



TOURISM PLAN 2021-2023



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Mayor's Message

Welcome to Burns Lake and the Lakes District! We are pleased to present the 2020 Burns Lake Tourism Plan.

Tourism is a key economic driver that diversifies the local economy by providing business opportunities and employment.

Our community offers outdoor recreation at your doorstep! Whether you are an avid mountain biker, trail enthusiast or someone who enjoys the outdoors, Burns Lake offers visitors an experience that is both adventurous and fun.

The picturesque landscapes makes Burns Lake a community that offers a small town experience that is both welcoming and enjoyable. Visitors continue to make the Lakes District a must stop in Northern British Columbia.

Dolores Funk, Mayor



VILLAGE OF BURNS LAKE TOURISM PLAN 2021-2023

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TOURISM PLAN INTRODUCTION

This three-year tourism plan was developed using an understanding of both the local tourism environment and global tourism trends, and is designed to be a practical and workable roadmap that can be easily implemented by the Village of Burns Lake

While the plan is intended to be realistic in acknowledging the challenges faced by the regional tourism industry, it is creative in recognizing tourism opportunities that can drive long-term, sustainable economic impact benefitting industry stakeholders and the local community.

In accordance with the requirements of the Village of Burns Lake, the plan remains at a strategic level, leaving development of detailed operational plans to the Village and its designates.

SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS



Photo: Margus Riga Photography

SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS STRENGTHS & OPPORTUNITIES

1. Outdoor Recreation

Hunting & fishing are already well established as activities in the region, and there is a very strong base of product to develop mountain biking, cross-country skiing, and potentially hiking. Future opportunity is significant, but dependent on **expanding existing infrastructure** to create revenue-generating tourism products and packaging.

2. Natural Landscapes

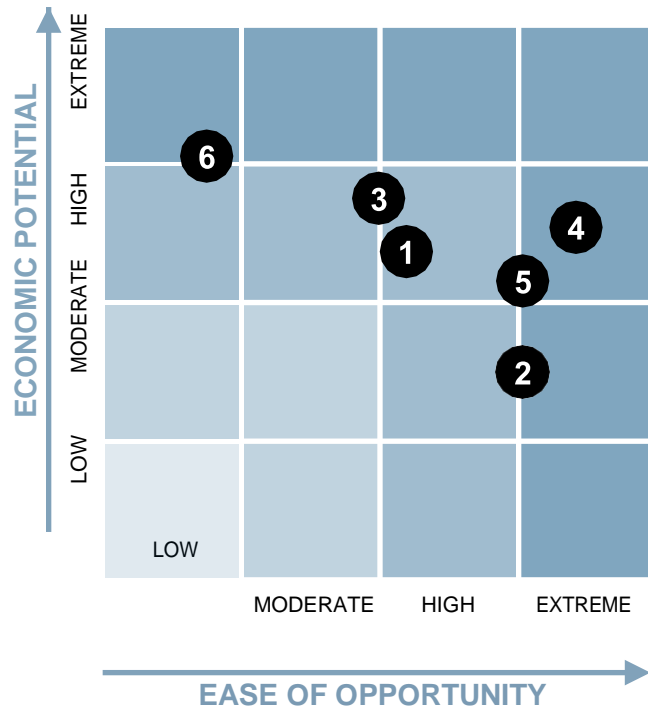
There is no question that the Burns Lake region offers outstanding natural environments, which is a great source of pride to locals and makes a great impression on visitors. There is an **economic opportunity** to build on the community's natural landscapes through a combination of effective marketing and investment in tourism access.

3. Post-Covid Travel

Burns Lake's visitors originate from BC and, to a lesser extent, Alberta. Post-Covid tourism includes regional travelers. Destinations that deliver compelling messages have the opportunity to attract repeat visitors to the area. Burns Lake has the opportunity to leverage a **"natural physical distanced"** alternative to larger populated tourism destinations.

4. Highway 16 Location

Burns Lake's **location** on a major regional artery is a **core tourism strength**, providing a built-in flow of traffic that includes visitors heading to or from Alaska. The opportunity is to leverage this in a way that Burns Lake becomes THE stop along the route, through a combination of effective marketing and disruptive/vibrant visuals that convert through-traffic.



