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COMOX VALLEY TOURISM PLAN

Final
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COMOX VALLEY TOURISM PLAN
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The communities in the Comox Valley have been welcoming visitors for many years, and the Comox Valley destination marketing organization has been working cooperatively with local tourism businesses and Tourism Vancouver Island to promote tourism to the Valley. In early 2008, responsibility for destination development and marketing moved from Comox Valley Tourism to the Comox Valley Economic Development Society. However, no formal tourism plan exists to provide a cohesive and strategic approach to tourism development and marketing, to enable the Comox Valley to effectively focus its tourism resources for the greatest benefit. In addition, stronger integration with Tourism BC and Tourism Vancouver Island is desired to enable the Comox Valley to leverage the skills and programs provided through these organizations. As a result, the communities of the Comox Valley have embarked upon a joint tourism planning initiative through Tourism British Columbia's Community Tourism Foundations program that provides resources to assist communities in developing a comprehensive tourism plan. These resources include the services of professional facilitators to assist in the planning process. Strategex Consulting Group was given the assignment to prepare a comprehensive tourism plan for Comox Valley that encompasses destination development and market development. Tourism British Columbia oversaw this project that included the guidance and assistance of a working group comprising representatives from the communities including Comox Valley Economic Development, Mount Washington Alpine Resort, Comox Valley Airport Authority, hotel and B&B operators, and other tourism-related businesses (wine/culinary/agri-food, restaurants, heritage and culture) as well as representatives from Tourism Vancouver Island.

Planning Process

The planning process started with an initial meeting on August 6, 2008 and the subsequent preparation of a detailed situation analysis, which formed the factual foundation for the tourism plan. A planning session was held on October 30, 2008 in which the situation analysis was reviewed by the working group and priorities were set for the tourism plan. Following the setting of priorities, the first draft of the tourism plan was completed with a review on December 15, 2008. The tourism plan was finalized after working group members provided feedback to the plan.

Tourism Plan

The tourism plan serves as the embodiment of the community's overall vision and economic goals with regard to tourism. The plan encompasses five years and, while it serves as a roadmap, it is flexible enough to take new information and unexpected opportunities into consideration during implementation.

Objectives

The overall goal of the Comox Valley is to significantly grow tourism to the area but in a sustainable manner. Stakeholders identified that it was important to maintain the small town feel and relaxing atmosphere of the Valley. This would be achieved over a period of five to ten years, in a manner that enhances the community.

The objectives are as follows:

- In 2009, total room revenues will be maintained at the level achieved in 2008 (0% growth).
- 2010 to 2013. Given the volatile state of the world economy at the time of writing, objectives beyond 2009 will be determined based on 2009 performance, economic conditions in late 2009, and visitor volume and/or expenditure forecasts provided by Tourism BC.

Target Markets

Primary markets in order of priority:

- Residents of Greater Vancouver. This is the largest population centre in BC (2.3 million), and BC residents currently comprise about 45% of visitors to Vancouver Island¹ and 52% to the Comox Valley (excluding local residents)².
- Residents of Greater Victoria and Vancouver Island. This target group is an important market, but the potential is not as great as Greater Vancouver due to population.
- Visitors to Greater Victoria. There are 3.6 million overnight visitors to Victoria³, most of them repeat visitors, who may be ready to explore areas beyond the city centre on a current or future trip.
- Residents of Calgary and Edmonton. This is a primary target group for Comox Valley because of the direct air access provided by WestJet through the Comox Valley Airport. Both Calgary and Edmonton have populations of over 1 million.
- Outdoor adventure enthusiasts, particularly residents of Greater Victoria/Vancouver Island, Greater Vancouver and Alberta.
- Local residents. While residents of the Comox Valley are not strictly a tourism target group, they represent potential ambassadors for the communities who can encourage their friends and family to visit and provide information on what to do in the area.

These are considered primary target markets because Comox Valley has the greatest product strengths against them, they represent the greatest visitor volumes, and/or they are the most cost-efficient to reach.

Secondary and niche markets:

- Seattle/Washington State. Between 2-3 % of visitors to the Comox Valley (excluding local residents) are from Washington State and an equal percentage are from California.
- Saskatchewan. Although visitors from Saskatchewan currently comprise less than 2% of visitors to the Comox Valley, stakeholders identify this as a market with potential for winter visitation.
- UK, Germany, Netherlands. Visitors from international markets represent approximately 10% of visitors to Comox Valley and the same percentage of visitors to Vancouver Island overall.
- Meeting and incentive travel planners for BC and Alberta businesses (appropriate for a limited number of accommodation providers that have the meeting space and facilities for this market). According to the Vancouver Island Visitor Survey, 82% of visitors to the North Central Island are travelling for leisure purposes, 9% for business or work, 7% a combination of business and pleasure, and 2% for personal reasons⁴.

Length of Stay

Visitors to the Comox Valley are flexible regarding their trip activities and close to half are flexible in their travel schedule (able to extend their visit by one or two extra days). Comox Valley should endeavour to increase visitors' length of stay in a number of ways:

- Make overnight leisure travellers aware of the various attractions and activities available in the Comox Valley both at the trip planning stage and once they arrive.
- Package activities together with accommodation or together with other activities, and create multiple day itineraries with a mix of activities of interest to visitors.

¹ *Tourism Vancouver Island Visitor Study*, Preliminary Data, November 2008. Excludes Vancouver Island and Gulf Island residents.

² Tourism BC Visitor Services, 2007.

³ Tourism Victoria Exit Survey Annual Report, 2007.

⁴ *Tourism Labour Research Project: Vancouver Island Visitor Survey, Visitor Profile-North Central Island*, Malaspina University-College and Tourism Vancouver Island, 2002-2003.

- Increase the number and variety of attractions, activities and tours that have been identified as priority tourism products and of interest to key markets.

In addition, getaway vacations of two to three nights can be promoted to residents Greater Victoria and Greater Vancouver, and to those Victoria visitors who have more flexible itineraries or may visit Victoria frequently (40% of Victoria's visitors say they visit three or more times annually⁵).

Positioning

The following recommended positioning statement has been developed based on Tourism BC's *Value of the Comox Valley Visitor Centre* report, other consumer research studies cited in the Situation Analysis and the positioning exercise with the working group on December 15, 2008:

Located between the ocean and Strathcona Provincial Park and Mount Washington, the Comox Valley offers visitors a vast array of year-round outdoor experiences, from ocean kayaking to hiking in the high alpine, against a backdrop of breathtakingly beautiful scenery. Yet close at hand are the comforts and amenities usually found in more urban destinations - luxury hotel/ resort accommodation, spas, museums and heritage sites, unique shops and galleries, and good restaurants offering cuisine prepared with ingredients sourced from local waters, farms and wineries.

Brand Character – outdoorsy yet urbane, easygoing and friendly.

Priority Tourism Products

The product categories to be developed and promoted are recommended as follows:

- Outdoor adventure. The area's natural beauty/scenery, the ocean, and provincial and regional parks offer the opportunity for a wide range of outdoor experiences for both outdoor adventure enthusiasts and less active travellers.
- Heritage, arts, and cultural attractions and related festivals and events (including aboriginal products and experiences). Although not as likely to motivate a trip as outdoor adventure, heritage/arts/cultural attractions and festivals/events are popular tourism products on Vancouver Island and in the Comox Valley.

Secondary/Niche Products

- Wine and culinary (agri-food). Wine and culinary tourism is an emerging opportunity for the Comox Valley as it continues to build its wine and culinary products.
- Spa. While only 6% of visitors to the Comox Valley reported visiting a spa on their trip, 23% expressed interest in visiting a spa on a future trip.
- Golf. About 10% of the visitors to the Comox Valley Visitor Centre participated in a game of golf or golf event. The interest in golf rises for a return trip with about 18% of visitors identifying golf as an activity of interest on a future trip to the Comox Valley.
- Ski. Skiing, snowboarding and other outdoor winter activities at Mount Washington provide valuable visitation to the Comox Valley in the winter months.
- Sport tourism. Comox Valley has had success in attracting teams to the Vancouver Island Mountain Sports Centre at Mount Washington for pre-Olympic training for alpine events. However, stakeholders see Comox Valley as currently lacking in facilities/sport tourism product compared to other BC communities that are concentrating on this product.

⁵ 2007 Tourism Victoria Exit Survey Annual Report

- Smaller meetings/corporate retreats and incentive travel. As the Comox Valley does not have a meeting and convention facility to accommodate larger groups, and only a few hotels can accommodate smaller conferences (under 500), this product has been identified as a niche product.

Research and evaluation

Evaluation mechanisms are essential to understanding the current value of tourism in the community, to tracking growth and gauging the effectiveness of various initiatives. Some mechanisms are already in place in the form of surveys conducted at the Visitor Centre, but additional measures are needed to evaluate the impact of marketing programs and the drawing power of the attractions and events in the area.

Budget

To accomplish the objectives, strategies, and the tactics outlined in the plan, an annual budget of approximately \$350K in 2009, \$530K in 2010, growing to \$700K by 2013 (excluding staffing and the operation of the Visitor Centre) is recommended. Multiple sources of funding (including local government support, the Additional Hotel Room Tax, Tourism BC's Community Tourism Opportunities program, and earned revenue) will be required to achieve these budget amounts.

INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

This tourism plan for the Comox Valley addresses the conclusions and implications brought forward from the situation analysis. It is intended to guide the tourism activities of Discover Comox Valley and sets out the objectives that the tourism organization will strive to achieve, using the strategies and specific tactics described. Evaluation methods to track results are listed and estimated budget amounts for each activity are provided where applicable.

Background

The communities of the Comox Valley have embarked upon a joint tourism planning initiative through Tourism British Columbia's Community Tourism Foundations program that provides resources to assist communities in developing a comprehensive tourism plan. These resources include the services of professional facilitators to assist in the planning process. Strategex Consulting Group was given the assignment to prepare a comprehensive tourism plan for Comox Valley that encompasses destination development and market development. Tourism British Columbia oversaw this project that included the guidance and assistance of a tourism working group.

The planning process started with an initial meeting on August 6, 2008. The participants included:

Community Participants:

Roger McKinnon	Old House Village Suites and Hotel
Mike McLaughlin	Discover Comox Valley – Tourism Consultant
Edd Moyes	Blackfin Pub at the Marina
John Watson	Comox Valley Economic Development

Tourism BC Representatives:

Peter Harrison	Tourism BC
Dave Petryk	Tourism Vancouver Island

Facilitator:

Denise Hayes	Strategex Consulting Group
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Subsequent to the initial meeting, a working group was formed and a planning session was held on October 30, 2008 in which the working group reviewed the situation analysis and set priorities for the tourism plan. Following the setting of priorities, the tourism plan was completed and reviewed by the working group on December 15, 2008. The plan was then finalized based on feedback from the working group. Members of the working group included:

Community Working Group Participants:

Ron Bannerman	Comox Valley Heritage Tours
Ted Benson	Comox Valley Bed & Breakfast Association
Karen Bonell	Mount Washington
Rick Browning	Best Western
Scott Butler	Holiday Inn Express
Jonathan Cross	Best Western
Chuck Fast	Comox Valley Airport Commission
Mike Hawitt	Comox Bay Resort and Marina
Lynn Larsen	Holiday Inn Express
Linda McIntyre	Kingfisher Resort and Spa
Roger McKinnon	Old House Village Suites and Hotel

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Mike McLaughlin	Discover Comox Valley Contractor
Edd Moyes	Blackfin Pub
Jay Oddleifson	Shelter Point Distillery
Mike O'Hara	Kingfisher Resort & Spa
Randy Rai	Crown Isle Resort and Golf Community
Marc Rheaume	Holiday Inn Express
Ronald St. Pierre	Locals Restaurant
Larry Seburn	Old House Village Suites and Hotel
Jeff Vandermolten	Beaufort Winery
John Watson	Comox Valley Economic Development

Tourism BC

Representatives:

Peter Harrison	Tourism British Columbia
Bobbi-Jean Goldy	Tourism Vancouver Island
Dave Petryk	Tourism Vancouver Island

Facilitator:

Denise Hayes	Strategex Consulting Group
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These individuals have volunteered their time to participate in the planning process. Their commitment and support have made completion of this plan possible.

Tourism Plan

In the preparation of the tourism plan, the following principles are kept in mind:

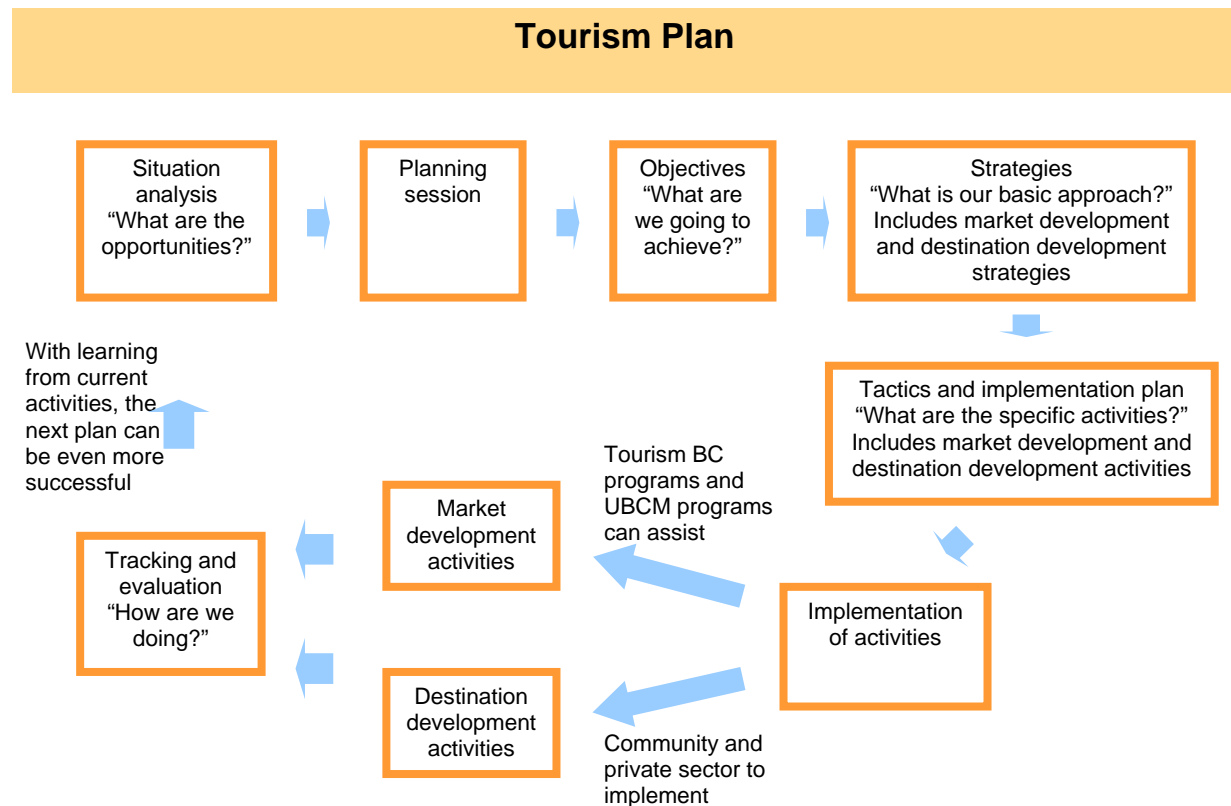
- **Visitor Needs.** BC communities must be responsive to visitor needs. Communities need to understand visitor needs first, develop tourism experiences to meet those needs, and then market the appropriate tourism experience to the appropriate type of visitor.
- **Inclusiveness.** To address the issues and opportunities facing the tourism industry, consultation and collaboration need to form the basis of plan development.
- **Effective Partnerships.** Tourism is a fragmented industry and effective partnerships among tourism operators, communities, destination marketing organizations, and all levels of government are essential to building a cohesive, strong and sustainable tourism industry in British Columbia.
- **Sustainability.** Tourism in British Columbia will be developed in a sustainable manner, recognizing the need for economic, social, and environmental sustainability.
- **Community Support.** To be successful, tourism development in communities needs to be supported by all areas of a community, including businesses, local government, and residents.

