

REIMAGINE PARKSVILLE DOWNTOWN

PARKSVILLE DOWNTOWN BUSINESS
ASSOCIATION

We gratefully acknowledge the support of the **Government of British Columbia** and the **Ministry of Jobs, Economic Development and Innovation** through the **Rural Economic Diversification and Infrastructure Program (REDIP)**. This funding played a vital role in supporting the development of this report and the broader *Imagine Parksville Downtown* initiative. The REDIP program has enabled us to engage deeply with our community, explore opportunities for long-term economic resilience, and chart a course toward a more vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable downtown.



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ABOUT THE PROJECT

Parksville Downtown plays a vital role in the city's economy, community life, and identity. What began as a small service centre along the Old Island Highway in a farming community has grown into the heart of a city known for its lifestyle and tourism appeal.

But decisions shaped by outdated urban design have left downtown falling short of its full potential. Recognizing the need to reimagine its future—to strengthen its role while staying true to the community's identity—the Parksville Downtown Business Association (PDBA) launched the Reimagine Parksville Downtown project in 2024.

The project was supported by the Government of British Columbia's Rural Economic Diversification and Infrastructure Program (REDIP) and led by William Bakker of DAAR Place Consulting. DAAR previously led the strategic tourism development project for the Parksville Qualicum Beach region and brings deep local insight to this work.

This reimagining isn't a one-time initiative. It's a sustained, collaborative process—building momentum through early wins, strengthening partnerships, and steadily creating a downtown that serves, inspires, and reflects the evolving needs of the Parksville community.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Parksville Downtown is at a pivotal moment. Long valued for its small-town charm, seaside beauty, and essential services, downtown now faces a critical opportunity to evolve—to better meet the needs of a growing population, an expanding visitor economy, and an increasingly diverse community.

Through extensive community and stakeholder engagement, combined with strategic analysis, this project uncovered both challenges and opportunities for downtown's future. Residents, businesses, developers, and government representatives all recognized that while downtown continues to meet many day-to-day needs, it must become more vibrant, connected, and dynamic to thrive long term.

Building on Parksville's deep community pride and distinctive sense of place, a shared vision has been developed: a vibrant coastal hub where small-town life, creativity and connection come together—anchored in the traditions and stewardship of the Qualicum and Snaw-Naw-As First Nations.

Achieving this vision will not be the result of a single project or investment. It will require a sustained, collaborative effort—built on early momentum, pilot initiatives, partnership across sectors, and a commitment to learning and adaptation.

Five strategic directions have been identified to guide action:

1. Create Vibrant, Inclusive Public Spaces
2. Strengthen Downtown's Business Ecosystem
3. Enhance Downtown's Identity and Appeal
4. Improve Downtown Accessibility and Connection
5. Foster a Strong Downtown Community

Each strategic direction is supported by tactical actions designed to create visible progress, rally support, and steadily build the downtown Parksville the community envisions.

The Parksville Downtown Business Association (PDBA) will play a critical leadership role—not by owning every action, but by championing the strategy, rallying stakeholders and rightsholders, and driving collective momentum forward.

Downtown revitalization will be a journey, not a quick fix. But with shared vision, steady leadership, and a commitment to working together, Parksville Downtown can evolve into a place that not only serves, but inspires—today and for generations to come.

PART 1: SiTUATiON ANALYSiS



ABOUT DOWNTOWN PARKSVILLE

Parksville Downtown sits on the east coast of Vancouver Island, surrounded by natural beauty, a mild climate, and iconic beaches. While it continues to provide essential services, it is evolving to meet the needs of a changing population and a growing visitor economy.

Today, it offers a mix of local shops, restaurants, and service providers that reflect both its historical roots and future potential.

Parksville Downtown is defined by the ocean to the north, McMillan and McVickers Streets to the east and west, and Jensen Avenue to the south. Highway 19A separates the Community Park and waterfront tourism area from the area east of the highway, where most commercial activity takes place. For the purpose of this document, we refer to this area as Upper Downtown.

POPULATION, DEMOGRAPHICS, AND LIVABILITY TRENDS

Population and Demographics

Parksville has grown steadily, with an increase of nearly 4,000 residents since 2006. As of 2023, BC Stats estimated the population at 14,499, with another 4,000 expected over the next 20 years—much of it in and around the downtown core.

The population continues to skew older. While there is optimism about attracting more young adults—and encouraging those raised in Parksville to stay—projections suggest otherwise. Despite a projected increase of 1,500 people aged 22 to 60 over the next two decades, the number of residents aged 81 and over is expected to grow by 2,000.

Projections from BC Stats, which incorporate economic migration, employment trends, building permits, community plans, and housing data, indicate that population growth will be concentrated among older age groups.

Livability and Quality of Life

Parksville consistently ranks well for quality of life. In The Globe and Mail's 2024 analysis of Canada's most livable cities, Parksville placed 65th out of 439. It scored high for retirees, young professionals, and people in mid-life transitions. The ranking looked at 43 variables across 10 categories, including economy, housing, and health care. For

retirees, strong community connections, accessible health care, and leisure options stood out. For newcomers, affordability, essential amenities, and a welcoming atmosphere were key.