5. Festival Development

There is a core of existing events and festivals that are run independently by passionate volunteers from special interest groups in the region. This provides an opportunity to both **leverage and support these events by creating festival marketing 'umbrellas'**, within which new and existing products can be developed and promoted.

6. Develop an "Icon"

There is currently no single iconic tourism product on Highway 16 between Prince George and Prince Rupert that is a 'must stop' for travellers. An icon product that utilizes the landscapes and ties to the local outdoor-oriented tourism brand (e.g. zipline, mountain coaster, gondola) **has the potential to make Burns Lake a 'guaranteed' stopping point** along the route, and generate multiple economic spin-offs for accommodation, food & beverage and other activity providers.

SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

CORE RISK ASSESSMENT

1. Lack of Leadership

Effective destination marketing requires both leadership and investment. There is currently a lack of clarity about who is responsible for this leadership, resulting in a disconnect between government and industry, a lack of tourism industry collaboration, and there being no established brand message or marketing strategy for the region.

2. Lack of Product

While there are outstanding outdoor recreation opportunities for visitors with their own knowledge and equipment, there appears to be a distinct lack of options for visitors looking to pay for tour operators, guided services, and rentals. Additionally there is an apparent weakness in road, lake and trail access, as well as a major lack of Indigenous tourism product.

3. Wayfinding & Vibrancy

It was universally agreed in stakeholder feedback that signage in Burns Lake does not meet basic visitor needs of directions for parking, information & activities. In addition, there is a lack of vibrancy that would offer visible reasons to stop, as well as a lack of amenities including food & beverage options — essential to leverage through traffic on a major highway.

4. Transport & Location

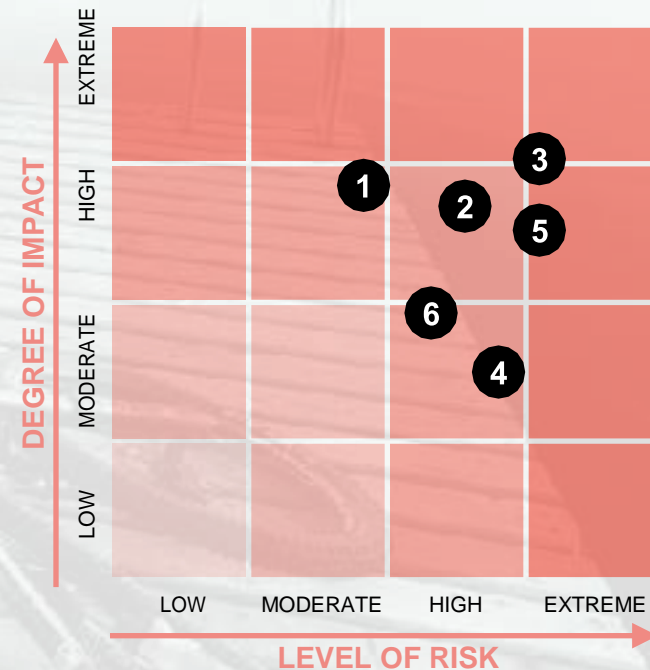
While Burns Lake does benefit from its location on a major highway, its location in Northern BC, together with a lack of established public transport infrastructure, makes it remote and somewhat inaccessible to visitors and potential visitors outside the immediate region, and anyone who isn't travelling in their own vehicle.

5. Marketing & Messaging

Burns Lake's remote location and low brand recognition mean marketing needs to offer a clear and compelling offering to the potential visitor, with alignment in messaging from all partners. Currently there is no clearly aligned messaging, and there are multiple sources of information providing somewhat conflicting and/or out of date information. While provision of in-person visitor information seems to be positive, digital marketing and social media are being under-utilized.

6. No buy-in from Locals

Local residents and businesses are an essential part of a tourism destination as they effectively become the 'product'. It is essential to gain buy-in, and help locals see the positive benefits of tourism as a well-managed economic driver that can bring revenues to the communities that lead to the development of new infrastructure and vibrancy that benefits locals. Businesses - especially visitor-oriented ones - should be engaged by leadership to share knowledge & see value.



SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS MARKET ASSESSMENT & OPPORTUNITY

CURRENT VISITOR

CURRENT VISITOR* IS REGIONAL SELF-DRIVE:

- 1) *BRITISH COLUMBIA (65%)*
- 2) *ALBERTA (12%)*
- 3) *USA - ALASKA-BOUND (6%)*

THE VISITOR IS FACED BY INCONSISTENT MARKETING, POOR WAYFINDING, A LACK OF VIBRANCY, AND A LACK OF CLEAR MESSAGE ABOUT WHAT THERE IS TO DO & HOW TO ENGAGE WITH THE COMMUNITY.**

*Destination BC 2014
**Stakeholder Interviews 2020



FUTURE VISITOR

IN A 3-5 YEAR POST-COVID TIME FRAME, THE VISITOR IS LIKELY TO BECOME **MORE** REGIONAL & INTER-PROVINCIAL:

- 1) *BRITISH COLUMBIA (76%)*
- 2) *ALBERTA (21%)*
- 3) *USA - ALASKA-BOUND (~2-4%)*

THE #1 OPPORTUNITY FOR VBL WILL BE TO SUCCESSFULLY ENGAGE WITH THE REGIONAL MARKET AND CREATE LONG-TERM REPEAT VISITATION.



FUTURE OPPORTUNITY

- TARGET BRITISH COLUMBIA & ALBERTA
- OFFER A CLEAR MESSAGE
- PROMOTE AN EXCITING EXPERIENCE
- MAKE IT EASY FOR THE VISITOR
- CREATE ITINERARIES (e.g. table on right)
- GENERATE LONGER STAYS
- DEVELOP THE EXPERIENCES

Sample format for creating itineraries that are easy-to-use for the visitor, and that inspire both stopping in VBL and expanding length of stay (strategic initiative #2.6):

1-HR VBL EXPERIENCE	4-HR VBL EXPERIENCE	24-HR VBL EXPERIENCE	3-DAY VBL EXPERIENCE
includes:	includes:	includes:	includes:
1)	1)	1)	1)
2)	2)	2)	2)
3)	3)	3)	3)
	4)	4)	4)
		5)	5)
			6)

FUTURE STRATEGY



FUTURE STRATEGY STRATEGIC INITIATIVES & OUTCOMES

STRATEGY#1:

BUILD AN EFFECTIVE & COLLABORATIVE BUSINESS-CENTRIC FRAMEWORK

OUTCOME:

VBL and region offers effective and dynamic tourism leadership, and provides a supportive framework within which Tourism Stakeholders can engage and collaborate successfully.

STRATEGY#2:

CREATE EFFECTIVE & ALIGNED MARKETING INITIATIVES & PROGRAMS

OUTCOME:

VBL is promoted via a simple, clear and easily understood message that resonates with potential visitors and is easy-to-adopt for stakeholders.

STRATEGY#3:

INVEST STRATEGICALLY IN PRODUCT & EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT

OUTCOME:

VBL and region develops tourism assets in alignment with short, medium and long-term plans based on potential for ROI, supported by a practical program of investment and attraction.

STRATEGY#4:

DRIVE REVENUE & PROFITS FOR TOURISM BUSINESSES

OUTCOME:

Recognize tourism as an economic driver. The goal of all marketing and tourism development will be to increase visitor spending. Invest in opportunities that provide the highest profits to the local economy.