The tourism plan is the embodiment of the overall vision, economic goals, and serves as a roadmap for the years ahead to achieve the community's vision with regard to tourism. This tourism plan presents objectives to 2013, with greater detail provided in the first three years. While the plan provides a roadmap, it is also flexible enough to take new, unexpected opportunities into consideration during implementation.

The tourism plan accomplishes the following⁶:

1. Defines the business situation – past, present and future.
2. Defines the tourism-related opportunities and problems facing the community.
3. Establishes specific and realistic business objectives.
4. Defines strategies and tactics required to accomplish the objectives.
5. Establishes a timetable and pinpoints responsibility for execution of programs.
6. Establishes control and review procedures to monitor effectiveness of programs and performance against the defined objectives.

Once the tourism plan is completed and implementation begins, results should be tracked regularly such that an updated plan, with learning from the current year’s activities, can be even more effective in increasing tourism to the community. For many communities, the objectives and strategies should be reviewed, with most of the updates occurring on the detailed tactics. The planning cycle can be illustrated as follows:



⁶ Based on the American Marketing Association definition.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FROM SITUATION ANALYSIS

The conclusions and implications are the culmination of the situation analysis and the results of the planning session. They represent the key insights that distil the learning and identify the key areas that the tourism plan must address.

- a) **Comox Valley is well placed to make gains in tourism with its proximity to Greater Vancouver and Victoria, and with direct flights from Calgary and Edmonton to the Comox Valley Airport.** BC residents currently make up 45%⁷ of visitors to Vancouver Island and 52% to the Comox Valley, and Greater Vancouver, with a population of 2.3 million, comprises the vast majority of BC resident travellers. The 337,000 residents of Victoria are an important market and the 3.6 million overnight visitors to Victoria⁸, most of them repeat visitors, may be ready to explore areas beyond the city centre on a current or future trip. Comox Valley enjoys direct air access from Calgary and Edmonton, both of which have populations over 1 million. Residents of Alberta currently comprise about 13% of visitors to Vancouver Island⁹ and about 12% of visitors to the Comox Valley¹⁰.
- b) **The unique aspects of the Comox Valley that have potential to contribute to tourism growth include its natural beauty/ocean/parks, and the many opportunities for outdoor adventures, heritage/culture and culinary/agri-food experiences, and festivals and events.** The skiing, snowboarding and other winter activities at Mount Washington draw visitation outside the summer season. Golf and spa also have potential. Sport tourism, with the completion of the Vancouver Island Mountain Sports Centre and the proposed IMG sports training academy, provides a niche opportunity. The area also benefits from a number of “destination” accommodation properties and a variety of accommodations types with capacity throughout the year, especially with the addition of several hundred new rooms by early 2009. The number of high quality restaurants serving local foods is significant for a community of this size.
- c) **Comox Valley faces a number of destination development issues that affect tourism growth.** Currently there are no direct flights from Seattle or Victoria to the Comox Airport and rail service from Victoria is limited. The potential for larger meetings and conventions and performing arts events is handicapped by a lack of facilities that can accommodate more than 500 people. Outdoor event venues are limited and those that do exist have limited services and infrastructure for event hosting. Consideration should be given to upgrading signage and way finding across all the communities in the Valley as the great majority of visitors arrive by car and the lack of/confusing signage, together with traffic, are the most frequently cited negative images for visitors to the Comox Valley¹¹.

Although located on the ocean, the town centres of Comox and Courtenay are disconnected from the waterfront with few access points and walkways for visitors and residents. This issue will be important to address as the ocean/harbour is seen by visitors as one of the top unique characteristics of the Comox Valley¹².

⁷ *Tourism Vancouver Island Visitor Study*, Preliminary Data, November 2008. Excludes Vancouver Island and Gulf Island residents.

⁸ *Tourism Victoria Exit Survey Annual Report*, 2007.

⁹ *Tourism Vancouver Island Visitor Study*, Preliminary Data, November 2008. Excludes Vancouver Island and Gulf Island residents.

¹⁰ *Tourism BC Visitor Services*, 2007.

¹¹ *Value of the Comox Valley Visitor Center*, Tourism BC Research Services, March 2007.

¹² *Value of the Comox Valley Visitor Center*, Tourism BC Research Services, March 2007.

- d) **Tourism product and market development in Comox Valley has been hampered by the lack of a tourism plan (with clearly defined target markets, quantifiable objectives, strategies, tactics and evaluation mechanisms) and by messages that are more general in nature rather than focused.** “Discover the possibilities” Comox Valley, has been used consistently in all marketing materials. However, the current tag line implies a very broad positioning statement, rather than focusing on any unique point of difference. As part of the tourism planning process, consideration should be given to developing a tourism positioning for the Comox Valley that provides compelling reasons to visit and reflects the unique nature of the experience relative to other competitive destinations. Research indicates that the natural beauty of the Comox Valley and the opportunities for outdoor adventure are highly rated by and important to visitors¹³.
- e) **With hundreds of new rooms coming online, Comox Valley must attract more overnight visitors and increase the average length of stay to maintain occupancy levels. Adequate levels of funding will be required to achieve success, either through implementation of the Additional Hotel Room Tax or other sources.** Increased investments in marketing activities in key markets combined with the development and promotion of new tourism products and packaging of complementary tourism activities will be required to achieve significant tourism growth.
- f) **Research with visitors and potential visitors and evaluation of product development and marketing activities should guide annual planning and decision making.** Comox Valley should build in evaluation tools for its marketing activities wherever possible. These evaluation tools will help Comox Valley judge the effectiveness of activities and whether an activity should be continued, expanded, contracted or eliminated as part of its annual planning process. Research among visitors and potential visitors will be important to inform changes in positioning.

¹³ *Value of the Comox Valley Visitor Center*, Tourism BC Research Services, March 2007.

OBJECTIVES

The overall goal of the Comox Valley is to significantly grow tourism to the area but in a sustainable manner. Stakeholders identified that it was important to maintain the small town feel and relaxing atmosphere of the Valley. This would be achieved over a period of five to ten years, in a manner that enhances the community.

The objectives are as follows:

- In 2009, total room revenues will be maintained at the same level achieved in 2008 (0% growth).
- 2010 to 2013. Given the volatile state of the world economy at the time of writing, objectives beyond 2009 will be determined based on 2009 performance, economic conditions in late 2009, and visitor volume and/or expenditure forecasts provided by Tourism BC.

It is anticipated that tourism will grow more significantly to BC after the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games, based on learning from other Olympic host destinations and Tourism BC's plan, so the rate of growth is expected to accelerate after 2010.

To measure this growth, the Comox Valley will use indicators as it is costly to conduct visitor studies. Indicators could include the following:

- Accommodation revenues.
- Occupancy data that compares occupancy rate with the total number of rooms.
- Comox Valley Airport inbound visitor traffic.
- Number of visitors to key attractions (using a common methodology that identifies tourists from local residents).
- Number of visitors to the Visitor Centres.

STRATEGIES

The strategies that the Comox Valley needs to employ to achieve its objectives are discussed in this section. The principles that were integral to developing these strategies include:

- The need for a unified approach to tourism development and marketing.
- Setting market priorities to provide the greatest return with limited budgets.
- The importance of a consumer-driven positioning, based on research.
- Working with other tourism organizations wherever possible to maximize the benefits of combined resources.
- Ongoing stakeholder involvement through a Tourism Advisory Committee.

Organizational Structure

This plan does not examine options for a tourism organizational structure in the Comox Valley. In early 2008, responsibility for destination development and marketing moved from Comox Valley Tourism to the Comox Valley Economic Development Society. It is envisaged that a Tourism Advisory Committee will provide guidance to the Comox Valley Economic Development Society on the development and implementation of tourism development and marketing activities and the application of tourism funds.

The makeup of the Comox Valley Tourism Advisory Committee will likely be an issue of much discussion but a possible make-up is shown below based on practices in other communities in British Columbia.

- Maintain a manageable size – no more than 15 members in total including representatives from the following organizations/sectors:
 - Comox Valley Economic Development Society (plus ex-officio staff)
 - First Nations
 - hotels/motels/resorts
 - B & B sector
 - heritage, arts, and culture
 - ski
 - culinary/agri-tourism
 - outdoor adventure
 - retail
 - restaurant
 - at-large.

A representative of Tourism Vancouver Island could be invited as a guest to ensure coordination between the Comox Valley and the regional tourism association.

The makeup of this tourism advisory committee reflects an emphasis on overnight stays. The importance of activities and attractions in motivating potential travel to the Comox Valley is also represented on the tourism committee group.

It will be important that the members of the Tourism Advisory Committee have a big picture view and agree that, while each may represent a particular sector of the community, each committee member has the responsibility to achieve the best possible results for Comox Valley as a whole and is not an advocate for any particular business or sector.

Sources of Funding

In recent years, many communities in British Columbia have increased their funding for tourism initiatives, creating greater competition. Significant funding increases will be required for the Comox Valley to achieve its tourism objectives. An annual budget of approximately \$350K in 2009, \$530K in 2010, growing to \$700K by 2013 (excluding staffing and the operation of the Visitor Centre) is presented to achieve the objectives set out in this plan and to implement the product development and promotional tactics.

Currently, funding support may be available from the following sources:

Comox Valley Economic Development Commission	\$175K
Tourism British Columbia Community Tourism Opportunities (CTO)	TBD
2% Additional Hotel Room Tax (if implemented, rough estimate only)	\$250 - 300K
Earned revenue/cooperative advertising revenue (excluding revenue from the Visitors' Guide) ¹⁴	\$150K
Total	\$575 - 625K

AHRT

To provide a sustainable source of funding, the communities in the Comox Valley are considering implementing the 2% additional hotel room tax (AHRT, which would generate approximately \$250 to 300K annually).

Other Sources of Revenue

Earned revenue, such as the sale of cooperative advertising, is an important source of funds for Discover Comox Valley, and development of cooperative marketing initiatives is an important component of this plan.

Municipal Support

The local governments comprising the Comox Valley provide funding of \$175,000 for tourism development (2008) and marketing and \$110,000 for the operation of the Courtenay and Cumberland Visitor Centres. In addition to funding support, Comox Valley Economic Development provides staff resources dedicated to destination development. The costs associated with these staff resources are not reflected here. The Comox Valley Tourism Advisory Committee may wish to solicit additional funding support from the local governments based on the strategies and tactics outlined in this plan.

¹⁴ As costs and revenues were not provided for the Comox Valley Official Visitors' Guide, it is assumed that advertising revenue from the guide will totally offset design, production and distribution costs. As a result, neither revenue nor expenses are included in the budget for the Visitors' Guide.

Target Markets

The recommended target markets are as follows:

Primary markets in order of priority:

- Residents of Greater Vancouver. This is the largest population centre in BC (2.3 million), and residents of BC currently comprise about 45% of visitors to Vancouver Island¹⁵ and 52% to the Comox Valley (excluding local residents)¹⁶.
- Residents of Greater Victoria and Vancouver Island. This target group is an important market, but the potential is not as great as Greater Vancouver due to population.
- Visitors to Greater Victoria. There are 3.6 million overnight visitors to Victoria¹⁷, most of them repeat visitors, who may be ready to explore areas beyond the city centre on a current or future trip.
- Residents of Calgary and Edmonton. This is a primary target group for Comox Valley because of the direct air access provided by WestJet through the Comox Valley Airport and both Calgary and Edmonton have populations of over 1 million. Residents of Alberta currently comprise about 13% of visitors to Vancouver Island¹⁸ and about 12% of visitors to the Comox Valley¹⁹.
- Outdoor adventure enthusiasts, particularly residents of Greater Victoria/Vancouver Island, Greater Vancouver and Alberta. Soft outdoor adventure and visiting parks are the two most popular activities for visitors to the Comox Valley and are cited as the top two activities of interest for future trips²⁰. However, further organized outdoor adventure tours and packages need to be developed to significantly grow this market over the longer term.
- Local residents. While residents of the Comox Valley are not strictly a tourism target group, they represent potential ambassadors for the communities who can encourage their friends and family to visit and provide information on what to do in the area. Through local residents, potential visitors from other parts of Canada and the world could be reached efficiently.

These are considered primary target markets because Comox Valley has the greatest product strengths against them, they represent the greatest visitor volumes, and/or they are the most cost-efficient to reach.

Secondary and niche markets:

- Seattle/Washington State. Between 2-3 % of visitors to the Comox Valley (excluding local residents) are from Washington State and an equal percentage are from California²¹.
- Saskatchewan. Although visitors from Saskatchewan currently comprise less than 2% of visitors to the Comox Valley²², stakeholders identify this as a market with potential for winter visitation.
- UK, Germany, Netherlands. Visitors from international markets represent approximately 10% of visitors to Comox Valley and the same percentage of visitors to Vancouver Island overall. International visitors to Comox Valley are mainly from UK (30%), Germany (19%) and the Netherlands (19%)²³. European markets are also a source of visitation for sport tourism initiatives,

¹⁵ *Tourism Vancouver Island Visitor Study*, Preliminary Data, November 2008. Excludes Vancouver Island and Gulf Island residents.

¹⁶ Tourism BC Visitor Services, 2007.

¹⁷ *Tourism Victoria Exit Survey Annual Report*, 2007.

¹⁸ *Tourism Vancouver Island Visitor Study*, Preliminary Data, November 2008. Excludes Vancouver Island and Gulf Island residents.

¹⁹ Tourism BC Visitor Services, 2007.

²⁰ *Value of the Comox Valley Visitor Centre*, Tourism BC Research Services, March 2007.

²¹ Tourism BC Visitor Services, 2007.

²² *Value of the Comox Valley Visitor Centre*, Tourism BC Research Services, March 2007.

²³ *Value of the Comox Valley Visitor Centre*, Tourism BC Research Services, March 2007.

particularly team training opportunities leading up to the 2010 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games.

- Meeting and incentive travel planners for BC and Alberta businesses (appropriate for a limited number of accommodation providers that have the meeting space and facilities for this market). According to the Vancouver Island Visitor Survey, 82% of visitors to the North Central Island are travelling for leisure purposes, 9% for business or work, 7% a combination of business and pleasure, and 2% for personal reasons²⁴. This is consistent with the numbers for BC as a whole with 86% of visitors to BC coming for leisure purposes and 15% for business purposes. Looking at trips taken by BC residents within BC, 10% of trips are for business purposes, 57% for personal/pleasure, and 33% for visiting friends and relatives.

As many of the primary and secondary markets for Comox Valley are also priority markets for Tourism Vancouver Island, Comox Valley would do well to continue and enhance its relationships with Tourism Vancouver Island and Tourism British Columbia, taking advantage of these well-established marketing programs and strong tourism brands.

The distinction between primary and secondary/niche markets is based on potential visitor revenue and best practices from other communities. Leisure markets are the primary source of visitor revenue for all BC communities. The primary markets of Greater Victoria/Vancouver Island, Greater Vancouver and Calgary/Edmonton have enormous potential. As well, the 3.6 million overnight visitors to Victoria, most of them repeat visitors, may be ready to explore areas other areas of Vancouver Island. The secondary markets also have potential for growth but they are not likely to come close to the visitation levels of the primary markets.

