

## community vitality

## 9



## INTRODUCTION

Vitality in an urban setting is usually defined in three ways:

- Social vitality is a city's ability to make the people who live and work there feel like they belong to or are a part of a community or neighbourhood. This sense of belonging influences many aspects of urban life, including crime rates and community safety.
- Economic vitality is a city's ability to attract and retain businesses and the jobs they bring with them.
- Cultural vitality is a city's ability to provide a range of arts and cultural activities that people value and look for opportunities to become involved in, as active participants, viewers or supporters.
- The Downtown Core Area is the economic and cultural heart not just of the City of Victoria, but of the Capital Region as a whole.

It is the Provincial Capital and site of the Legislative Assembly. It houses the headquarters of many provincial ministries, agencies and Crown corporations. It has the region's largest concentration of employment and is a hub of transportation and commerce. It is home to major cultural institutions and entertainment facilities, and is the Region's primary tourist attraction. The Downtown Core Area also offers the greatest range of goods and services in the Region, with a local market of approximately 12,000 people living within one kilometre of City Hall. No other location in Greater Victoria provides more opportunity for face-to-face communication, interaction and exchange.

But despite these strengths, the Downtown Core Area faces a number of challenges. Homelessness, poverty and issues of social disorder have become entrenched in certain parts of the Downtown Core Area and have contributed to a growing sense of insecurity and despair. Affordable housing is limited. The Downtown Core Area's share of the regional office and retail market continues to decline as suburban communities offer more opportunity for their residents to shop and work closer to home. Established bus-based transit is nearing operational capacity in key high-volume corridors, including Douglas Street. Aging infrastructure and public facilities need to be upgraded or replaced to support future population growth, and the Downtown Core Area needs new attractions to enhance its place as a destination for visitors and tourism.

## COMMUNITY VITALITY OBJECTIVES

To help ensure the social, economic and cultural vitality of the Downtown Core Area as it grows over the next 30 years, the community vitality policies contained in this Plan attempt to build on the Area's significant strengths and to realize the opportunities new growth and development can offer. Collectively these policies address the following objectives:

1. That a broader range of housing options are developed within the Downtown Core Area to support a more diverse mix of households.
2. That initiatives to decrease homelessness and increase community safety and civility continue to be supported by both public and private initiatives.

3. That ideas for making the Downtown Core Area more attractive for residents, workers and visitors alike are supported through new or improved public amenities and recreational facilities, as well as expanded arts, cultural and learning options.
4. That the Downtown Core Area continues to diversify and strengthen its employment base and its provision of suitable office space.
5. That improved transit options continue to emerge both within the Downtown Core Area and across the Region.

## SOCIAL VITALITY POLICIES AND ACTIONS

### HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

- 9.1. Support the development of non-market housing as the Downtown Core Area grows, working with provincial, regional, non-profit and industry partners and with targeted investments from the Victoria Housing Trust Fund.
- 9.2. Explore development standards such as reduced parking requirements, to encourage and facilitate the provision of smaller residential dwelling units in the 30 to 40 m<sup>2</sup> range in multi-residential development.

### HOMELESSNESS

- 9.3. Continue to support the work of the Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness.
- 9.4. Continue to work with community partners to secure emergency shelter for homeless people through the Greater Victoria Extreme Weather Protocol.

### DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

- 9.5. Review and amend the *Zoning Regulation Bylaw* to establish requirements and standards for the provision of indoor and outdoor common areas and recreation space within multi-residential development in addition to the provision of ground-oriented housing such as townhouses at the base level of new higher density multi-residential developments.
- 9.6. Expand the use of heritage revitalization agreements and incentive programs to upgrade and revitalize heritage buildings for market and non-market housing.

## SAFETY AND CIVILITY

- 9.7. Establish a coordinated Graffiti Management Program, in partnership with the Victoria Police Department and business and community partners.
- 9.8. Review, update and extend City and partner downtown street-cleaning programs as the Downtown Core Area grows.
- 9.9. Work with the Victoria Police Department and community partners to improve personal safety, security of property and public order within the Downtown Core Area.