FUTURE STRATEGY

STRATEGY#1: BUILD AN EFFECTIVE & COLLABORATIVE BUSINESS-CENTRIC FRAMEWORK

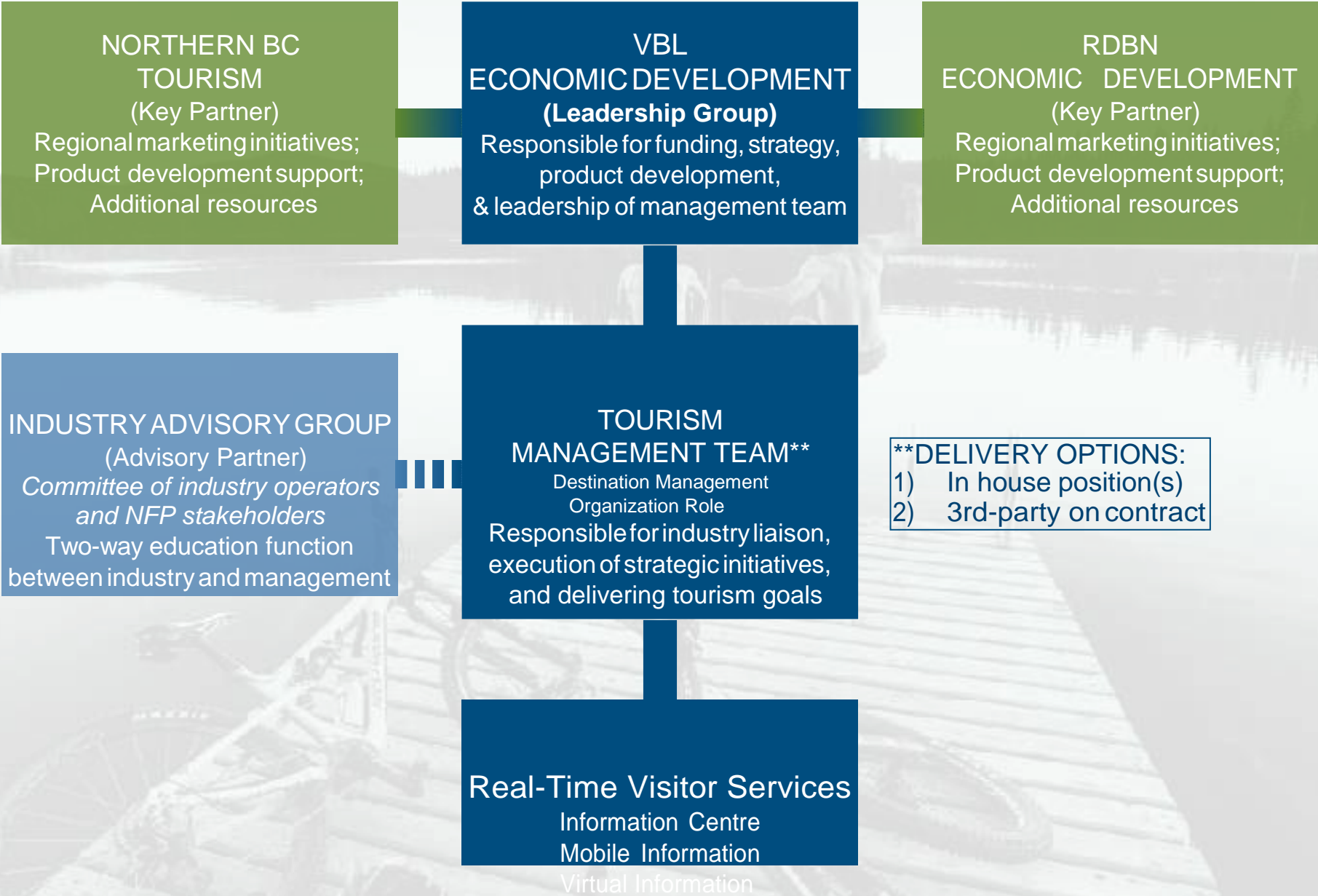
2023 Outcome: VBL and region offers effective and dynamic tourism leadership, and provides a supportive framework within which Tourism Stakeholders can engage and collaborate successfully.

- STRATEGIC PILLARS:**
- **MANAGE:** Create management structure to support and fund the tourism industry
 - **ENGAGE:** Engage stakeholder businesses in a meaningful way
 - **PROGRAM:** Provide programming to support industry
 - **RESEARCH:** Fully understand visitors to make informed product & marketing decisions

#	PILLAR	STRATEGIC INITIATIVE	OUTCOMES	TIMEFRAME
1.1	RESEARCH	Create statistics collection mechanism at hotels, campsites, VIC, Multiplex, Gas Stations, etc.	Create a baseline measurement: who is the VBL visitor? Where do they come from ? What do they do. Measure change based through time.	Q1 2021
1.2	ENGAGE	Create a Tourism Stakeholder Committee to engage stakeholders and help guide discussions.	Becomes the Industry Advisory Group as part of leadership structure. Two-way education liaison between industry and municipality.	Q1 2021
1.3	PROGRAM	Packaging & partnership workshops – help businesses make the visitor experience easy.	Create effective networking group between tourism businesses. Teach methods & benefits of packaging and provide promotional help.	Q1 2021
1.4	MANAGE	Memorandum of Understanding between VBL & RDBN that clarifies tourism relationships at region & municipal level.	Formalize working relationship between groups, clearly defining leadership & support structure for marketing and product development.	Q1 2021
1.5	MANAGE	Define clear tourism management and support structure for tourism in VBL & Region.	Refine or remodel recommended management structure and put in place. Launch to industry with communication of structure & benefits.	End 2020
1.6	MANAGE	Study of labour shortages, with potential for shared resources group.	Understand labour issues, including peaks and troughs of supply/demand, and work with industry to create recruitment & sharing scheme.	End Q3 2021
1.7	MANAGE	Assign budget and/or create sustainable funding mechanism to support tourism management in VBL.	Several funding models may be considered including tax-based, pay-to-play, etc. Long-term sustainability is essential.	End 2021
1.8	MANAGE	Fixed multi-year support for new and innovative private-sector product experiences.	Find and/or create funding or in-kind support mechanism for new experience development and implement in line with Strategy#4.	End 2021