The primary and secondary/niche markets will be pursued and promoted to proactively, and destination development will keep these target markets in mind. This does not mean that from other markets will not be welcome or will not receive any attention, but the limited resources of the organization will be focused on the key target markets.

Length of Stay

According to the Value of the Comox Valley Visitor Centre study, BC resident travellers reported spending an average of 4 days out of their 8-day vacation in the Comox Valley in the summer of 2006. Other Canadian travellers reported spending an average of 5 days in the Comox Valley out of a total of 15 days they spent in BC. Visitors of all origins indicated they were flexible regarding their trip activities, with the majority (64%) planning less than a quarter of their activities prior to arrival. When asked about travel schedule flexibility, close to half (45%) of all travellers indicated they were flexible (able to extend their visit by one or two extra days). This indicates opportunity to extend a visitor's length of stay in a number of ways:

- Make overnight leisure travellers aware of the various attractions and activities available in the Comox Valley both at the trip planning stage and once they arrive. Nearly 40% of visitor to the North Central Island plan their trip 1-6 months in advance and 17% plan more than 6 months in advance²⁵.
- Package activities together with accommodation or together with other activities, and create multiple day itineraries with a mix of activities of interest to visitors.
- Increase the number and variety of attractions, activities and tours that have been identified as priority tourism products and of interest to key markets.

²⁴ *Tourism Labour Research Project: Vancouver Island Visitor Survey, Visitor Profile-North Central Island*, Malaspina University-College and Tourism Vancouver Island, 2002-2003.

²⁵ *Tourism Labour Research Project: Vancouver Island Visitor Survey, Visitor Profile-North Central Island*, Malaspina University-College and Tourism Vancouver Island, 2002-2003.

In addition, getaway vacations of two to three nights can be promoted to residents Greater Victoria and Greater Vancouver, and to those Victoria visitors who have more flexible itineraries or may visit Victoria frequently (40% of Victoria’s visitors say they visit three or more times annually²⁶).

Positioning

As indicated the situation analysis, while “Discover the possibilities” Comox Valley, has been used consistently in all marketing materials, the current tag line implies a very broad positioning, rather than focusing on any unique point of difference. Comox Valley requires a positioning that provides compelling reasons to visit and reflects the unique nature of the tourism experience relative to other competitive destinations.

The following recommended positioning statement has been developed based on Tourism BC’s *Value of the Comox Valley Visitor Centre* report, other consumer research studies cited in the situation analysis and the positioning exercise with the working group on December 15, 2008.

Located between the ocean and Strathcona Provincial Park and Mount Washington, the Comox Valley offers visitors a vast array of year-round outdoor experiences, from ocean kayaking to hiking in the high alpine, against a backdrop of breathtakingly beautiful scenery. Yet close at hand are the comforts and amenities usually found in more urban destinations - luxury hotel/ resort accommodation, spas, museums and heritage sites, unique shops and galleries, and good restaurants offering cuisine prepared with ingredients sourced from local waters, farms and wineries.

Brand Character – outdoorsy yet urbane, easygoing and friendly.

What it means:

- The first sentence encompasses the primary activities people participate in when they visit the Comox Valley (according to visitor research) and what they plan to do on a return visit (participate in soft adventure and visit parks) as well as Comox Valley’s primary unique characteristics of natural beauty and oceanfront/harbour location. “A vast array of year-round outdoor experiences, from ocean kayaking to hiking in the high alpine” highlights the Comox Valley’s unique location and the outdoor opportunities this presents for visitors. The “vast array of year-round outdoor experiences” reference is aspirational and the weakness of lack of organized outdoor adventure product and tours will need to be addressed to fully deliver on the brand promise.
- “Yet close at hand are the comforts and amenities usually found in more urban destinations” means that a visitor’s outdoor experience in the Comox Valley does not mean “roughing it” and visitors can enjoy the more sophisticated comforts of luxury accommodations, spas and fine dining together with their outdoor experiences. The second sentence also indicates there are other things to enjoy beyond the beautiful scenery to keep visitors engaged. The list includes the specific products and experiences that are of greatest interest to visitors to the Comox Valley as identified in the visitor research.

Notes about the positioning statement.

- A positioning statement should drive everything that the Comox Valley does related to tourism, including all aspects of a visitor’s experience, not just marketing.
- A positioning statement is not a tagline or an advertising slogan. It is a concise statement or description of the core benefits that the Comox Valley offers potential visitors.
- The positioning statement is not used directly in advertising or public/media relations – it is a strategy statement from which the Comox Valley would develop a logo, tagline and key messages.
- The positioning statement answers these questions:

²⁶ *Tourism Victoria Exit Survey Annual Report, 2007*

- What differentiates Comox Valley’s visitor experience from other destinations, particularly other BC destinations?
- What are the most important reasons, from the point of view of the visitor, for choosing Comox Valley as a destination over others?
- What aspects of Comox Valley’s tourism experience can be claimed to be the best compared to other destinations (either currently or potentially)?

Support for the positioning statement from the *Value of the Comox Valley Visitor Centre*, Tourism BC Research Services, March 2007:

- Outdoor activities are a major draw for visitors at the Comox Valley Visitor Centre. Among the visitors at the Comox Valley Visitor Centre, the five most popular activities were soft adventure activities (74%), visiting parks (73%), shopping for local arts and crafts (60%), visiting museums, heritage or historic sites (50%), and participating in fine dining (49%).
- Positive experiences from the visitors’ current trip reinforced interest in specific activities on future trips. The top activities of interest on future trips among visitors to the Comox Valley Visitor Centre include visiting parks (77%), participating in soft adventure activities (75%), visiting museums, heritage or historic sites (59%), shopping for local arts and crafts (57%), and attending a festival, fair or exhibition (54%), and visiting a farm, farmers’ market, orchard or food processor (53%).
- Respondents were also asked to list the top three unique characteristics that make the Comox Valley different from other destinations. The most frequently cited unique characteristics were beautiful scenery, ocean/harbour, location/proximity, activities, and the presence of family and friends and friendliness of people in general.

Priority Product and Destination Development Strategies

The product categories to be developed and promoted are recommended as follows:

Primary tourism products:

- Outdoor adventure. The area’s natural beauty/scenery (visitors’ most frequently cited positive image and unique characteristic of the Comox Valley), ocean/beaches and provincial parks offer the opportunity for a wide range of outdoor experiences for both outdoor adventure enthusiasts and less active travellers. Hiking, wildlife viewing, whale watching, bird watching, kayaking/canoeing, salt water fishing, and cycling/mountain biking are the most popular activities for visitors to the North Central Island, and are activities that visitors of a wide range of ages and abilities can enjoy. While other communities in BC may offer similar outdoor activities, few offer the ability to access alpine experiences and ocean adventures within such close proximity. The relatively mild climate of the Comox Valley is an added advantage, since outdoor activities can be enjoyed almost year-round.

Outdoor adventure activities, along with visiting parks, were identified in the situation analysis and by the working group as being competitive advantages for Comox Valley compared to other destinations. The two most popular activities for visitors to the Comox Valley on a current trip were soft adventure and visiting parks, with nearly 75% participating in these activities. The most frequently cited activities of interest on future trips were the same, with 75% or more of visitors indicating their interest in participating in soft adventure and visiting parks²⁷.

²⁷ *Value of the Comox Valley Visitor Centre*, Tourism BC Research Services, March 2007.

- Heritage, arts, and cultural attractions and related festivals and events (including aboriginal products and experiences). Although not as likely to motivate a trip as outdoor adventure, heritage/arts/cultural attractions and festivals/events are popular tourism products on Vancouver Island and in the Comox Valley. According to the Value of the Comox Valley Visitor Centre study, activities of interest to visitors on future trips were visiting museums, heritage and historic sites (59%), shopping for local arts and crafts (57%) and attending a festival, fair or exhibition (54%), ranking 3, 4, and 5 respectively after soft outdoor adventure and visiting parks above. Comox Valley has product strengths in this area with the Courtenay and District Museum & Palaeontology Centre, Cumberland Museum & Archives, Comox Air Force Museum, the Filberg Heritage Lodge and Park and K'omoks First Nations traditional Big House and its Heritage Experience walking and driving tours. It also has a lively schedule of more than 50 annual performing arts and arts events including the Filberg Festival and MusicFest.

Secondary/Niche Products

- Wine and culinary (agri-food). Wine and culinary tourism is an emerging opportunity for the Comox Valley as it continues to build its wine and culinary products. In addition, there are other clusters of wine and culinary products on Vancouver Island (Cowichan Valley and Saanich) that enhance Vancouver Island overall as a wine and culinary destination and present opportunities for potential partnerships for Comox Valley. Among visitors to the Comox Valley Visitor Centre in the summer of 2006, 40% reported visiting a farm/farmers' market/orchard/food processor and 13% reported visiting a winery. When asked to identify activities of interest on future trips to the Comox Valley, 53% were interested in visiting a farm/farmers' market/ orchard/food processor, and 38% expressed interest in visiting a winery²⁸. As Canadian wine and culinary tourists tend to live in households without children (over 70%), they can travel throughout the year and can help build visitation during shoulder seasons. Wine and culinary tourists have above average income and education levels, also attractive characteristics of this tourism product as this can generate higher yields. Attracting farmers to the Comox Valley is one of Invest Comox Valley's economic development priorities.
- Spa. While only 6% of visitors to the Comox Valley reported visiting a spa on their trip, 23% expressed interest in visiting a spa on a future trip²⁹. Although significant numbers of travellers report visiting spas while on leisure trips, it is a motivator for travel for a small percentage. Comox Valley has three hotel/resort spas, the most popular type of spa experience among American and Canadian spa travellers³⁰. There is the opportunity to package spa and golf, especially for couples, where the men may wish to golf every day but the women may wish to participate in spa activities in addition to the occasional game of golf.
- Golf. About 10% of the visitors to the Comox Valley Visitor Centre participated in a game of golf or golf event. The interest in golf rises for a return trip with about 18% of visitors identifying golf as an activity of interest on a future trip to the Comox Valley³¹.
- Ski. Skiing, snowboarding and other outdoor winter activities at Mount Washington provide valuable visitation to the Comox Valley in the winter months. Among visitors to the North Central Island Region

²⁸ *Value of the Comox Valley Visitor Centre*, Tourism BC Research Services, March 2007.

²⁹ *Value of the Comox Valley Visitor Centre*, Tourism BC Research Services, March 2007.

³⁰ *Identifying the Spa Traveller* prepared by the Hartman Group for the Canadian Tourism Commission and the International Spa Association, 2006, a special analysis of online and telephone surveys conducted during 2005.

³¹ *Value of the Comox Valley Visitor Centre*, Tourism BC Research Services, March 2007.

in 2002-2003, 2% participated in downhill skiing, 2% in snowboarding and 1% in x-country skiing/snow shoeing³².

- Sport tourism. Comox Valley has had success in attracting teams to Mount Washington for pre-Olympic training for alpine events. However, stakeholders see Comox Valley as currently lacking in facilities/sport tourism product compared to other BC communities that are concentrating on this product. While Comox Valley may not be expected to be a sport tourism power, it can achieve its fair share of sport tourism in a few key sports, particularly alpine events. The number of visitors travelling in BC for sport tourism is slightly lower than the number of visitors travelling in BC for meetings/conventions but the yield is significantly lower, with the meetings and conventions market in BC worth more than three times the sport tourism market (the number of visitors in BC travelling for sport tourism is less than 5%).
- Smaller meetings/corporate retreats and incentive travel. This product is a high yield tourism product since business travellers typically spend more per person than any other type of visitor. It is also attractive in generating overnight stays in non-peak periods. As the Comox Valley does not have a meeting and convention facility to accommodate larger groups, and only a few hotels can accommodate smaller conferences (under 500), this product has been identified as a niche product.

The distinction between primary and secondary/niche products does not mean that the secondary/niche products are not important. Both of the identified priority products (primary and secondary/niche) should receive attention and resources from Discover Comox Valley, along with its business and government partners, to achieve the tourism growth objectives outlined in this plan.

These product priorities should not suggest that other tourism experiences in the Comox Valley are not important, but the above have been identified as priorities due to their size, uniqueness, and potential to draw significant numbers of visitors. Other tourism experiences and products that provide more for a visitor to do and make a stay more enjoyable also play an important role in visitor satisfaction and an increased length of stay. These would include galleries, interesting local shops, unique restaurants, pubs and cafes.

Research and evaluation

Evaluation mechanisms are essential to understanding the current value of tourism in the community, to tracking growth and gauging the effectiveness of various initiatives. Some mechanisms are already in place in the form of surveys conducted at the Visitor Centre, but additional measures are needed to evaluate the impact of marketing programs and the drawing power of the attractions and events in the area.

To measure tourism growth, the Discover Comox Valley will use indicators as it is costly to conduct visitor studies. Indicators could include the following:

- Occupancy data that compares occupancy rate with the total number of rooms.
- Room revenue.
- Comox Valley Airport inbound visitor traffic.
- Number of visitors to key attractions.
- Number of visitors to the Visitor Centres.

Tourism BC's "Value of Tourism" model provides a structured, consistent approach to estimating the volume and value of tourism to a community and valuable information to participants. The core data collection component of the model is an accommodation survey to gather the most recent annual performance data from commercial

³² *Tourism Labour Research Project: Vancouver Island Visitor Survey, Visitor Profile-North Central Island*, Malaspina University-College and Tourism Vancouver Island, 2002-2003.

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accommodation operators (including campgrounds). This information is then applied to local, regional, provincial and national tourism indicators to provide an informed estimate of the total number of visitors (overnight, day and visiting friends and relatives) and their expenditures in the community. (see Appendix #2).

While Discover Comox Valley does not have the budget at this time to conduct quantitative consumer research in primary target markets about attitudes and behaviour regarding visiting the Comox Valley, it is highly recommended that a survey of visitors already in the Valley be undertaken to provide information on visitors' experiences and satisfaction to help guide future initiatives. In addition to the information already captured by the Visitor Centre (origin, nights in the community, type of information requested), the survey should gather data consistent with the Value of the Comox Valley Visitor Centre Study (March 2007) on the travel planning process, accommodation used, participation in activities, etc. Data could then be compared year to year to the benchmark data.

Tracking of tourism activities should occur to determine whether each activity should be continued, expanded, changed, or abandoned and will help to enhance the effectiveness of Discover Comox Valley's tourism initiatives. This tracking should also include:

- website visitor statistics
- calls to the toll-free information line
- media monitoring.

Branding research to test positioning/creative concepts would need to take place as part of the re-branding initiative.

TACTICS AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The following tactics flesh out the strategies for the Comox Valley. A summary of tactics is provided followed by further detail and the action steps to implement each one. While the tactics may change from year to year, the overall strategies may not. The tactics are organized in the following categories:

- Product development tactics
- Market development tactics
- Research and evaluation tactics
- Summary timetable
- Budget.

