect everyone to the outdoors, Vancouver will be well positioned as an inclusive, leading destination in the outdoor recreation tourism space.

## INITIATIVES:

- **4.1:** Develop regional collaboration opportunities with regional tourism organizations like Travel Portland or the Columbia Gorge Tourism Alliance to create awareness and foster educational and fully accessible experiential opportunities for visitors & locals
  - Build relationships within the outdoor recreation industry to better understand Vancouver's outdoor recreation economy (including outdoor recreation visitor profiles and target market, gaps in services, high visitation "hotspots" in the area, recreation assets that should be developed or highlighted, potential partnerships, and opportunities for broader storytelling collaborations).



# GOAL #4 – STRENGTHEN OUTDOOR RECREATION TOURISM OPPORTUNITIES TO CONNECT ALL PEOPLE WITH THE OUTDOORS (CONTINUED)



- **4.2:** Further develop sustainable trail experiences and urban parks
  - Connect with the City of Vancouver and Clark County Parks & Recreation departments to explore options for trail and park enhancements.
- **4.3:** Foster small business opportunities for outfitters and tour guides to enhance Vancouver's outdoor recreation product offerings
  - Quantify the economic impact of outdoor recreation to Vancouver's economy.
  - Conduct an asset inventory of existing outdoor recreation enabling businesses, determine service gaps, and identify needs to support Vancouver's outdoor recreation economy.
  - Support new business development in this category to meet the needs of outdoor recreation enthusiasts of all abilities.
- **4.4:** Increase awareness of outdoor recreation tourism, stewardship, and volun-tourism opportunities (including those at the Fort Vancouver National Historic Site, Clark County Historical Museum, and Vancouver Farmers Market) in messaging, through awareness campaigns and itinerary development.
  - Identify opportunities for broader storytelling collaborations of Vancouver's outdoor recreation assets and opportunities.
- **4.5:** Develop outdoor recreation itineraries based on ability, accessibility, time commitment, etc. to show visitors what's possible in Vancouver's outdoors.
- **4.6:** Connect with organizations that specialize in outdoor equity, accessibility, and inclusivity to better understand how to foster an equitable outdoor recreation landscape in Vancouver (TravelAbility, Outdoors for All, Diversify Outdoors, Latino Outdoors, etc.)



# GOAL #5 – ARTICULATE VANCOUVER’S DESTINATION IDENTITY AND BRAND PROMISE



Destination brand is an important factor for travelers choosing where they'd like to invest their time and money to create new memories. Visitors only know what they are told or shown about a destination, so a high-quality brand and in-market experience plays a critical role in visitor satisfaction. Increasingly, the reputation, quality of place and the perceived brand of a city is determining where businesses choose to invest, in turn driving an increase in talent, capital, and tourism to destinations of choice.

Effective place brands garner the attention of visitors and businesses by bringing diverse stakeholders together to create brand alignment that is truly representative of their unique community. Not only does this alignment generate external awareness, it also bolsters community pride and sense of place. A meaningful and authentic place brand will resonate with locals and be a source of pride for Vancouver residents.

Communication of a destination's brand is essential to spread awareness and drive attraction that results in visitation. Content creation across multiple platforms drives the destination brand and experience, which drives interest, enhances visitor experience, and creates repeat visitation. Defining a clear identity and delivering a memorable brand experience will build visitor loyalty and drive repeat visitation to Vancouver.

## INITIATIVES:

- **5.1:** Convene a meaningful and representative group of Vancouver residents and stakeholders from diverse populations to discuss Vancouver's destination identity
- **5.2:** Develop a clear identity statement and inclusive brand promise for the destination
  - Identify and articulate characteristics that define Vancouver's sense of place.
- **5.3:** Collaborate with economic development partners on this work
- **5.4:** Engage locals in the conversation about Vancouver's destination identity and brand promise
- **5.5:** Develop strong communication and marketing strategies to support this work
  - Identify where there is opportunity to implement design elements that support community identity and sense of place.
- **5.6:** Consistently engage and support all groups in living the brand promise
  - Develop a toolkit for partners to effectively incorporate Vancouver's brand identity into their own brands and marketing.

# NEXT STEPS

From the outset of the destination master planning process, the community was engaged and excited to support the implementation of the strategic recommendations.

Visit Vancouver WA doesn't own the assets and experiences related to the visitor economy, and therefore, they cannot single-handedly move this Destination Master Plan forward. Their roles in the implementation of the Plan will take several forms including:

## ADVOCATE

There will be instances where Visit Vancouver WA will advocate for the advancement of strategic initiatives that will advance Vancouver for the benefit of visitors and residents.

## CONVENER

Visit Vancouver WA may be the conveners of groups and those in positions to advance initiatives.

## LEADER

There will be instances where Visit Vancouver WA takes the lead as the organization to advance initiatives.

## SUPPORTER

Finally, Visit Vancouver WA will be the supporting or partnering organization on initiatives with other leading organizations.

Several initiatives within the plan will be incorporated into the subsequent Implementation Plan and into Visit Vancouver WA's annual business plans to ensure implementation is given an appropriate level of organizational focus, support and resources. It is recommended that Visit Vancouver WA assign a dedicated lead to champion the implementation of the Destination Master Plan and the subsequent Implementation Plan, and that an appropriate annual budget is allocated to this effort.

Members of the Steering Committee have agreed to continue to be involved with the Destination Master Plan to support its implementation. Subcommittees and working groups will be tasked with guiding implementation, collaborating to execute on initiatives and report on progress and other performance measures.

With a collaborative, focused and original approach to the implementation of this Destination Master Plan, it will result in the growth of the visitor economy and its widespread benefits for Vancouver and the entire region.

The visitor economy in Vancouver has unlimited potential and we're excited to welcome more visitors to our great city!