FUTURE STRATEGY

STRATEGY#1: RECOMMENDED MANAGEMENT & DELIVERY STRUCTURE



FUTURE STRATEGY

STRATEGY#2: CREATE EFFECTIVE & ALIGNED MARKETING INITIATIVES & PROGRAMS






2023 Outcome: VBL is promoted via a simple, clear and easily understood message that resonates with potential visitors and is easy-to-adopt for stakeholders.

- STRATEGIC PILLARS:**
- **ALIGNMENT:** *Align industry behind comprehensive marketing plan*
 - **CLARITY:** *Simple, clear messaging for all stakeholders to adopt*
 - **PACKAGING:** *Make it easy for the visitor by providing aligned experiences*
 - **PROMOTION:** *Cost-effective marketing*

#	PILLAR	STRATEGIC INITIATIVE	OUTCOMES	TIMEFRAME
2.1	PACKAGING	Proactively create circle tour itineraries – find natural partners to cross-promote.	Make it easy for potential visitors by creating multi-day drive itineraries that include VBL plus other logical destinations on drive routes.	Q2 2021
2.2	PROMOTION	Adopt digital marketing strategy and replace full printed visitor guide with 1) online download, and 2) rackable 4x9 digest size leaflet.	Switch to most cost-effect marketing model and eliminate full visitor guide. Redirect funds to digital marketing. Print only rack cards.	Q1 2021
2.3	ALIGNMENT	Develop Comprehensive Marketing Plan for VBL & Region.	Create annual marketing plan template including measurable goals, strategies and tactics based on factual data.	End 2020
2.4	CLARITY	Agree on and develop messaging for the (max three) clear reason(s) to stop in VBL.	Create reasons to stop in VBL that will resonate with potential visitor. Leverage current mood (eg NATURAL SOCIAL DISTANCING).	Q2 2021
2.5	CLARITY	Create simple & aligned marketing message with easy access to verbiage & assets for partners.	Work with advisory group to create a series of messages that can easily be adopted by all businesses. Give to them in digital form.	Q2 2021
2.6	PACKAGING	Create and publish one-hour, four-hour and 24-hour itineraries with packaged products.	Make it easy for the visitor by telling them what to do, and try to upsell (1 4 hours etc). Create simple marketing around these (eg Billboard).	Q3 2021
2.7	PACKAGING	Facilitate formalized product/packaging partnerships with wilderness products (including high-end lodges).	All about upselling the regional experience - how do we get visitors to spend more time and money in the region by making it easy for them?	End 2021

FUTURE STRATEGY

STRATEGY#2: TOURISM BRANDING ELEMENTS

LOGO	VBL Council Approved 
TOURISM APPLICATION	Keep Synergy with Elements  Tagline: Carve Your Path
COLOUR PALLETTE	 Green R82 G133 B85 C63 M17 Y74 K25  Blue 1 R31 G136 B158 C82 M32 Y31 K2  Blue 2 R4 G158 B90 C78 M20 Y18 K2
CORE MESSAGE	To be developed by end 2020 (Strategic Initiative 2.5): —30-word message —100-word story

FUTURE STRATEGY

STRATEGY#3: INVEST STRATEGICALLY IN PRODUCT & EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT

2023 Outcome: VBL and region develops tourism assets in alignment with short, medium and long-term plans based on potential for ROI, supported by a practical program of investment and attraction