Summary of Tactics

Product Development Tactics
1. Maintain and enhance tourism product inventory that includes information about current accommodations, attractions and events in the Comox Valley.
2. Increase understanding among the city/town councils, the regional district, and residents of the importance of tourism and the need to attract more visitors through strategic product development and marketing.
3. Support tourism development initiatives consistent with Comox Valley’s overall tourism strategy and priority products.
4. Encourage initiatives that contribute to improvement of the visitor experience including improvement of the aesthetic appeal of Comox Valley’s tourism areas and its entrances.
5. Educate local business about the tourism opportunities in the Comox Valley and the activities of Discover Comox Valley and the Tourism Advisory Committee through newsletters, media releases, and speaking engagements.
6. Promote and deliver tourism education programs and provide training tools to tourism-related businesses in the Comox Valley.
7. Encourage tourism businesses to increase packaging of complementary tourism products to provide potential visitors with reasons to come, and current visitors with reasons to stay longer, explore the area and return.
8. Review and enhance current way-finding and interpretive signage and visitor maps.
9. Encourage new or enhanced festivals and events.
10. Encourage entrepreneurs to create new tourism products and tours in priority product categories.
Market Development Tactics
11. Update the Comox Valley tourism brand identity to reflect the new positioning.
12. Expand and enhance the current image bank.
13. Enhance the Comox Valley Visitors’ Guide and tourism website with new and more robust content and updated design.
14. Increase advertising in key markets, continuing to take advantage of the media planning expertise and discounted media rates offered through Tourism BC and Tourism Vancouver Island.
15. Create a radio and newspaper promotion to generate awareness of the Comox Valley and to reinforce the new Comox Valley positioning.
16. Promote Comox Valley tourism experiences to visitors to Greater Victoria.
17. Use direct marketing to encourage repeat visitation from BC and Alberta visitors.
18. Implement media relations activities with general and special interest publications in key BC and Alberta markets, with media monitoring to track results.
19. Work with Tourism Vancouver Island and Tourism BC on other media relations and marketing initiatives.

20. Maximize Tourism BC's marketing opportunities to expose Comox Valley tourism products to millions of potential visitors.
21. Promote Comox Valley as a meeting/conference and incentive travel destination to planners and influencers in Vancouver, Victoria/Vancouver Island, Calgary and Edmonton.
22. Support partners, such as Mount Washington Alpine Resort, in attracting athlete training camps and sports teams.
23. Implement "Be a Tourist in Your Own Town" promotion to familiarize local residents with Comox Valley's products and encourage them to be tourism ambassadors.
24. Create an "invite family and friends" e-mail campaign, encouraging local residents to invite their friends and family for a visit.
25. Investigate the feasibility of a television advertising campaign in the Vancouver/Victoria markets for spring 2010, if budget permits. Expand to Calgary and Edmonton over the longer term.
Research and Evaluation Tactics
26. Conduct qualitative research with key audiences to help guide any Comox Valley re-branding initiative.
27. Encourage local accommodation providers to participate in Tourism BC's Value of Tourism analysis by completing and returning the accommodation surveys and forecasts.
28. Provide tools and maintain tracking for key attractions, festivals and events.
29. Ensure comprehensive tracking of website traffic and calls to the Visitor Centre toll free-line information line is implemented.
30. Conduct annual or bi-annual visitor surveys at the Courtenay Visitor Centre and other key intercept points, using the Value of the Comox Valley Visitor Centre Study as a benchmark.

Short Term Market Development Tactics

Tactic #1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain and enhance the Comox Valley tourism product inventory that includes information about current accommodations, attractions and events in the Comox Valley.
Short description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An initial tourism product inventory has been compiled as part of the Community Tourism Foundations planning process. It is intended to be kept current and used as the information source to the Comox Valley's tourism activities as well as promotional efforts by Tourism BC and Tourism Vancouver Island. The tourism product inventory is divided into categories consistent with Tourism BC's tourism product database. The initial Comox Valley tourism product inventory is included as an appendix to the situation analysis.
Quantifiable objectives (if applicable)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/a.
Rationale / relation to strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The up to date tourism product inventory would be used as the basis for listings, marketing communications, media relations, etc.
Action steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine who is responsible for maintenance and enhancement of the tourism product inventory database. • Contact local businesses and event organizers regularly to augment information. • Once the information updates have been collected, Tourism BC's system can be used to update information. Contact Tourism BC (Kathleen Harvey) to confirm appropriate steps.
Potential partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism BC, Tourism Vancouver Island
Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discover Comox Valley.
Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial tourism product inventory has been completed. Maintenance ongoing.
Budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff time.
Evaluation mechanism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/a.

Tactic #2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase understanding among the city/town councils, the regional district and residents of the importance of tourism, and the need to attract more visitors through strategic product development and marketing.
Short description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The attitude of local government and residents is important to the growth of the tourism industry, as a welcoming atmosphere for developers, visitors and for tourism workers is needed for tourism to flourish. • It will be important to inform city/town councils and the regional district about the tourism plan, its underlying principles and the importance of tourism to the Comox Valley. • Data gathered through Tourism BC's Value of Tourism Model will provide a factual basis for tourism economic benefit analysis. • With competing destinations offering a continually improving tourism product, it will be important for the Comox Valley to recognize the importance of this industry to the economic health of the community, and in turn, to actively welcome both visitors and tourism workers.
Quantifiable objectives (if applicable)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribution to overall objectives.
Rationale / relation to strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A positive attitude among local governments and residents contributes to a more welcoming environment for tourists and tourism workers. Without this positive attitude, tourism growth can be hindered.
Action steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentations to city/town councils on the Comox Valley Destination Marketing and Development Strategy and/or develop information kit to be discussed with city/town staff and councilors. • Continue to keep city/town councils informed of tourism activities and where their assistance is required. • For residents, communications could take the form of public meetings, speeches at the Rotary Club or other associations, and a series of editorials in the local newspaper.
Potential partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discover Comox Valley/Comox Valley Tourism Advisory Committee.
Responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discover Comox Valley to coordinate. Individual members of Tourism Advisory Committee to use their contacts and influence to advocate on behalf of the tourism industry using the common presentation and information kit.
Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spring 2009.
Budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None.
Evaluation mechanism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/a.

Tactic #3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support tourism development initiatives that are consistent with the Comox Valley’s overall tourism strategy and priority products.
Short description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage tourism initiatives that are consistent with the overall tourism strategy by providing support as appropriate and available. This tactic sets the stage for other product development tactics in creating a tourism business-friendly environment. The actual product development initiatives that will be undertaken as a result of this support would be expected to take place over a period of at least five years. As a result, this is a key tactic that will be instrumental in the Comox Valley achieving its tourism growth objectives. • There are two parts to this support: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support by local governments and Comox Valley Economic Development to actively encourage tourism development initiatives, including policies and by-laws that are tourism-friendly. - Support by local governments of adequate funding of non-profit heritage, arts and cultural attractions that are important tourism products for Comox Valley. - Support by Discover Comox Valley in the form of in-kind, promotional, or organizational activities. • The tourism development initiatives that need to be supported include encouraging: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Entrepreneurs to create new tours and products related to the priority product categories – outdoor adventure, heritage/arts/culture, wine/culinary/agri-tourism. - Expansion of festivals/events with the potential to become signature events. - Local businesses to increase packaging of accommodation with activity-based tourism products and the packaging of activities together to extend length of stay.
Quantifiable objectives (if applicable)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of new tourism development initiatives that are planned and come to fruition on an annual basis.
Rationale / relation to strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The tourism plan contains broad objectives and strategies that represent the vision for tourism in the Comox Valley. Initiatives that are consistent with that vision should be encouraged and supported without compromising the competitiveness of other tourism-related businesses. Without improvements in tourism products and the destination overall, the Comox Valley will not be able to achieve its longer term objectives.
Action steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify potential initiatives and determine how best to remove barriers and actively encourage the appropriate tourism development initiatives. • Prepare a list of potential initiatives with timeframe, lead organization, milestones, etc. and commit to regular updates to report back on progress. These regular updates could be bi-monthly or quarterly to ensure there is momentum. • The local governments and the Comox Valley Economic Development Society would need to take the lead in revitalization initiatives, policies and by-laws, providing incentives for businesses, and ensuring a tourism business-friendly environment. • The Discover Comox Valley/Tourism Advisory Committee can provide advice and direction as to the development initiatives and assistance in communication to tourism businesses.
Potential partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chamber of Commerce, Comox Valley Airport Authority, community organizations, etc.
Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Courtenay, Town of Comox, Village of Cumberland, Comox Valley Regional District and Discover Comox Valley/Tourism Advisory Committee.
Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2009 and ongoing.
Budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff time (this could be substantial). There may also be budget implications for business incentives and policy/by-law changes.
Evaluation mechanism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As above.

Tactic #4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage initiatives that contribute to improvement of the visitor experience including improvement of the aesthetic appeal of Comox Valley’s tourist areas and its entrances.
Short description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support and promote initiatives to make tourist areas more visually attractive and give them a distinctive, small-town charm, such as revitalization and beautification plans, community and shoreline cleanups, beautification of facades, addition of public art, landscaping, hanging flower baskets and planters, Communities in Bloom, etc. • Encourage the development of clusters of visitor-friendly boutiques, arts and crafts galleries, bistro style and higher end restaurants, and attractions.
Quantifiable objectives (if applicable)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvement in perceptions of the visual appeal of Comox Valley’s tourist areas.
Rationale / relation to strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urban sprawl/over development and commercial appearance were among the top six most frequently cited negative images of the Comox Valley among visitors to the Comox Valley Visitor Centre.³³ • Ongoing improvements to the Comox Valley’s streetscapes, main approaches, waterfront, etc, will enhance the area’s appeal to visitors. These improvements and changes should be consistent with the Comox Valley’s desire to maintain its small town charm.
Action steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide support to municipal departments that contribute to Comox Valley’s aesthetic appeal by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Providing input to beautification plans, neighbourhood revitalization plans, design guidelines, official community plans, etc. – Identify problem areas and potential solutions that could be forwarded to the municipalities for consideration. – Identify and promote community programs such as neighbourhood clean up weekend, Communities in Bloom, etc. – Identify tasks that are achievable each year.
Potential partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chamber of Commerce, BIAs, individual businesses, volunteer groups, etc.
Responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Courtenay, Town of Comox, Village of Cumberland, Comox Valley Regional District, and Discover Comox Valley.
Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing.
Budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff time, plus resources to achieve destination development improvements.
Evaluation mechanism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate ratings of Comox Valley’s visual appeal compared to competing destinations into visitor/consumer surveys (Tactic #30).

³³ *Value of the Comox Valley Visitor Centre*, Tourism BC Research Services, March 2007.

Tactic #5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educate local businesses about the tourism opportunities in the Comox Valley and the activities of Discover Comox Valley and the Tourism Advisory Committee through newsletters, media releases, and speaking engagements.
Short description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These activities are meant to achieve a number of purposes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Educate tourism-related businesses and potential entrepreneurs about the types of opportunities in demand in the Comox Valley, focusing on the priority products. – Encourage tourism-related businesses to meet the needs of an ever more discerning visitor base by enhancing their product mix, opening hours and service levels. – Keep businesses informed about relevant activities of Discover Comox Valley. • Initially, face-to-face communication will likely be needed to communicate the new tourism plan. • An e-newsletter, issued at least quarterly, with back issues available on the Discover Comox Valley website, can be used to provide news and marketing opportunities to tourism businesses in the Comox Valley on a consistent basis. • Speaking engagements through the Chamber of Commerce and other organizations as well as one-to-one conversations with local business people.
Quantifiable objectives (if applicable)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of tourism-related businesses in Comox Valley receiving e-newsletter.
Rationale / relation to strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educate tourism-related businesses about the tourism opportunities in the Comox Valley, encouraging them to grow their businesses by servicing visitors (through more convenient opening hours, selection of products, etc). • Tourism experiences and products play an important role in developing the Comox Valley as an even more desirable destination, increasing visitor satisfaction and length of stay.
Action steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtain email addresses from local businesses through personal contact and partner organizations, ensuring opt-out options are incorporated into the e-newsletter. • Create e-newsletter, consistent with new graphic standards. • Distribute 4 to 6 times per year, depending on the amount of communication needed. • Issue releases to local media regarding tourism initiatives. • Seek opportunities to speak to local business associations, Chamber of Commerce, etc.
Potential partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Courtenay, Town of Comox, Village of Cumberland, Comox Valley Regional District, Chamber of Commerce, Comox Valley Airport Authority, Mount Washington Alpine Resort.
Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discover Comox Valley.
Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2009 and ongoing.
Budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$5K for set-up of e-newsletter, presentation materials, etc. and staff time.
Evaluation mechanism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of tourism-related businesses receiving newsletter. • Amount of coverage by local media.

Tactic #6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote and deliver tourism education programs and provide training tools to tourism-related businesses in the Comox Valley.
Short description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism BC has a series of education and training tools available, using workshops and guides. They include the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Tourism Packaging and Product Distribution – Environmentally Responsible Tourism – Travel Media Relations – Ads & Brochures that Sell – Internet Marketing – Hospitality Law Guide – Starting a Tourism Business Guide – Sport Tourism. • For further details on the workshops or to book contact Chris.Lofft@tourismbc.com. The workbooks are free and copies can be obtained by contacting Christina.Cafouros@tourismbc.com for sport tourism and Chris Lofft for all other guides. The guides will be available for downloading at www.tourismbc.net in the near future. • The SuperHost program is a valuable tool for training front line employees as well as their supervisors. Topics include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – SuperHost Fundamentals – Service Across Cultures – Japanese Service Expectations – Customers with Disabilities – Frontline Management Solutions – Solving Problems through Service – Sales Powered by Service. <p>The SuperHost workshops are conducted by a number of delivery organizations throughout the province. Workshop fees vary by delivery organization. The Comox Valley Chamber of Commerce delivers the SuperHost Fundamentals training workshop.</p> • Discover Comox Valley can promote the appropriate workshops with the individual businesses paying the participation fee.
Quantifiable objectives (if applicable)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of participants in workshops. • At least two workshops in Year 1. • Based on the actual results from Year 1, establish objectives for Year 2 and beyond.
Rationale / relation to strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide educational and training tools to assist tourism-related businesses. A starting point would be the Tourism BC Business Essentials series of guides and workshops and the SuperHost workshops.
Action steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decide on the appropriate workshops that will be most relevant to tourism-related businesses in the area. • Contact the appropriate delivery organization about dates and location. • Promote workshops to tourism-related businesses in the Comox Valley. • Attend workshops to ensure the desired messages about tourism in the Comox Valley are incorporated into the workshop.
Potential partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism BC, Chamber of Commerce.
Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discover Comox Valley.
Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2009 and ongoing.
Budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$2K to \$5K annually for promotion of workshops, room rentals (if necessary), etc. These workshops could be undertaken on a cost recovery basis through charging a nominal fee. Staff time would be required to coordinate.
Evaluation mechanism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of participants. • Number of workshops.

Tactic #7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage tourism businesses to increase packaging of complementary tourism products to provide potential visitors with reasons to come, and current visitors with reasons to stay longer, explore the area and return.
Short description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide more for visitors to do (particularly adults visiting outside the peak season) and to simplify the planning of their activities, encourage packaging of tourism experiences with accommodation, as well as the “bundling” of experiences to create longer (one or two-day) itineraries – both guided and self-guided - for specific demographics or interest groups. Examples might be a day of hiking, kayaking and whale watching for active outdoor adventurers; or a nature walk combined with a visit to a winery and cheese maker or a visit to the spa, for less energetic visitors. • These packages can be promoted via the tourism website, by Visitor Centre staff, and in the Official Visitors’ Guide and by local tourism businesses.
Quantifiable objectives (if applicable)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of packages developed. • Number of packages booked.
Rationale / relation to strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Packaging of activities can encourage people to extend their stay and spend more money in the area. • Packaging and promotion of activities with accommodation will help increase awareness of the many tourism experiences available in the Comox Valley.
Action steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Host a Tourism BC <i>Tourism Packaging & Product Distribution</i> workshop for operators to give them further information about how to package tourism product. • Support local accommodation operators, tour operators and attractions in developing packages and itineraries. • Packages to be promoted by businesses themselves, as well as by Discover Comox Valley, Tourism Vancouver Island, and Tourism BC, as appropriate. (There may be costs associated with collateral materials that could be offset through co-op).
Potential partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accommodation sector. • Tour operators. • Mount Washington Alpine Resort. • Other local tourism-related businesses and organizations.
Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discover Comox Valley.
Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2009 and thereafter.
Budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff time and a nominal fee for the workshop.
Evaluation mechanism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of participating businesses. • Number of packages booked.