## PUBLIC SERVICES

- 9.10. Prepare and implement a strategy for the design, location, installation, maintenance and funding for the provision of new or upgraded full service public washrooms and drinking fountains within the Downtown Core Area.

## COMMUNITY SERVICES

- 9.11. Work with regional partners and senior levels of government to explore establishing secure funding that will permit social service providers to provide 24-hour service, seven days a week to the street community as appropriate.
- 9.12. Review the need for new community services and facilities on an ongoing basis, as part of the monitoring strategy for the Downtown Core Area Plan.
- 9.13. Engage with community partners to identify methods to encourage and facilitate the provision of childcare facilities within the Downtown Core Area in response to increased demand from the local workforce.

## EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

- 9.14. Update the City of Victoria Emergency Management Plan to prepare for the challenges of an expanded, higher density Downtown Core Area.
- 9.15. Continue to support the seismic upgrading and rehabilitation of heritage buildings through heritage revitalization incentive programs.
- 9.16. Review and update the *Zoning Regulation Bylaw* to establish standards for providing on-site emergency preparedness facilities and equipment in new higher density commercial, residential and mixed use buildings.

## URBAN ANIMATION

- 9.17. Ensure that the development of outdoor café and dining areas on sidewalks, squares and plazas, are evaluated against all relevant City of Victoria, policies and regulations.
- 9.18. Maintain, review and extend seasonal lighting and decoration programs as appropriate and with partners as opportunities arise.
- 9.19. Support and facilitate the development of a year-round farmers' market within the Downtown Core Area, to animate the public and private realm and support local growers and food processors.
- 9.20. Review and update public space management policies and programs with partners to ensure they are consistent with this Plan.
- 9.21. Review and update management programs and supports for major public open spaces, such as Centennial Square, to ensure appropriate and ongoing year round events and activities.

## PUBLIC AMENITIES

- 9.22. New public amenities and public realm improvements within the Downtown Core Area should serve to meet the objectives and policies of this Plan.

## RECREATION

- 9.23. Review and update plans for enhancing primary recreation facilities in the Downtown Core Area.
- 9.24. Consider opportunities for providing new recreation facilities and services in the new parks proposed for Rock Bay and Harris Green, including appropriately scaled indoor facilities and recreational water access as appropriate.

## ENTERTAINMENT AND SPECIAL EVENTS

- 9.25. Establish a management strategy to support and enhance the downtown evening and late night economy that addresses:
  - 9.25.1. Initiatives to maintain downtown as the primary entertainment district for Greater Victoria.
  - 9.25.2. Initiatives to manage and mitigate issues of public disorder.
  - 9.25.3. Locational criteria and development standards for new entertainment-related uses.
  - 9.25.4. Strategies to encourage the provision of a broader range of entertainment venues for varying ages and interests.
  - 9.25.5. Interface conditions and strategies to mitigate conflict between residential development and bars, nightclubs and restaurants.

- 9.26. Continue to support special events, celebrations and festivals at major public open spaces – including Centennial Square, along the Inner Harbour waterfront and in other existing and proposed public open spaces – through programming and by providing on-site infrastructure and equipment.
- 9.27. Work with community partners to investigate the feasibility and need for a permanent and dedicated location for major outdoor events and festivals within the Downtown Core Area.

## ECONOMIC VITALITY POLICIES AND ACTIONS

### PROVINCIAL CAPITAL

- 9.28. Work with the Province to meet the long-term office space needs of ministries, agencies and Crown corporations, within transit accessible locations, in the expanded Central Business District and in the Inner Harbour District.
- 9.29. Work with the Province, the Provincial Capital Commission and the Greater Victoria Harbour Authority to develop – with an appropriate mix of provincial, civic, community and private development – currently vacant and underdeveloped public lands along the Inner Harbour, in accordance with the policies contained in this Plan.