STRATEGIC SUPPORT: *Create support mechanism to help businesses/organizations*

- PILLARS:**
- **VIBRANCY:** *Ensure VBL offers a visually vibrant experience to attract traffic*
 - **MAJOR/ICON:** *Explore potential to develop major tourism infrastructure*
 - **INDIGENOUS:** *Recognize future potential for partnership with Indigenous experiences*

#	PILLAR	STRATEGIC INITIATIVE	OUTCOMES	TIMEFRAME
3.1	VIBRANCY	Second Tourism Centre by the beach with focus on providing both information and vibrancy.	Immediate opportunity to add to the visitor experience — providing it is feasible to manage and meet Covid protocols.	Summer 2021
3.2	MAJOR/ICON	Work with a hotel to leverage post-Covid grants to secure funding for development of pool/waterslide.	Hotel waterslides are an essential product when trying to position VBL to the family market for through traffic.	Q2 2021
3.3	SUPPORT	Meet with each product association to determine their individual 2030 vision for product.	Understand vision of local associations (eg mountain biking) and collectively brainstorm future potential if there were no restrictions.	End Q2 2021
3.4	VIBRANCY	Create 'disruptive' beautification scheme, and enforce bylaws to keep town & beaches clean/vibrant.	Essential for the future development of tourism in VBL - need to offer a tourism ICON that has instant visual appeal, and is ideally 'different'.	End Q2 2021
3.5	MAJOR/ICON	Develop 10-year Product 10-Yr 'Best Case' Development Plan, including clear Unique Selling Proposition.	Long-term plan for product development that can be invested in by the community, or used as part of an investment attraction prospectus.	End 2021
3.6	VIBRANCY	Effective wayfinding plan in alignment with brand (25 things to do... 25 minutes to decide...).	Essential for the future development of tourism in VBL - need to offer easy-to-use, on-brand and visually attractive wayfinding.	End 2021
3.7	VIBRANCY	Traffic plan that includes easy parking and signage specific to RVs.	Create signage and parking spaces specific to trailers and RVs that allow for simple turning of vehicles.	End 2021

STRATEGY #4 (continued...)

#	PILLAR	STRATEGIC INITIATIVE	OUTCOMES	TIMEFRAME
3.8	SUPPORT	McBride-style contracts between VBL and product associations on how they help to reach goal.	Clear and concise agreements between municipality and associations that detail collective visions and how to partner.	End 2021
3.9	MAJOR/ICON	Commission tourism opportunities study and publish a Tourism Opportunities and Investment Prospectus.	Prospectus based 10-year product development plan.	End 2021
3.10	SUPPORT	If VBL & Region are serious about mountain biking as a tourism asset, find \$15-20K for paid crew to maintain trails.	If mountain biking is to become a core pillar of marketing, municipality should work with biking association to develop trail maintenance plan.	End 2022
3.11	VIBRANCY	Get CN to improve visuals around railroad.	Multi-year plan to improve vibrancy.	End 2022
3.12	VIBRANCY	Find sustainable mechanism to increase Food & Beverage offering; with at least one anchor (eg Brew Pub).	Prospectus based on 10-year product development plan.	End 2022
3.13	SUPPORT	Mechanism to assist product associations in bringing their 2030 visions to life.	Clear and concise agreements between municipality and associations that detail collective visions and how to partner.	Target 2025-2030
3.14	MAJOR/ICON	Major icon development to give Burns Lake a unique selling proposition.	Consider potential to build/attract major icon that can generate major spin-off cross-sector business development.	Target 2025-2030
3.15	MAJOR/ICON	Major expansion of existing infrastructure to create visible and easy-to-use products.	Predominantly access (trails, roads, lakefront).	Target 2025-2030
3.16	MAJOR/ICON	Effective transportation infrastructure. Make it easy to come to and move around region.	Review initiatives including public transportation by air, train and road.	Target 2025-2030
3.17	INDIGENOUS	Recognize potential opportunity for future partnership with Indigenous Tourism products led by local First Nations.	Be open to long-term product and marketing partnerships with Indigenous products that are differentiated from other areas in the region.	Ongoing

FUTURE STRATEGY

STRATEGY#4: DRIVE REVENUE & PROFITS FOR TOURISM BUSINESSES

2023 Outcome: Recognize tourism as an economic driver. The goal of all marketing and tourism development will be to increase visitor spending. Invest in opportunities that provide the highest profits to the local economy.