Longer Term Market Development Tactics

These activities can be initiated immediately, but are expected to generate results over the longer term.

Tactic #8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and enhance current way-finding and interpretive signage and visitor maps.
Short description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current signage needs to be reviewed in the context of addressing the perception of visitors of the lack of/confusing signage in the Comox Valley. • Enhanced signage will provide greater awareness of local attractions, amenities and experiences that are of interest to visitors.
Quantifiable objectives (if applicable)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/a.
Rationale / relation to strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Way-finding signage to attractions and municipal amenities lack consistency among the communities in the Valley, some signage is dated and other areas signage is lacking altogether. • In the Value of the Comox Valley Visitor Centre Study, the lack of/confusing signage and traffic were the most frequently cited negative images (mentioned by 11% of respondents). • Attractively designed, highly visible way-finding signage and visitor maps will help create a welcoming atmosphere, assist visitors in finding their way to the areas man-made and natural attractions and help to address the separation between the town centres and the waterfront.
Action steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtain funding for way-finding and signage review including maps. • Engage signage and way-finding specialists to evaluate effectiveness of interpretive signage and way finding (already produced or in progress) and develop plan for interpretive signage and way finding. Depending on budget and scope, this plan could be implemented in one year or over a period of three to five years. It is important to note that signage and way-finding is a specialized area and should be undertaken by firms knowledgeable in the science of way finding. While there are many design firms that can design signage, most do not have way-finding expertise. The specialist firms will be able to evaluate the effectiveness of current signage and way finding, provide recommendations for placement and formats, and design and produce the signage and way finding. • The signage and way-finding plan should include the determination of optimal formats and locations. The signage and way-finding firm would also design and produce the interpretive signage and way finding.
Potential partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signage: Tourism BC (as it has been working with the Ministry of Transportation on circle tours); Ministry of Transportation, Ministry of Tourism, Culture, and the Arts.
Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discover Comox Valley together with City of Courtenay, Town of Comox, Village of Cumberland, and Comox Valley Regional District.
Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and discussions in early 2009. • Secure funding in 2009 for implementation in 2010. • Implementation of signage would be dependent on levels of government and would likely be no earlier than 2010.
Budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBD.
Evaluation mechanism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ratings of way-finding/signage in future visitor studies.

Tactic #9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage new or enhanced festivals and events.
Short description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depending on their size and appeal, events can provide either a primary motivation to visit or a reason to stay longer. Festivals and events also help to build repeat visitation by providing reasons to visit a different times of the year. • Special support should be given to events that appeal to a wide range of spectators, and have the potential to become signature events. • It will be important to measure the actual benefits created by these festivals and events in relation to the resources expended.
Quantifiable objectives (if applicable)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of new or enhanced festivals and events. • Attendance at new or enhanced festivals and events.
Rationale / relation to strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Festivals and events can enhance visitor satisfaction by contributing to a greater sense of having more to do in a destination.
Action steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using the list of events in the Tourism Product Inventory, develop a short list of existing events that have potential for increased tourism. • Examine best practices in other communities. • Consider what resources will be required to enhance the events, e.g. marketing support, by-law relaxation, etc. • Municipal funding may be required in the early stages, although the longer term goal would be to have events self-funded through attendance and/or sponsorship revenues.
Potential partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arts and culture groups, Chamber of Commerce, community groups, individual businesses.
Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local governments, Discover Comox Valley.
Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing.
Budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBD.
Evaluation mechanism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of new or enhanced festivals and events. • Attendance at new or enhanced festivals and events.

Tactic #10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage entrepreneurs to create new tourism products and tours in priority product categories.
Short description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not only are there opportunities for packages of complementary tourism experiences, there are opportunities for standalone tours. Stakeholders identified that Comox Valley currently lacks organized tours for many of its priority tourism products, particularly in the areas of outdoor adventure and wine/culinary/agri-food. • Examples could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Guided nature walks and interpretive tours in Strathcona Park and Paradise meadows geared to non-athletic adults. – Guided tours (including bicycle tours) focusing on a specific theme or area, e.g. a culinary tour that includes Fisherman’s Wharf, Fanny Bay Oysters, Natural Pastures Cheese, organic produce growers, local wineries and distilleries, etc. – New outdoor adventure experiences. (e.g. zip lining/trekking is a popular activity in other destinations) – In addition to Heritage Experiences self-guided tours, guided tours of cultural/heritage attractions, and art galleries, possibly with a hands-on component and/or aboriginal culture component. – Learning and enrichment packages, e.g. arts and crafts workshops.
Quantifiable objectives (if applicable)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of tours available and number of bookings.
Rationale / relation to strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These tours are in the priority tourism product categories and should be of interest to higher income adults. • Comox Valley requires more organized tours, particularly outdoor adventure product, to capitalize on its potential as an outdoor adventure destination. • Organized activities provide reasons to stay longer and to visit outside the peak season.
Action steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide information to entrepreneurs on long-term market development strategies (Tactic #5). • Encourage these entrepreneurs to learn more about tourism through education programs (Tactic #6). • Tours to be promoted through Discover Comox Valley, Tourism Vancouver Island and BC as appropriate.
Potential partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local businesses and entrepreneurs.
Responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discover Comox Valley, Tourism Advisory Committee, Chamber of Commerce.
Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2009 and ongoing.
Budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None.
Evaluation mechanism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of tours available and number of bookings.

Shorter Term Promotional Tactics

Tactic #11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update the Comox Valley tourism brand identity to reflect the new positioning.
Short description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The new brand and tagline will be the foundation of a distinctive, consistent look and feel that will be reflected in the complete range of Comox Valley’s tourism marketing materials. • Given the long-term implications of a new brand, Comox Valley should retain the services of a professional brand strategist as well as a design firm.
Quantifiable objectives (if applicable)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/a.
Rationale / relation to strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While “Discover the possibilities” Comox Valley has been used consistently in all marketing materials, the current tag line implies a very broad positioning, rather than focusing on any unique point of difference. Comox Valley requires a tourism positioning and brand that provides compelling reasons to visit and that reflects the unique nature of the experience relative to other competitive destinations.
Action steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare Request for Proposals from brand strategy/design firms • Assign the project • From the positioning statement, prepare creative brief. • Branding firm/creative team to present brand options for review and research. These brand options should ideally include initial advertising and collateral applications. • Conduct qualitative research among potential visitors (residents of Greater Victoria, Greater Vancouver and Calgary) to assist in decision (see Tactic #26).
Potential partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/a.
Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discover Comox Valley.
Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early 2009. Begin process as soon as funding is available. Aim for finalized brand mark, tagline and brand within three months of issuing RFP.
Budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$30K to \$60K depending on scope. Ideally, the assignment would also include a graphic standards manual that outlines the application of the tourism brand look in principal marketing materials, such as the Visitors’ Guide, media kit, and tourism website.
Evaluation mechanism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consumer research (Tactic #26).

Tactic #12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand and enhance the current image bank.
Short description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A greater variety of appealing, high impact, tourism-related photos will enhance marketing communications and be valuable for cooperative initiatives such as Tourism Vancouver Island and Tourism BC programs. • Particular emphasis should be placed on the priority tourism products. • Where possible, images should include people enjoying the priority activities in optimal weather conditions.
Quantifiable objectives (if applicable)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of high quality images per year by category. While both quality and quantity are desired, having a few high quality images is preferable to having a larger number of mediocre images.
Rationale / relation to strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A good variety of high quality, visually appealing images is needed for any community tourism organization.
Action steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine the images that are currently available (checking subject matter, aesthetic and technical quality, weather issues, usage limitations, etc.), including the availability of appropriate images from Tourism BC's extensive image bank. • Identify the gaps in images based on the newly developed positioning statement. • Consult with Tourism BC/Tourism Vancouver Island to determine if cost-sharing is an option. • Prepare the terms of reference for photographers (e.g. format requirements, copyrights, payment, model releases, preferred subjects, artistic quality, size, resolution). • Retain photographer and shoot images. • Create a repository of images, organized by subject, with supporting data such as photographer details, talent details and releases, and copyright requirements. Wherever possible, negotiate permanent, non-exclusive rights to images for use in all media (traditional and online). This will eliminate the need to revisit contracts annually and also keep fees a low as possible, since photographers will retain the right to sell images to other parties.
Potential partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism BC/Tourism Vancouver Island.
Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discover Comox Valley.
Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing, with first set of new images by fall 2009.
Budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$5K – 10K in 2009, and annually thereafter.
Evaluation mechanism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/a.

Tactic #13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance Comox Valley Visitors’ Guide and tourism website with new and more robust content and updated design.
Short description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The graphic design of these two key elements needs to reflect the new tourism brand in a consistent manner. • To encourage potential visitors to stay longer in Comox Valley, new content can include itineraries based on stays of different lengths of stay that highlight Comox Valley’s key attractions and the variety of experiences available. • Highlight products consistent with the new positioning and priority products - outdoor adventure itineraries, the Heritage Experience, culinary/agri-tourism routes/tours, and golf and spa packages are a few examples. • Present information in an easily-scanned manner, with concise text, informative sub-headings, short paragraphs, and captioned photos. • Website enhancements could include video pod casts, blogs, search engine optimization, and search engine marketing. • Identify the website as the “official” website of Discover Comox Valley, to distinguish it from other travel websites.
Quantifiable objectives (if applicable)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase traffic to the website and time spent on the website. • Increase interest in visiting Comox Valley among visitors to the website and recipients of the Visitors’ Guide. • Ultimately, increase overall visitation to Comox Valley and length of stay.
Rationale / relation to strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Destination websites and visitor guides are important as the majority of American and Canadian travellers use the Internet for vacation planning and about half book online. Among visitors to the North Central Island, the two most important sources of information for trip planning were friends and relatives (57%) and the internet (56%) • As noted in the Situation Analysis, there is a need to clearly differentiate the Discover Comox Valley website from the numerous for-profit websites that users may encounter when searching for information on visiting the Comox Valley and Vancouver Island. • Search engine optimization will help ensure that those seeking information on visiting the area are directed to the most appropriate site.
Action steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the Comox Valley Official Visitors’ Guide and website against the best destination visitor guides and websites as well as those for competing destinations on an ongoing basis, with a view to continual improvements. • Review the current Visitors’ Guide and website to determine priority topics and areas for improvement (e.g. any out-of-date or irrelevant information, overly long text, lack of images, etc.). • Increase the content on the website to include links to tourism businesses through listing programs for operators in the area. • Convert to Comox Valley Official Visitors’ Guide to “virtual” on the website and provide a version for downloading. • Enlist services of professionals such as graphic designers and web specialists to enhance content, structure and, in the case of the website, search engine rankings. • Work closely with selected firm(s) to ensure end products are consistent with the new graphic standards and provide information potential visitors need.
Potential partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism businesses and attractions to provide information for content.
Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discover Comox Valley.
Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website 2009. • As the 2009 Visitors’ Guide is currently being developed, the newly designed Visitors’ Guide would be implemented for 2010.

Budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$0K for update of Official Visitors’ Guide (assumes the cost of design, production and distribution is totally offset by advertising revenue). • \$15K for first update of website (design, programming, search engine optimization); \$4K annually thereafter for ongoing updates and maintenance. • Staff time will be needed to oversee the updated design, website updates, and create the content enhancements, particularly the creation of itineraries.
Evaluation mechanism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website tracking, including downloads of Visitors’ Guide. • Survey on website.

Tactic #14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase advertising in key markets, continuing to take advantage of the media planning expertise and discounted media rates offered through Tourism BC and Tourism Vancouver Island.
Short description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comox Valley already undertakes advertising in key markets, partnering with Tourism Vancouver Island in publications and cooperative advertising initiatives. However, a larger budget is required to achieve the objectives in this plan. • Well-targeted, high impact advertising will be used to help increase Comox Valley’s awareness and interest among the various and diverse primary markets. These may be stand-alone destination messages, or they may be accompanied by ads from local tourism operators • Size of the Comox Valley destination ads should be sufficient to stand out as well as include destination messages that can provide enough information to potential visitors to intrigue them to find out more about the Comox Valley. • Although the specific message of each ad may vary, each should be consistent with Comox Valley’s graphic standards, and each should reinforce the positioning and brand character. • Visit the Discover Comox Valley website or call 1-800 # would be used as call-to-action. • Advertising in the high quality travel guides/planners produced by the larger destination marketing organizations is a cost-effective way to reach consumers who may be considering a visit to BC and/or Vancouver Island or are already visiting. • There are also frequent opportunities to participate in Tourism Vancouver Island coordinated cooperative advertising/editorial programs with targeted consumer publications. • Potential advertising opportunities, among others include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Tourism BC <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Vacation Planner - Outdoor Adventure Guide - BC Escapes ○ Tourism Vancouver Island <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Vacation Guide - Outdoor Adventure Guide - Times Colonist Discover (spring and fall) - Westworld – BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan - Van Dop Arts & Culture Guide - Edmonton Journal, Calgary Herald - WestJet Up - Global TV - Vancouver Sun • Discover Comox Valley should continue to participate actively in these initiatives, taking advantage of the discounted rates to maximize its advertising budget and Comox Valley tourism businesses should also continue to be encouraged to participate on a “pay to play” basis.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While this tactic largely focuses on print advertising, this does not suggest that co-operative opportunities relating to radio or television should not be considered. A potential radio/newspaper advertising promotion is covered under Tactic #15 and a television advertising campaign is covered under Tactic #25.
Quantifiable objectives (if applicable)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visits to the website (unique landing pages can be created for specific ads to aid in tracking), calls to the 1-800 number. • Requests for more information. • Downloads/requests for the Visitors' Guide.
Rationale / relation to strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration with Tourism Vancouver Island and Tourism BC is a cost-effective approach to tourism marketing, allowing Comox Valley to focus its independent initiatives on a few key areas.
Action steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an annual media plan based on target markets and product priorities, selecting media vehicles that will reach each of the priority target markets most cost effectively. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Review advertising rates and circulation for the various guides/planners. ◦ Review additional cooperative marketing opportunities with Tourism Vancouver Island. ◦ Determine areas that may need to be supplemented with independent media buys/advertising. • Produce ad material, consistent with formats developed as part of the brand identity process. • Present cooperative opportunities to tourism businesses and encourage participation on a pay to play basis.
Potential partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism BC, Tourism Vancouver Island.
Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discover Comox Valley.
Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2009 and ongoing.
Budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperative programs with Tourism BC and Tourism Vancouver Island - \$75-100K. • Other print advertising if/as required – 25K (broadcast advertising is addressed under Tactics #15 & 25).
Evaluation mechanism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be determined.