### ACCESS

- 9.30. Work with BC Transit, the Ministry of Transportation, the Capital Regional District and other partners to establish regional rapid transit service between the Downtown Core Area, Saanich and the West Shore, with longer-term potential for rapid transit service to the Peninsula, Swartz Bay and the airport.
- 9.31. Work with BC Transit to implement the Rapid Transit Plan including the establishment of new routes, services, and related infrastructure.
- 9.32. Work with marine air companies and Transport Canada to ensure that efficient and convenient shore side air transport facilities continue to serve the Victoria Harbour Aerodrome, as lands along the Inner Harbour waterfront are redeveloped.
- 9.33. Support the development of a new and improved regional bus terminal in the Downtown Core Area.
- 9.34. Retain rail corridor access to the Downtown Core Area to ensure the long-term potential for commuter and regular inter-city passenger rail service that terminates Downtown.

- 9.35. Work with industry and community partners to develop a seamless network of wireless broadband service throughout the Downtown Core Area.

## OFFICE SECTOR

- 9.36. Update the *Zoning Regulation Bylaw* to expand the capacity of the Downtown Core Area, particularly the Central Business District, to accommodate new office development, consistent with the policies contained in this Plan.

## RETAIL TRADE

- 9.37. Update the *Zoning Regulation Bylaw* to accommodate new residential space – and increase the local consumer base – within the Downtown Core Area, consistent with the policies of this plan.
- 9.38. Work with partners to improve the frequency of public transit and level of service between the Downtown Core Area and potential customers in the rest of the Region.
- 9.39. Continue to work with public and private sector partners to provide a free circulating shuttle transit in the Downtown Core Area.
- 9.40. Participate with the Downtown Victoria Business Association, the Greater Victoria Development Agency and business and community partners to develop and implement a Downtown Retail Strategy.

## TOURISM

- 9.41. Design and implement a comprehensive wayfinding system, that uses prominently displayed maps, clear and consistent signage and other mechanisms to make it easy for visitors to find attractions within and adjacent to Downtown.
- 9.42. Continue to update and expand the range of walking tours, including tours using wireless delivery mechanisms.
- 9.43. Work with business, community and agency partners to develop a broader range of attractions in the Downtown Core Area, including those that cater to families with children.
- 9.44. Continue to expand the capacity of the Victoria Conference Centre to attract convention business through ongoing marketing programs and facility improvements.
- 9.45. Ensure that new hotels are located at appropriate and strategic locations where they can serve to support tourism, convention business and retail activities within the Downtown Core Area.

## INDUSTRY

- 9.46. Continue to support the working Harbour and marine industrial and transportation uses, consistent with the direction set out in the City of *Victoria Harbour Plan*.
- 9.47. Plan, develop and implement, as an immediate priority, a local area plan and related strategy to transform the Rock Bay District as a green employment centre.

## CULTURAL VITALITY POLICIES AND ACTIONS

### ARTS AND CULTURE

- 9.48. Work with community partners to retain and enhance existing cultural facilities, including the Victoria Conservatory of Music, the Greater Victoria Regional Library, the Maritime Museum, the Royal BC Museum and others.
- 9.49. Continue to provide support to community organizations that provide diverse cultural programming in private and institutional facilities, throughout the Downtown Core Area.
- 9.50. Continue to maintain and upgrade the Royal Theatre and the McPherson Playhouse as primary civic performance halls.
- 9.51. Work with the Royal BC Museum to ensure that future expansion plans contribute a signature, architecturally harmonious presence to the Inner Harbour precinct, as well as modernized facilities and enhanced public viewing galleries.
- 9.52. Work with community partners and senior levels of government to explore the feasibility of establishing and accommodating a prominent cultural facility in the Downtown Core Area.

### EDUCATION AND LEARNING

- 9.53. Engage with community partners including post-secondary education providers to explore the feasibility of establishing new facilities and uses within the Downtown Core Area that provide a multitude of learning opportunities.
- 9.54. Work with School District 61 to retain existing school facilities and lands in areas immediately adjacent to the Downtown Core Area, and to monitor the need for a new elementary school as the residential population increases.
- 9.55. Work with existing private schools to maintain their presence in the Downtown Core Area.
- 9.56. Work with Greater Victoria Public Library partners to encourage and facilitate the relocation of the Central Library from Broughton Street to a more centralized downtown location.