- STRATEGIC PILLARS:**
- **MINDSET:** *Change the perception of tourism to be seen as an Economic Driver*
 - **TARGET:** *Strategically target immediate and/or 'low-hanging' revenue opportunities*
 - **FESTIVALS:** *Develop and operate a festival strategy that promotes tourism assets within targeted 'seasons', within which operators can offer aligned product*

#	PILLAR	STRATEGIC INITIATIVE	OUTCOMES	TIMEFRAME
4.1	TARGET	This summer is an opportunity to seize – BC residents are staying and exploring BC.	See Covid recovery notes. There is an excellent opportunity to attract new regional visitors and convert them into repeat visitors.	Summer 2021
4.2	TARGET	Target pipeline workers in post-Covid recovery for off-shift activities, VFR and long-term attraction.	400-600 pipeline workers in the region for the next 12-24 months. Need to implement strategies to turn them into tourists.	Q2 2021
4.3	FESTIVALS	Assign central 'ownership' of 2-year events calendar to be kept up to date on tourism website.	Part of an overall alignment strategy to ensure that ALL events are easy to find for the visitor with accurate dates 18-24 months ahead.	Q3 2021
4.4	FESTIVALS	Promote grant-writing role within VBL to support bona fide festival organizers.	Provide grant-writing support to festival organizers so that volunteers can focus on organization rather than administration.	Q1 2021
4.5	MINDSET	Change the mindset in all tourism discussions to "How does this drive dollars".	Educate the community that tourism IS a major economic driver, and change mindset away from FREE experiences to REVENUE DRIVERS.	Q2 2021
4.6	MINDSET	VBL Needs to set goals & provide tools to Economic Development to drive return from Tourism.	Municipality to show commitment to tourism being an economic driver by providing necessary supports to Economic Development.	End 2021
4.7	FESTIVALS	Develop 4-season Umbrella Festival Strategy – (eg month-long festival but individuals manage the events).	Develop major festival strategy based on product 'umbrellas'. Encourage event development by providing marketing.	End Q3 2021
4.8	FESTIVALS	Leadership role around events to be defined as core element of plan (even if just grant writing).	Establish formal administrative support role for festivals within the municipality.	End Q3 2021

FUTURE STRATEGY MEASUREMENTS OF SUCCESS

STRATEGY	MEASUREMENT	DEC 2021	DEC 2022	DEC 2023
STRATEGY#1 (FRAMEWORK)	PARTICIPATION INDEX % of eligible businesses engaged through tourism initiatives	Advisory group active & meeting regularly	60% of eligible businesses engaged	80% of eligible businesses engaged
STRATEGY#1 (FRAMEWORK)	SATISFACTION INDEX Annual survey of local businesses	Create Annual Baseline Survey	65% POSITIVE response from tourism business	85% POSITIVE response from tourism business
STRATEGY#2 (MARKETING)	HOTEL OCCUPANCY/REVPAR Increase in hotel Revenue Per Available room	Create Baseline >50% vs. 2020	>50% vs. 2021	>100% vs. 2021
STRATEGY#2 (MARKETING)	WEB TRAFFIC Increase in unique page views from target markets	Create Baseline >50% vs. 2020	>100% vs. 2021	>400% vs. 2021
STRATEGY#2 (MARKETING)	SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT Increase in social media interactions	Create Baseline >50% vs. 2020	>200% vs. 2021	>400% vs. 2021
STRATEGY#2 (MARKETING)	MARKETING CONVERSION/SALES Measurable DIRECT impact of tourism marketing initiatives	Measurable ROI >1:1 in reported \$\$ earned	Measurable ROI >5:1 in reported \$\$ earned	Measurable ROI >10:1 in reported \$\$ earned
STRATEGY#3 (EXPERIENCES)	INCREASE TOURISM EXPERIENCES Measure growth in number of marketable experiences	Increase of >3 market-ready experiences	Increase visitor capacity of experiences >25%	Increase visitor capacity of experiences >50%
STRATEGY#3 (EXPERIENCES)	DEVELOPMENT PLAN GOALS Vibrancy, Wayfinding and Major Experience Development	Meet Target	Meet Target	Meet Target
STRATEGY#4 (REVENUE)	ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE INDEX INDIRECT impact of tourism marketing on overall economy	Create Baseline Performance Index	>25% growth vs. 2021	>50% growth vs. 2021