Tactic #15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a radio and newspaper promotion to generate awareness of the Comox Valley and to reinforce the new Comox Valley positioning.
Short description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For summer or fall of 2009, focus this promotion on Greater Vancouver. A number of stations also provide a limited amount of “spill” into the Victoria market. • Since stations are not open to offer free promotional airtime if the same prize is shared between competing stations, one core station group will be contacted to support the promotion, and additional secondary radio stations to giveaway smaller prizing. • A combination of :30 second and :15 second radio ads will be used over a three to four week period on one core station to generate awareness of the Comox Valley tourism experience, and promote the “getaway” contest and how to enter. The core station will be researched to ensure listeners match the target profile. • The radio promotion would be supplemented by ads in the Vancouver Sun – travel features or travel sections.
Quantifiable objectives (if applicable)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase number and length of website visits. • Increase distribution of the Visitors’ Guide to potential visitors. • Increase in hotel bookings.
Rationale / relation to strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Position Comox Valley as an appealing destination among adult travellers.
Action steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact potential transportation, accommodation, resort, and restaurant partners to develop high value prize package. • Request proposals from appropriate radio stations for adding value to the promotion (through on-air mentions by hosts, listener newsletters, etc.). • Award buy based on reach of targeted audience and added value. • Develop creative brief. • Assign creative development and production.
Potential partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism Vancouver Island, transportation providers, area hotels/resorts, restaurants, culinary and heritage attractions.
Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discover Comox Valley.
Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summer or fall 2009.
Budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$42K for radio plus \$8K for production. • \$15K for newspaper.
Evaluation mechanism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of on-line contest entries. • Number of requests for Visitors’ Guide or other information.

Tactic #16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote Comox Valley tourism experiences to visitors to Greater Victoria.
Short description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As Greater Victoria already receives 3.6 million overnight visitors annually, there is an opportunity to encourage some of these visitors to make a trip to Comox Valley. Some of the opportunities include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Advertising in-room publications to communicate with potential visitors while they are in Victoria. - Educating Victoria area Visitor Centre staff about tourism experiences in Comox Valley. - Advertising in Tourism Victoria Visitors' Guide (circulation 225,000) will reach those planning a trip to Victoria and those already in Victoria. The guide is distributed at Tourism Victoria's inner harbour visitor centre, on BC Ferries and the Coho Ferry, Victoria International Airport and 300 other outlets. - Distributing the Comox Valley Visitors' Guide on BC Ferries. (This is already being considered for the Visitors' Guide distribution for 2009). - Participating in Certified Folder's racking program in Victoria hotels. - Featuring a contest in advertising to capture contact information for visitors to Victoria for future direct marketing initiatives.
Quantifiable objectives (if applicable)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribution to overall objectives based on tourism indicators.
Rationale / relation to strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visitors to Greater Victoria are one of the primary target markets. Victoria receives 3.6 million visitors annually, the majority of them repeat visitors.
Action steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review rates and ad sizes for Tourism Victoria Visitors' Guide for 2010. • Review rates and ad sizes for Where Magazine (Monthly) for May, June, July, August 2009. • Explore the potential of racking the Comox Valley Visitors' Guide in the Tourism Victoria Visitor Centre (may mean becoming an associate member of Tourism Victoria - \$750). • Contact Certified Folder regarding racking opportunities in key Victoria hotels. • Identify the method of education required for the each Visitor Centre location. This could range from providing materials to a meeting with a Discover Comox Valley staff person, to presentations. • Develop and promote itineraries that include interesting sights and points of interest on the drive from Victoria to Comox Valley – make the journey part of the experience. • Develop a contest to capture contact information from Victoria visitors for future direct mail campaigns.
Potential partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/a.
Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discover Comox Valley.
Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2009 and thereafter.
Budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total \$20K.
Evaluation mechanism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contest entries. • Overall objectives of visitor volume through tourism indicators.

Tactic #17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use direct marketing to encourage repeat visitation from BC and Alberta visitors.
Short description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Previous visitors from these primary markets are likely to return, as repeat visitation is high. They can be reached efficiently through direct marketing once their contact information is obtained. • Previous visitors can be encouraged to explore more of the area and to broaden their experiences. For example, summer visitors can be encouraged to visit during the shoulder seasons (with information about what there is to see and do each season) and business visitors can be encouraged to return and explore the area with their spouses and families. • Email addresses can be collected through the Visitor Centres, through website and email enquiries, contests and promotions and accommodation properties (with permission). • Seasonal emails and/or annual postcards can be sent to these visitors, with promotional specials to encourage bookings. • As well, repeat visitation can be encouraged by each individual business or accommodation property.
Quantifiable objectives (if applicable)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of responses to campaign. • Number of bookings.
Rationale / relation to strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repeat visitation from BC and Alberta visitors is an important component of tourism.
Action steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put policies in place to systematically collect email addresses of visitors. • If necessary, obtain the technology to enable email campaigns. • Create email and, budget permitting, conventional mail communications with promotional offers. • After each communication, evaluate and make necessary changes. After the first communication, conduct an email survey to help evaluate.
Potential partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/a.
Responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discover Comox Valley.
Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement in 2010.
Budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$20K.
Evaluation mechanism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of responses to campaign. • Number of bookings. • Email survey.

Tactic #18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement media relations activities with general and special interest publications in key BC and Alberta markets, with media monitoring to track results.
Short description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use unpaid media to generate editorial coverage of events and attractions in the priority product categories, particularly outdoor adventures and arts/cultural events and festivals, wine/culinary, golf and spa. • Focus on media that target Greater Vancouver, Greater Victoria/Vancouver Island, Calgary and Edmonton residents. This could include the travel and leisure sections of the Times Colonist (“Go!”) and Vancouver Sun and Province, Calgary Herald, Edmonton Journal, and community papers, as well as targeted magazines and e-newsletters, and specialty publications and websites dealing with priority tourism products. • Continue to work with Tourism BC and Tourism Vancouver Island to ensure the Comox Valley receives its fair share of editorial coverage in their publications and websites. • Continue to assist Tourism Vancouver Island and Tourism BC with media fam tours. • Retain a media monitoring firm such as Cision (formerly Bowden’s) to track, report on and provide copies of media coverage related to tourism in Comox Valley, whether print, broadcast or on-line (blogs, etc.). The value of the coverage received can be estimated by calculating the cost to purchase the equivalent advertising space. The information should be communicated to tourism partners in Comox Valley so that the value of media relations activities is broadly understood.
Quantifiable objectives (if applicable)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After baseline of annual media value obtained is established in 2009, objectives for future years can be set accordingly.
Rationale / relation to strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Editorial coverage is cost effective and has high credibility among readers. Greater Vancouver, Greater Victoria/Vancouver Island, Calgary and Edmonton residents are the primary target groups.
Action steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contract a media relations professional with tourism experience to implement media relations activities if these skills do not currently exist in Discover Comox Valley. • Establish a list of targeted publications, editors and journalists. • Determine whether prepared stories, press releases, familiarization tours, or other methods of achieving editorial coverage are appropriate for each. • When newsworthy events occur, prepare press releases and distribute to appropriate media. • Contact Cision (www.ca.cision.com or 877-269-3367) and/or other media monitoring firms to review services needed, markets to be monitored and rates.
Potential partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism BC, Tourism Vancouver Island. • Comox Valley Airport and Mount Washington Alpine Resort may be interested in sharing in the cost of the media monitoring if there is potential to expand the scope beyond just the destination, in an efficient manner.
Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discover Comox Valley.
Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2009 and ongoing.
Budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$42K annually for contracted media relations services, hosting, materials, photography, 8K for media monitoring.
Evaluation mechanism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media coverage, number of stories, etc. • Value of media coverage received relative to the resources expended.

Tactic #19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with Tourism Vancouver Island and Tourism BC on other media relations and marketing initiatives.
Short description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In addition to their publications, websites and cooperative advertising programs, Tourism BC, Tourism Vancouver Island and Tourism Victoria are engaged in numerous activities such as media/trade familiarization tours, media marketplaces, and consumer travel shows and travel trade shows/initiatives. • Discover Comox Valley should continue to participate actively in these initiatives, taking advantage of the opportunities to reach markets it cannot afford to reach on its own.
Quantifiable objectives (if applicable)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be determined.
Rationale / relation to strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration with Tourism BC and Tourism Vancouver Island is a cost-effective approach to tourism marketing and media relations.
Action steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with Tourism Vancouver Island/Tourism BC on opportunities with the travel trade, particularly those targeting the UK, Germany and the Netherlands. • Continue to support trade and media fairs conducted by Tourism Vancouver Island/Tourism BC. • Review marketing and media relations opportunities as they become available • Decide on opportunities to pursue. • Where appropriate, present opportunities to tourism businesses in the communities and encourage participation.
Potential partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism BC, Tourism Vancouver Island.
Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism organization.
Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2009 and ongoing.
Budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be determined.
Evaluation mechanism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be determined.

Tactic #20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximize Tourism BC’s marketing opportunities to expose Comox Valley tourism products to millions of potential visitors.
Short description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism BC’s www.hellobc.com website receives 8 million web visits annually, its HelloBC call centre receives 119,000 calls, and the Tourism BC visitor centres throughout BC receive 3.3 million visitors (all 2007/08 figures). • Comox Valley and the tourism businesses in the area can benefit from the power that these tools provide and the \$9 million annually in advertising that drive visitors to these sources of information. • The marketing opportunities that are recommended include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Content for the community pages of www.hellobc.com (a free service). Any updates or additions to the information should be coordinated through Tourism Vancouver Island. - Listings program for tourism businesses, including festivals and events. Prices for non-accommodation businesses start at \$95 per year for a <i>base</i> listing. Optional enhancements are available. Prices for accommodation businesses are tiered based on size of property. Currently, listings for festivals and events are free of charge. Tourism BC staff, Visitor Centre staff and the 1-800-HelloBC Call Centre staff also use the listings as a resource for requests they receive about media relations, from meeting planners, and to advise potential visitors. More information is available on www.tourismbc.net. As of September 2008, listings that appear on www.HelloBC.com also appear on Tourism BC’s international websites (Japan, Taiwan, Korea, Australia and UK). Germany will be added to this list in 2009. - The Welcome the World marketing program is a multi-million dollar marketing campaign conducted by Tourism BC in selected high potential cities in Canada and the U.S. Part of the overall Welcome the World campaign is the opportunity for tourism businesses (accommodation and non-accommodation) to buy an ad in the “Insider’s Guide”. The Insider’s Guide will be distributed through the Visitor Centre network, as a fulfillment piece through 1-800HellBC, and through www.hellobc.com. Accommodation properties must also be part of the Reservations program in order to participate in the Welcome the World Insider’s Guide. Currently 53 Comox Valley accommodation properties are listed on www.hellobc.com but only eight are bookable through the website or call centre, and only one these is offering special rates (as of October 2008). Hellobc.com is presently limited to booking accommodation and activity packages through accommodation properties, but other activities are anticipated to be bookable in the future. More information is available on www.tourismbc.net. - Effective in 2009/2010, the Welcome the World campaign will replace the BC Escapes campaign that has run successfully for 10 years. The 2008/2009 BC Escapes campaign will remain in effect until March 31, 2009.
Quant. objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of web visits to the community pages, individual business results.
Rationale / relation to strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These opportunities provide exposure for Comox Valley to its primary target markets as well as markets further afield. This is a particularly efficient way for Comox Valley to reach its large variety of primary and secondary target groups, as the information in the listings program, for example, is the basis for the Tourism BC websites for North America, UK, Australia, and Asia. Germany will be added in 2009.
Action steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide updated content for the community pages of www.hellobc.com. • Encourage tourism businesses to participate in the Tourism BC programs and promote through e-newsletter and speaking engagements.
Potential partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism BC / Tourism Vancouver Island, tourism businesses.
Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discover Comox Valley.
Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing.
Budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff time.
Evaluation mech.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of web visits to the community pages, individual business results.

Tactic #21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote Comox Valley as a meeting/conference and incentive travel destination to planners and influencers in Vancouver, Victoria/Vancouver Island, Calgary and Edmonton.
Short description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For meeting conference planners, create a sales kit that includes the Comox Valley Group Planner, the Official Visitors' Guide, pre- and post conference options and itineraries, and contact information. • Distribute to corporate offices and associations in and key markets (personal sales calls should be considered for organizations with the greatest potential). • For incentive travel planners, provide materials and information that will help position Comox Valley as a unique and attractive destination for incentive trips or corporate retreats. • Distribute a version of the sales kit to selected Comox Valley businesses, clubs and associations, that includes a letter (ideally from the mayor) encouraging them to "be a host in their own town" by inviting out-of-town associates to hold regional meetings and conferences in Comox Valley. Discover Comox Valley can act as the central contact point for enquiries. • Develop an advertising campaign focusing on Comox Valley as a unique location for meetings/conferences with attractive modern facilities and leisure activities (such as outdoor adventure, golf, spa, etc.) that will appeal to attendees. • Advertise in newspapers and business publications that target meeting planners and incentive travel planners and senior executives in partnership with Tourism Vancouver Island. • Encourage prospects to contact Discover Comox Valley for a free information kit (sales kit will be used as the fulfillment piece). • Some elements of this tactic are already taking place (Group Planner, participation in Tourism Vancouver Island initiatives targeting meeting and incentive planners).
Quantifiable objectives (if applicable)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow-up enquiries from potential clients. • Increase in number of meetings/conferences booked. • Increase in revenues related to meetings/conferences events. • Increase in number of incentive travel or corporate retreats booked. • Increase in revenues related to incentive travel or corporate retreats.
Rationale / relation to strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting/conference and incentive planners are identified as a secondary/niche target market. • Executives within the organization play an influential role in the choice of location. • Comox Valley's higher end hotels, resorts and amenities make it an attractive destination for business people.
Action steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify corporate offices and associations in key markets that have potential as meeting/conference and incentive travel clients. • Identify Comox Valley businesses and associations with out-of-town connections that have the potential of holding their meetings/conferences in Comox Valley. • Determine format and contents of information kit. • Design/produce materials that are in keeping with new identity and positioning. • Distribute kits, either through the mail (with follow up telephone call) or through personal meetings, depending on the level of potential. • For the advertising campaign, consult with Tourism Vancouver Island on media opportunities, develop ad material, and book media space.
Potential partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism Vancouver Island, major hotels and resorts, Mount Washington Alpine Resort, Chamber of Commerce.
Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discover Comox Valley.
Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2009 and ongoing.

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Budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$20K for group planner/sales kit/distribution. • Significant staff time may be required to reach the potential for this market. As meetings and conferences are a specialized area, consideration needs to be given to providing additional staff resources to this area.
Evaluation mechanism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of enquiries regarding meetings/conferences and incentive travel/corporate retreats compared to previous years. • Room revenue and facility rental fees related to meetings/conferences and incentive travel and corporate retreats compared to previous years.

Tactic #22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support partners, such as Mount Washington Alpine Resort, in attracting athlete training camps and sports teams.
Short description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comox Valley has had success in attracting teams to Mount Washington for pre-Olympic training for alpine events. However, stakeholders see Comox Valley as currently lacking in facilities/sport tourism product compared to other BC communities that are concentrating on this product. • Comox Valley should take advantage of the sport tourism initiatives offered through the Tourism British Columbia and 2010 Legacies Now sport tourism partnership. These opportunities include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Listing all sport hosting and training venues on www.hostingbc.ca - Joining the BC Sport Tourism Network (contact Christina.Cafouros@tourismbc.com) - Attending the annual BC Sport Tourism Events Marketplace to learn more about opportunities in sport tourism. For further information visit www.bcsporttourismmarketplace.com.
Quantifiable objectives (if applicable)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased visitation by athletes, coaches and other training staff in the off-peak seasons.
Rationale / relation to strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sport tourism is a niche opportunity that Comox Valley should pursue but not at the expense of its primary tourism products and key markets.
Action steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact Christina.Cafouros@tourismbc.com regarding Tourism British Columbia and 2010 Legacies Now sport tourism initiatives. • Identify target organizations and events for alpine and other key sports for which Comox Valley has existing facilities and organizational capacity. • Identify bid requirements. • Proactively pursue bids and/or respond to event hosting opportunities.
Potential partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Governments, sports organizations, Mount Washington Alpine Resort.
Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discover Comox Valley.
Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing.
Budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5K.
Evaluation mechanism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tracking incremental sport tourism events, training camps and participants.

