

5-YEAR DESTINATION STRATEGY

TOURISM NANAIMO &
THE NANAIMO HOSPITALITY ASSOCIATION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

STORMY
LAKE
CONSULTING



Nanaimo 5-Year Destination Development

To be successful as a tourism destination, we must face some difficult truths head-on. Despite all we have going for us, we're not hitting the mark as a tourism hotspot or as a city that its own residents fully embrace. We've been stuck in neutral for too long. We're not collaborating effectively and our disjointed approach to development is holding us back.

This Destination Development Plan embraces and celebrates the real Nanaimo. We are a good place to visit with pockets of cool character. Still, we lack tourism self-confidence.

We have a long, magical shoreline and an abundance of parks, trails, and beaches, yet our out-of-market perceptions are rooted in the negative attributes. Our visitors often see a Nanaimo that is somewhat gritty and unvarnished. But this is the real Nanaimo and one that we do not need to shy away from. It makes us honest rather than shallow.

While we have an energetic and culturally rich community, we have not fully realized our relationships with the Snuneymuxw First Nation – the first people to welcome visitors on their lands.

We won't successfully develop tourism by trying to be someone we are not, but by leaning into who we are. The real Nanaimo and the real people of Nanaimo.

What we need to do:

- Be a strong ally – with our most important partner, the Snuneymuxw First Nation, and with our own community.
- Embrace and build out the real Nanaimo.
- Ensure we are better together.
- Elevate the destination – in others' minds and in our own.

By 2030, our vision is to have a top-of-mind, year-round destination on Vancouver Island. Known for our bold, colorful, active and immersive experiences, visitors come to indulge in the real Nanaimo – in our unparalleled nature and culture, in our grittiness and our quirky personality. They feel excited, welcome, and safe to explore our place.

Our three intention:

1. We will be a strong ally for our residents and partners, particularly the Snuneymuxw First Nation.

2. We will be guided by the principles of sustainability and DEIA as we authentically showcase and encourage people to visit the real, unique Nanaimo.
3. We will only support tourism that is for the benefit of our community

Our goals

- Enhance and diversify Nanaimo's tourism offerings to create a unique visitor experience that captures the essence of the city and its surroundings.
- Transform Nanaimo into a leading accessible tourism destination and a premier hub for sports tourism by 2030.
- Strengthen industry collaboration and align tourism development initiatives across all sectors to enhance our competitive edge as a tourism destination by 2030.
- Elevate the brand visibility and recognition of Nanaimo as a vibrant cultural hub and premier destination for meetings and events by 2030.
- Establish Nanaimo as a model city for inclusivity and support in tourism, fostering strong partnerships and community cohesion by 2030.

Nanaimo 5-Year Destination Development

Build out the real Nanaimo

Product and experience development

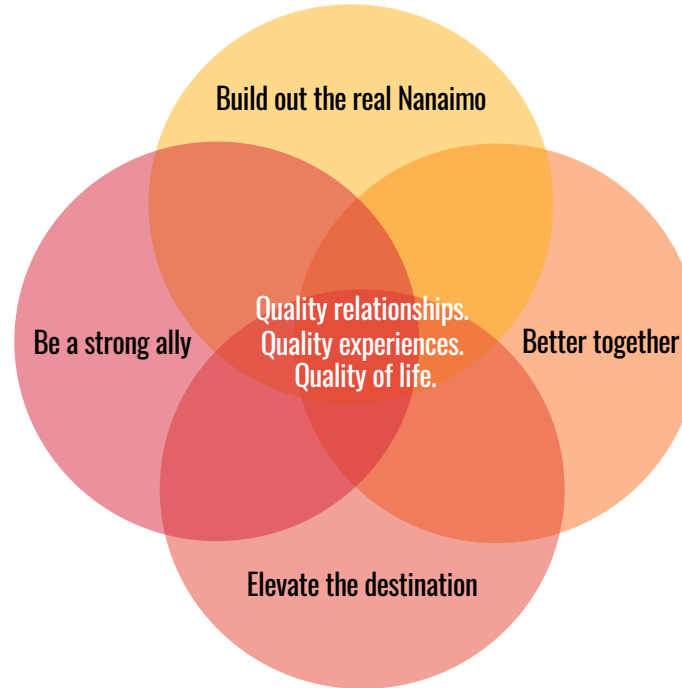
- Develop tourism itineraries supporting multi-day visits
- Encourage the growth of the accommodations sector
- Improve destination accessibility

Be a strong ally

A culture of inclusivity, equality, and support

- Solidify relationships with the Snuneymuxw First Nation
- Grow the number of accessible and inclusive experiences
- Invest in community engagement

Across every strategic area, we will practice sustainability, advance diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility, engage our residents, and make data-driven decisions.



Better together

Industry alignment, collaboration, and connecting the dots

- Create strong connections within the tourism industry
- Build industry capacity and expertise
- Advocate for tourism infrastructure

Elevate the destination

Branding and marketing

- Build the Nanaimo destination brand
- Increase awareness in regional markets
- Enhance Nanaimo as a meetings and events destination
- Grow the capacity for Sports Tourism
- Improve destination wayfinding

Our target visitor: We will target a visitor who appreciates active outdoor and cultural experiences – well matched to the best of what Nanaimo offers – and grow this market year-round.