Tactic #23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement a “Be a Tourist in Your Own Town” promotion to familiarize local residents with Comox Valley’s products and encourage them to be tourism ambassadors.
Short description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coinciding with the beginning of the tourism season in spring, residents will be invited to purchase and use a special “Comox Valley passport”, which entitles them to free or deeply discounted admission (or other high value offers) at area attractions, cultural events, restaurants, shops, etc. for a limited time. • The passports can be available through the Visitor Centres and other outlets, at a nominal cost (under \$5-\$10) in relation to the value represented (at least \$300-\$500). • When residents use their passports at participating business or events, the passport is validated with an official stamp. Once a certain number of stamps are obtained, the passport may be used as an entry form, to be deposited at the Courtenay and Cumberland Visitor Centres and other designated locations by a predetermined date. A winning entry is then chosen, with the winner receiving a grand prize (minimum \$1,000 value) consisting of items/offers donated by the participating tourism businesses. • Attractions or performing arts groups that do not charge admission fees can encourage residents to visit/attend by offering to stamp passports.
Quantifiable objectives (if applicable)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of local residents who visit participating businesses/events.
Rationale / relation to strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local residents are potential tourism ambassadors who may invite their friends and relatives to visit Comox Valley and provide information on its many activities and attractions.
Action steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organize the mechanisms to implement the promotion. • Obtain agreement from tourism business operators and non-profit groups to participate in the campaign. • Obtain discounts, special offers and grand prize elements through tourism-related businesses in the communities. • Promote the event through local advertising, posters and media releases.
Potential partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local media. • Tourism-oriented businesses and arts and cultural groups in the area. • Other partnerships to be determined.
Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discover Comox Valley.
Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spring 2010 and annually thereafter.
Budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$3K annually (may be offset by passport purchase price) plus staff time to coordinate.
Evaluation mechanism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of participating business or groups. • Number of passports purchased. • Number of visits to participating businesses/events.

Tactic #24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create an “invite family and friends” e-mail campaign, encouraging local residents to invite their friends and family for a visit.
Short description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residents are naturally proud of their community and this initiative motivates them to tell their friends and family what a great destination the Comox Valley is. • A series of electronic postcards would be posted on the tourism website, each highlighting a particular aspect of Comox Valley, and incorporating a link back to the official tourism website. • Residents (and website visitors) would be invited to e-mail postcards to non-resident family and friends. A contest could be included to encourage postcard recipients to visit the tourism website (e.g. “Win a weekend of outdoor adventures”) • Announce initiative through local media (paid advertising and unpaid editorial coverage)
Quantifiable objectives (if applicable)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of postcards sent and contest entries received.
Rationale / relation to strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The success of local tourism relies partially on strong community support. This initiative motivates the community to become involved in tourism. • By encouraging residents to send promotional e-postcards to non-resident family and friends, wide exposure is possible at very little cost.
Action steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organize the mechanisms to implement the campaign. • Obtain sponsors to participate in the campaign. • Obtain prizes through tourism-related businesses.
Potential partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media, hotels and attractions in the area. • Other partnerships to be determined.
Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discover Comox Valley
Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spring/summer 2010 and annually thereafter.
Budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$5K annually (may be partially offset by sponsorship revenue).
Evaluation mechanism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of participants.

Long Term Market Development Tactics

<p>Tactic #25</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate the feasibility of a television advertising campaign in the Vancouver/Victoria markets for spring 2010, if budget permits. Expand to Calgary and Edmonton over the longer term.
<p>Brief Description</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Television, while generally more expensive than other media, can have very broad reach and impact. The combination of “sight and sound” is ideally suited to destination marketing. If the Additional Hotel Room Tax is implemented in the Comox Valley, a television advertising campaign could be considered. • A sophisticated, single-focused creative approach and high quality production are essential in order to break through the clutter, as well as to enhance Comox Valley as a destination for adult tourists. • An exclusive (single station) advertising buy can be leveraged to receive promotional air time and presence on the station website at no extra cost. This would need to be negotiated. In the case of Vancouver/Victoria, this would be Global TV, for Calgary and Edmonton, it could be one of three stations (CBC, CTV or Global) depending on the promotional package and reach against the target group. There is no spill or overlap between the Calgary and Edmonton markets. • The on-air promotional component can feature a high-value Comox Valley vacation package. • Tie-ins with the selected station’s on-air personalities add interest and credibility. • Discover Comox Valley website would be featured for more information or to enter the contest. • :30 second spots would be utilized and a significant portion of the buy would focus on news, which has excellent reach against adults 35+. • Based on the ballpark budgets below, television will deliver strong reach. The estimated TV campaign reach amongst Vancouver and Victoria residents age 35+ is at least 85%. The reach in Calgary and Edmonton would be similar.
<p>Quantifiable objectives (if applicable)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of contest entries. • Increase number of unique website visits. • Increase distribution of Visitors’ Guide. • Increases in bookings with participating partners – WestJet, hotels, etc.
<p>Rationale / relation to strategies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Although a TV campaign in Calgary and Edmonton was identified as one of the biggest opportunities for the Comox Valley in the planning session, it is recommended that Vancouver/Victoria be pursued first as Vancouver/Victoria present the largest potential for increased visitation. There are a number of reasons for this: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Residents of Metro Vancouver (2.3 million) and residents of Victoria (337K) are primary target markets for the Comox Valley as previously discussed. - A single station purchase on Global TV will deliver both the Vancouver and Victoria markets with an estimated reach against adults 35+ of at least 85%. - The composition of current visitors to the Comox Valley excluding local residents is 52% BC residents and 12% Alberta residents. This is consistent with the new Tourism Vancouver Island visitor study, with Alberta residents accounting for 13.4% of visitation to Vancouver Island in 2007³⁴. • If the campaign produces the desired results, it can then be introduced into the Calgary and Edmonton markets at a later time.
<p>Action steps</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contract with Tourism Vancouver Island for media planning and buying services or retain contract services of an experienced media planner/buyer familiar with negotiating and implementing value added media promotions. • Investigate package costs and optimal timing and mechanics of promotional component with

³⁴ This study excluded residents of Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands. Visitation statistics quoted are preliminary.

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	<p>Global TV in Greater Vancouver/Greater Victoria market, and invite proposals from the dominant stations in Calgary and Edmonton.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review impact on budget (i.e. what other initiatives might have to be deferred, if any?) • Develop rates and partnership opportunities and secure cooperative advertising partners – accommodation providers/TVI for Vancouver and WestJet/TVI for Alberta. Total co-op participation should be limited to 2-3 key partners to maintain the integrity of the creative and provide adequate time for brand messages. • If proceeding, assign ad creative and production to an agency/advertising group. • Prepare creative brief, incorporating insights from creative testing (Tactic #26) and the situation analysis.
Potential partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WestJet, Tourism Vancouver Island, and accommodation providers for TV campaign. • Restaurants and other attractions can be encouraged to develop special offers and packages, with details provided on the Discover Comox Valley and partner websites.
Responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discover Comox Valley.
Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact TV media in spring of 2009 for preliminary discussion. • Campaign to run in spring 2010 – This timing will help build the spring shoulder and also increase awareness of Comox Valley among key target markets for summer vacation planning.
Budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vancouver/Victoria - \$150,000 media – 3-4 weeks – 2010 (annual budget). 75K for creative and production (25K in 2009, and 50K in 2010). • Calgary - \$70,000 media – 3-4 weeks – 2011 onward depending on available budget • Edmonton - \$70,000 media – 3-4 weeks – 2012 onward depending on available budget •
Evaluation mechanism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of visits website, contest entries, requests for Visitors' Guide. • Number of bookings during the time frame of the campaign compared to previous years. • Over the longer term, advertising recall may be measurable through consumer research (budget permitting).

Research and Evaluation Tactics

Tactic #26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct qualitative research with key audiences to help guide any Comox Valley re-branding initiative.
Short description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This research will be used to test creative options to Comox Valley’s re-branding initiative, including brand concepts and taglines against those currently in use. The results will help provide direction in the subsequent development of the overall brand personality and the graphic approach for future marketing materials. • The purpose of the research will be to provide consumer feedback on concepts for logo/tagline, and subsequent marketing materials that will have long-term appeal to adult travellers in the key markets of Greater Vancouver, Victoria/Vancouver Island, Calgary and Edmonton – although to minimize costs, BC research will be limited to Vancouver and Alberta research will be limited to Calgary. Results from research can be used to fine-tune the positioning statement, if necessary. • The qualitative research could take the form of focus groups, mini groups, and/or one-on-one interviews.
Quantifiable objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/a
Rationale / relation to strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirming the appeal of Comox Valley’s new positioning and testing the concepts and taglines is an important part of the re-branding initiative.
Action steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare research brief. • Conduct research. • Review research results. • Apply research results to final logo design, tag line and subsequent marketing materials.
Responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discover Comox Valley would oversee the research along with the brand strategist directing the re-branding initiative.
Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Late spring 2009.
Budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$16K (\$8K per market, Vancouver and Calgary only - excluding creative/design services).

Tactic #27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage local accommodation providers to participate in Tourism BC’s Value of Tourism analysis by completing and returning the accommodation surveys and forecasts (see Appendix #2).
Short description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism BC “Value of Tourism Model” uses accommodation data to estimate visitor volume and direct tourism expenditures within a community. The data is collected from accommodation operators (both fixed roof and campgrounds) and is then applied to regional, provincial and national tourism indicators to provide an informed estimate of the number of visitors and their expenditures in each community. • Ideally, the accommodation properties will fill out 12 months worth of monthly data such that the economic impact of tourism to Comox Valley can be calculated. Thereafter, the monthly Commercial Accommodation Survey can be used to track occupancy.
Quantifiable objectives (if applicable)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine the value to tourism in the Comox Valley and track tourism growth on an ongoing basis.
Rationale / relation to strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tracking is important to measure tourism growth and track success of tourism initiatives. • There is a need to educate local residents and businesses about the economic importance of tourism in the community.
Action steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine interest of accommodation properties to be involved in tracking. At least 50% of accommodation rooms would need to participate to provide meaningful data. • Distribute surveys to participants.
Potential partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism BC Research Department. • Accommodation properties. • Tourism Vancouver Island.
Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discover Comox Valley. • Accommodation properties.
Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depends on accommodation properties. Ideally, a baseline should be established using 2008 data.
Budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None.
Evaluation mechanism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Date Value of Tourism model is completed. • Monthly Accommodation Survey is completed by participating hotels and used to track occupancy.

Tactic #28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide tools and maintain tracking for key attractions, festivals and events.
Short description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Although attendance at some festivals and events and attractions is currently tracked, attendance statistics for other key attractions and festivals/events in the Comox Valley can also be useful as indicators of tourism growth. Also, consistent methods and formats for tracking and for identifying visitors from local residents will help increase the integrity of the data. • Attendance numbers would be reported only to Discover Comox Valley. If confidentiality is an issue, Discover Comox Valley can agree to publish only aggregate attendance numbers.
Quantifiable objectives (if applicable)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/a.
Rationale / relation to strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tracking of various attraction and events is important to measure overall tourism growth and track success of tourism initiatives
Action steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact Tourism BC Research about assistance with tools and formats for tracking. • Determine key attractions and events to be involved in tracking. • Obtain agreement from key attractions and event organizers to take on this responsibility. • Confirm formats and work with key attractions and event organizers to put systems in place to track.
Potential partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism BC. • Key attraction operators and event organizers.
Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discover Comox Valley.
Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a baseline using 2009 data.
Budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff time to coordinate.
Evaluation mechanism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/a.

Tactic #29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure comprehensive tracking of website traffic and calls to the Visitor Centre toll-free information line is implemented.
Short description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Track website traffic and calls to the 1-800 number to create a monthly report that includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of unique visits to website home page - Most visited pages (unique landing pages can be created to track response to specific promotions) - Source of links (e.g. from search engine, from HelloBC.com, etc.) - Number of phone calls to Visitor Centre information line - Most-requested topics/items. • Compare results month to month and year to year. • Some of this tracking may already be taking place but this more comprehensive tracking allows for better evaluation of tactics. • This tracking becomes more important with increased marketing and advertising activities featuring the Comox Valley website and Visitor Centre toll free line as the calls to action.
Quantifiable objectives (if applicable)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/a
Rationale / relation to strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tracking of tourism marketing activities should occur to determine whether each activity should be continued, expanded, changed, or abandoned.
Action steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss tracking needs and methods with website developer and Visitor Centre manager. • Implement tracking.
Potential partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/a.
Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discover Comox Valley, Comox Valley Visitor Centre.
Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing.
Budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBD.
Evaluation mechanism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/a.

Tactic #30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct annual or bi-annual surveys at the Courtenay Visitor Centre and other key intercept points, using the Value of the Comox Valley Visitor Centre Study as a benchmark.
Short description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Along with the information already gathered at the Visitor Centre (visitor origin, length of stay, etc.), collect data regarding visitor satisfaction including way finding, trip planning habits, type of transportation and accommodation, previous visitation, participation in activities, likelihood of returning, etc. • Additional intercept points, such as the Courtenay and District Museum and Palaeontology Centre and the Comox Air Force Museum, could also be added to capture visitors who may not use the Visitor Centre. • Develop a brief survey, using selected questions from the Value of the Comox Valley Visitor Centre Study so that the data gathered can be compared from year to year to show trends based on the benchmark data. • Aim for a representative random sample of visitors, with 250 to 300 surveys completed each year.
Quantifiable objectives (if applicable)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/a
Rationale / relation to strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Value of the Comox Valley Visitor Centre Study was a valuable source of information and it can be further used as a model to collect at least tracking information.
Action steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review questionnaires from Value of the Comox Valley Visitor Centre Study to determine most relevant questions. • Contact Tourism BC to obtain advice on questionnaire design and sampling methodology. Determine whether Tourism BC can assist in consolidating collected information. • Implement surveys through the Comox Valley Visitor Centre and key attractions. • Consolidate and analyze data as part of the annual tourism planning process.
Potential partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism BC, Tourism Vancouver Island.
Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discover Comox Valley, Visitor Centres, and key attractions.
Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2009, with updates every year or every other year.
Budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBD.
Evaluation mechanism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/a.

Summary Timetable

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Product Development Tactics					
1. Maintain and enhance tourism product inventory (staff time).	X	X	X	X	X
2. Increase understanding of tourism plan/importance of tourism among local government and residents.	X				
3. Support tourism development initiatives consistent with tourism strategy.	X	X	X	X	X
4. Encourage initiatives to improve visitor experience and aesthetic appeal.	X	X	X	X	X
5. Educate local business about tourism opportunities.	X	X	X	X	X
6. Promote and deliver tourism education and training programs.	X	X	X	X	X
7. Encourage packaging of complementary tourism products.	X	X	X	X	X
8. Review and enhance current way-finding and interpretive signage and maps.	X	X	X		
9. Encourage new or enhanced festivals and events.	X	X	X	X	X
10. Encourage entrepreneurs to create new tourism products and tours.	X	X	X	X	X
Market Development Tactics					
11. Update the Comox Valley tourism brand to reflect new positioning.	X	X			
12. Expand and enhance current image bank.	X	X	X	X	X
13. Enhance the CV Visitors' Guide and website with new design/content.	X				
14. Reach visitors via targeted advertising and coop programs with TBC/TVI.	X	X	X	X	X
15. Create a radio and newspaper promotion.	X	X	X	X	X
16. Promote Comox Valley tourism experiences to visitors to Greater Victoria.	X	X	X	X	X
17. Use direct marketing to encourage repeat visitation from BC and Alberta.		X	X	X	X
18. Media relations reaching Vancouver, Victoria/VI, Calgary, Edmonton.	X	X	X	X	X
19. Work with TVI and TBC on other media relations/marketing opportunities.	X	X	X	X	X
20. Maximize Tourism BC's marketing opportunities.	X	X	X	X	X
21. Promote Comox Valley as a meeting/conference/incentive destination.	X	X	X	X	X
22. Support partners in pursuing sport hosting.	X	X	X	X	X
23. Implement "Be a Tourist in Your Own Town" promotion.		X	X	X	X
24. Create an "invite family and friends" e-mail campaign for local residents.		X	X	X	X
25. Investigate spring TV ad campaign -Van/Victoria or Calgary/Edmonton.		X	X	X	X
Research and Evaluation Tactics					
26. Qualitative research with key audiences to guide branding/creative initiative.	X				
27. Encourage accommodation properties to participate in TBC's Value of Tourism analysis.	X	X	X	X	X
28. Provide tools and maintain tracking for key attractions, festivals and events.	X	X	X	X	X
29. Ensure tracking of website traffic and calls to Visitor Centre toll free line.	X	X	X	X	X
30. Conduct annual or bi-annual surveys at Comox Valley Visitor Centre.	X	X	X	X	X

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BUDGET

The amounts shown are broad estimates for budgeting purposes only.	\$000s				
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Product Development Tactics					
1. Maintain and enhance tourism product inventory (staff time).	-	-	-	-	-
2. Increase understanding of tourism plan/importance of tourism.	1	-	-	-	-
3. Support tourism development initiatives consistent with tourism strategy.	-	-	-	-	-
4. Encourage initiatives to improve visitor experience and aesthetic appeal.	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
5. Educate local business about tourism opportunities.	5	2	2	2	2
6. Promote and deliver tourism education and training programs.	2-5	2-5	2-5	2-5	2-5
7. Encourage packaging of complementary tourism products.	-	-	-	-	-
8. Review and enhance current way-finding and interpretive signage and maps.	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
9. Encourage new or enhanced festivals and events.	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
10. Encourage entrepreneurs to create new tourism products and tours.	-	-	-	-	-
Market Development Tactics					
11. Update the Comox Valley tourism brand to reflect new positioning.	30-60	-	-	-	-
12. Expand and enhance current image bank.	5-10	5-10	5-10	5-10	5-10
13. Enhance the CV Visitors' Guide and website with new design/content ³⁵ .	15	5	5	5	5
14. Reach visitors via targeted advertising and coop programs with TBC/TVI.	100	100	115	125	125
15. Create a radio and newspaper promotion.	60	60	60	60	60
16. Promote Comox Valley tourism experiences to visitors to Greater Victoria.	20	20	20	20	20
17. Use direct marketing to encourage repeat visitation from BC and Alberta.	-	20	20	20	20
18. Media relations reaching Vancouver, Victoria/VI, Calgary, Edmonton.	50	50	50	50	50
19. Work with TVI and TBC on other media relations/marketing opportunities.	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
20. Maximize Tourism BC's marketing opportunities.	-	-	-	-	-
21. Promote Comox Valley as a meeting/conference/incentive destination.	15-20	15-20	15-20	15-20	15-20
22. Support partners in pursuing sport hosting.	5	5	5	5	5
23. Implement "Be a Tourist in Your Own Town" promotion.	-	3	3	3	3
24. Create an "invite family and friends" email campaign for local residents.	-	5	5	5	5
25. Investigate spring TV ad campaign -Van/Victoria or Calgary/Edmonton.	25	200	220	250	290
Research and Evaluation Tactics					
26. Qualitative research with key audiences to guide branding/positioning.	16	-	-	-	-
27. Encourage accommodation properties to participate in TBC's Value of Tourism analysis.	-	-	-	-	-
28. Provide tools and maintain tracking for key attractions, festivals and events.	-	-	-	-	-
29. Ensure tracking of website traffic and calls to Visitor Centre toll free line.	-	-	-	-	-
30. Conduct annual or bi-annual surveys at Comox Valley Visitor Centre.					
Funds to take advantage of unexpected marketing opportunities/and or additional marketing assistance.	-	40-60	60-70	80-90	100-120
Total (\$000)	349+	532+	587+	647+	707+

³⁵ Budget assumes the cost of producing and distributing the Official Visitors' Guide is totally offset by the sale of advertising. Budget only includes website design and enhancements.

The budget amounts for the strategies and tactics related to destination development have not been identified, because they would vary widely depending on the scope that the communities in the Comox Valley intend to pursue. The budget amounts for the strategies and tactics related to market development and research and evaluation are identified above. For this reason, the totals in this budget can be considered to be the recommended budget for Discover Comox Valley (excluding staff resources)/Tourism Advisory Committee.

Additional Marketing Staff Resources

As Discover Comox Valley has indicated that it will need to review the tourism plan before it can assess staffing capacity to implement the proposed tactics within the suggested timeframes, no recommendations are provided regarding staffing levels to deliver this plan. The preliminary budget does include allowances for contracted specialists in the areas of media relations and media planning/buying.

Community Tourism Opportunities Program

Comox Valley will have access to cost-shared funding through the Community Tourism Opportunities program. This program provides a small amount of funding to provide initial support in an effort to increase the success of communities as they embrace tourism. This Tourism BC program is administered through the regional tourism associations (in the case of Comox Valley, through Tourism Vancouver Island). Eligible activities are marketing-related. Many of the tactics in this plan will be eligible and discussions with Tourism Vancouver Island will need to take place to determine which initiatives should be put forward for funding under the program.

Funding Sources

One of the most important steps in moving toward implementation of this tourism plan is to secure adequate funding. It will be important for Discover Comox Valley and the Tourism Advisory Committee to help identify and pursue these funding sources. Implementation of the Additional Hotel Room Tax in the Comox Valley has been identified by stakeholders as the single largest opportunity for the destination, followed by increasing cooperative advertising opportunities and partnerships.

Earned revenue, through cooperative ads and selling advertising in the Visitors' Guide should continue to be pursued by Discover Comox Valley. While earned revenue is valuable, it is important to ensure that generating earned revenue does not detract from the business of attracting visitors to the destination. It is imperative in developing a destination brand that there is sufficient space in co-operative advertising initiatives to sell the destination through brand messages and images, not just promote advertisers. This cautionary note is not intended to suggest that this is a concern in the Comox Valley, but to ensure the value of earned revenue and cooperative advertising is placed in context.



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COMOX VALLEY TOURISM PLAN

APPENDICES

**APPENDIX 1:
NOTES FROM PLANNING SESSION
OCTOBER 30, 2008**

How much tourism does Comox Valley have and how much tourism is desired in long term?

Participants were asked to rate Comox Valley on a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 means no tourism and 10 is similar to Vancouver.

Now	Long Term
5-6 – for products 3 – for awareness	10 – there is potential for growth in all products
5-6	8-9 – can grow with increases in awareness, but need to maintain the small town feel
3-4 – overall awareness is low 10 – for beauty	10 – need more activities
3-4 – destination is largely undiscovered, target authenticity, four seasons area	9-10 – authentic experience, hiking and culinary
6 – convention centre missing, have golf and spa	8-9 – with facilities, but keep the small town feel
6 – overall, missing convention centre	8-9 – big potential is outdoor
2 – agri-tourism and soft adventure have potential	6
4-5 – B & Bs, need materials in multiple languages	6-7 – need to maintain lifestyle, need better access to water
3 – lack of awareness	10 – not Victoria or Vancouver, be the best of what we are, extend length of stay, huge potential
3-4 – low awareness/not of the radar, all seasons destination	9 – Valley could be a gateway, extend stay
3 – lack of organized activities for convention goers, hiking is difficult to access	10
5 – need conference centre	9-10 – do not want to be too big, need to keep relaxing atmosphere
3-4 – open to development, spa	8 – do not want to be Victoria
6 – lacking organization of water sport activities, lack of organized	9-10 – strong products
6 – transportation, corporate is turning away business for lack of meeting space, lack of organized activities	9

Strengths

Big to small

1. Alpine to Ocean (11 votes)
2. Four season destination (5 votes)/temperate climate (3 votes)
3. Opportunities for outdoor adventure (6 votes)
4. Diverse product in close proximity (5 votes)
5. Airport/WestJet (5 votes)
6. Festivals – music, arts & crafts (5 votes)
7. High end quality properties (4 votes)
8. Quality dining experiences (4 votes)
9. On Vancouver Island (3 votes)
10. Lakes, rivers and oceans (2 votes)
11. Rural setting (1 vote)
12. Golf product, accessibility (1 vote)
13. Good service levels
14. Availability of amenities
15. Friendly, welcoming people – businesses and local residents

Weaknesses

Big to small

1. Lack of funds for marketing (20 votes)
2. Lack of transportation to venues (12 votes)/accessibility (4 votes)
 - Distance from ferry
 - Includes events and outdoor activities
 - Taxis are expensive
 - Public transportation is limited
3. Low levels of brand awareness (7 votes)
 - Low destination awareness
 - Brand is currently too broad
4. Government support and understanding is limited (8 votes)
5. Limited meeting space (6 votes)
6. Limited cooperative marketing (4)
7. Lack of organized tours (2)
 - Culinary, fishing, outdoor adventure
8. Businesses are not open late to cater to visitors (2)
9. Way finding/signage

Prioritized Target Groups for Comox Valley

The biggest opportunities, requiring small to medium resources, in order from largest opportunity downward include the following. These are the most easily pursued opportunities that can deliver significant results.

Greater Victoria residents
Vancouver Island residents
Visitors already in Victoria

The biggest opportunities, requiring medium to big resources, in order from largest opportunity downward include the following. These are large opportunities but will require significant resources to come to fruition.

Greater Vancouver
Alberta – Calgary and Edmonton
Seattle/Washington
Saskatchewan
Germany/UK

Small opportunities that require small to medium resources include the following. These are opportunities that can be pursued if there is time but are not expected to yield significant results.

None identified

Small opportunities requiring medium to big resources include the following.

None identified

Prioritized General Opportunities for Comox Valley (1-28)

The biggest opportunities, requiring small to medium resources, in order from largest opportunity downward, include the following. These are the most easily pursued opportunities that can deliver significant results.

27. Implement the Additional Hotel Room Tax
20. Increase cooperative advertising opportunities
26. Media relations – leverage off TAVI/TBC, develop media kit, hire dedicated media relations staff
4. Develop outdoor adventure tours with tour operators
5. Package outdoor adventure experiences with accommodation
6. Promote outdoor adventure on the website
11. Ski – ease of access (product)
9. Spa
7. Agri-tourism/culinary tours
1. Expand/continue golf packages
2. Leverage TVI/golf Vancouver Island efforts
28. Increase efforts with travel trade
22. Cross regional promotion – work with Tofino
21. Outdoor adventure map
19. Visitors Centre – upgrade with new location, involvement of private operators, reservation service?

The biggest opportunities, requiring medium to big resources, in order from largest opportunity downward include the following. These are large opportunities but will require significant resources to come to fruition.

23. TV campaign in Alberta – Golf, Ski, Spa – with partners such as TVI and WestJet
24. Extend media buys with value added promotions
25. Develop a multi-faceted campaign with packaging, promotions, contests, prizes
14. Develop conference, meeting and incentive market
10. Events/festivals – quality, quantity, attraction
12. Develop aboriginal product
16. Build a conference centre/meeting/multiplex

Small opportunities that require small to medium resources include the following. These are opportunities that can be pursued if there is time but are not expected to yield significant results.

17. Support efforts of Vancouver Island rail corridor
8. Sport tourism – attract sport teams
3. Fishing – partnering with Campbell River fishing operators for day excursions
13. Heritage and culture

Small opportunities requiring medium to big resources include the following.

15. Promote destination for film/movies
18. Improve signage and way finding

**APPENDIX 2: VALUE OF TOURISM
WORKSHEETS**

Estimating Tourism's contribution to the local economy

Having defensible estimates of tourism's contribution to a community is central to developing an informed tourism planning approach, strengthening the support of community stakeholders and local government, and encouraging an appreciation of tourism's economic development potential.

As part of the *Community Tourism Foundations*® Program facilitators are working with local stakeholders to gain a picture of tourism contribution to the local economy.

Objective

To provide a conservative and credible estimate of visitor volume and direct tourism expenditures within a community.

The "Value of Tourism" model provides a structured, consistent approach to estimate the volume and value of tourism. The core data collection component of the model is an accommodation survey to gather the most recent annual performance data from commercial accommodation operators (including campgrounds). This information is then applied to local, regional, provincial and national tourism indicators to provide an informed estimate of the total number of visitors (overnight, day and visiting friends and relatives) and their expenditures in the community.

Confidentiality

Information provided by accommodation businesses will:

- only be used for the purposes of estimating tourism contribution to the community;
- will be aggregated with other operators data to ensure anonymity;
- will remain confidential and will not be released in any form that enables individual operators to be identified; and
- is submitted directly to either Tourism BC Research Services or the *Community Tourism Foundations* facilitator.

Participation

Please complete the accommodation survey and return the form to Tourism BC Research Services at fax: 250-356-8246.

For More Information

For more information please contact:

Erin O'Brien, Research Services Tourism British Columbia, 250-356-5629,
Erin.Obrien@tourismbc.com.



Fixed Roof Accommodation - Tourism Contribution Survey

Please complete the following information on your property for **the most recent year** and return the completed sheet to:

Tourism BC Research Services fax: 250-356-8246 or the Community Tourism Foundations® facilitator.

The information provided will be kept **CONFIDENTIAL** and only used by Tourism BC and the facilitator for this project. Data will only be reported in aggregate and only where one cannot infer from the data the performance of indi

Property Name

Property type

(e.g. Hotel, Motel, Lodge, B&B, Resort)

All Guests	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Average Achieved Daily Rate												
Number of available rooms per night												
Total Occupied room nights												
Business Guests												
Occupied room nights												
Average Length of Stay												
Average party Size												
Leisure Guests												
Occupied room nights												
Average Length of Stay												
Average party Size												

** If your business includes **more than one** type of accommodation (e.g. Motel & RV sites), please complete a separate form for each "type" of accommodation.



RV/Campground Accommodation - Tourism Contribution Survey

Please complete the following information on your property for **the most recent year** and return the completed sheet to:

Tourism BC Research Services fax: 250-356-8246 or the Community Tourism Foundations® facilitator.

The information provided will be kept **CONFIDENTIAL** and only used by Tourism BC and the facilitator for this project. Data will only be reported in aggregate and only where one cannot infer from the data the performance of individual properties.

Property Name

Property type

RV/Campground

All Guests	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Average Achieved Daily Rate												
Number of available sites												
Occupied site nights												
Average Length of Stay												
Average Party Size												

** If your business includes **more than one** type of accommodation (e.g. Motel & RV sites), please complete a separate form for each "type" of accommodation.