Parksville also ranks well for economic resilience. In BC Business magazine's 2024 ranking, it placed 21st overall—down from 3rd in 2023. It remained strong in housing metrics, ranking 2nd in residential sales and 13th in housing starts per 10,000 residents. These results reflect the city's ongoing growth. However, social indicators saw declines, with a drop in residents' sense of belonging (from 9th to 49th) and in rental vacancy rates (from 9th to 22nd). While Parksville shows strength in housing development, the dip in social connectedness and rental availability points to challenges that must be addressed as the community continues to grow.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

A broad range of individuals and organizations was engaged throughout the discovery phase.

Foundational input came from a 2023 project led by the same consultant for the Parkville Qualicum Beach Tourism Association, which featured comprehensive stakeholder engagement including a resident survey. This earlier work provided important insights for the downtown revitalization strategy.

For this project, a business survey, workshops, focus groups, interviews, and an open house at Memorial Place were held in October 2024.

Engagement efforts included the downtown business community, representatives from city government, property developers, building owners, Parkville residents, members of the arts community, the history and heritage community, the tourism industry, and members of marginalized communities.

Following the completion of the situation analysis and the development of a strategic framework, participants were invited to return for a co-creation workshop in January 2025.

RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT

INSIGHTS

The following section summarizes insights gathered from residents during engagement.

Overall Resident Perspectives

Engagement with Parksville residents confirmed that downtown meets their current basic needs. Most residents visit for essential shopping, dining, and services, expressing overall satisfaction with the area. However, they also see significant opportunities to make downtown more vibrant, connected, and welcoming for a broader range of people.

Residents identified a desire for more unique retail and dining options, vibrant gathering spaces, and increased evening and nightlife activities. They raised concerns about aging building facades, poor pedestrian connection between downtown and the beach area, and safety issues around Memorial Plaza and nearby spaces.

Opportunities exist to modernize downtown with a refreshed, seaside-inspired identity and leverage Community Park as a central draw, and improve pedestrian infrastructure to create a livelier, walkable environment. Residents value Parksville's small-town charm and history, but recognize the need to evolve in ways that attract younger residents and visitors, without losing the community's distinctive character.

Arts Community Insights

The arts community emphasized the lack of dedicated spaces for cultural events and programming. Opportunities include better cooperation between the arts sector, businesses, and city leadership,

designating an official arts district, activating public spaces like Memorial Plaza with performances and installations, and showcasing Parksville's natural and cultural "hidden treasures" through public art and creative way-finding. There is strong support for strengthening downtown's creative identity while preserving its welcoming, small-town atmosphere.

History and Heritage Community Insights

Those involved in history and heritage expressed a desire to better integrate Parksville's rich past into its future. They highlighted the need for more accurate and engaging signage, and stronger inclusion of First Nations' history and culture. Opportunities include creating a historical walking tour, reviving community traditions, and designing downtown spaces that honour Parksville's evolution from a farming and tourism community into a modern destination.

Accessibility and Marginalized Groups Insights

Accessibility advocates and members of marginalized communities pointed out gaps in infrastructure, inclusion, and representation. They stressed the need for more accessible sidewalks and buildings, greater visibility of Indigenous culture, and public spaces that reflect diversity through art and community programming. They also highlighted the opportunity to position Parksville as a welcoming small city that honours its natural beauty and heritage.



BUSINESS, DEVELOPERS, TOURISM, AND GOVERNMENT INSIGHTS

In contrast, this section outlines perspectives from business, government officials, and tourism leaders.

Perspectives on Parksville Downtown

Engagement with the business community, property developers, tourism leaders, and government representatives revealed common perspectives on the future of Parksville Downtown.

Downtown is generally working well for most businesses today. Stakeholders expressed satisfaction with the performance of their operations. Many of the downtown revitalization strategies developed in 2006 have been implemented, contributing to the area's current strengths. However, these efforts have not fully achieved their broader objectives. There is broad recognition that downtown must better align with the evolving needs of residents, visitors, and emerging market segments. Strengthening downtown's vibrancy, diversity, and year-round appeal was seen as important to Parksville's long-term economic resilience.

Current Challenges

Businesses reported challenges related to parking, limited customer traffic outside of peak periods, constrained spending patterns among the core resident base, and a lack of evening vibrancy. Developers and property owners identified barriers, including aging buildings, restrictive zoning and permitting processes, and high infrastructure costs that make redevelopment difficult.

Competition from larger retail centres in nearby communities, limited turnover of downtown retail

spaces, and conservative attitudes toward change among residents were also seen as obstacles.

Tourism leaders emphasized the importance of a vibrant downtown to support the visitor experience, especially during off-peak seasons.

Several members highlighted the need for improved infrastructure, enhanced walkability, and upgraded public amenities.

Opportunities for the Future

Stakeholders identified several opportunities to reposition Parksville Downtown as a more dynamic and attractive place for residents, visitors, and investors. These include encouraging mixed-use developments that blend residential and commercial uses, creating specific areas for health, wellness, and services, and developing distinct downtown districts that integrate Parksville's seaside character with modern amenities.

Enhancing public spaces, strengthening the connection between downtown and the waterfront, and investing in beautification and pedestrian infrastructure were also seen as important steps to increase downtown's competitiveness and livability.

Shared Priorities

Despite varied perspectives, there is strong alignment on one central goal: maintaining Parksville's natural beauty and small-town charm while thoughtfully embracing the change needed to build a stronger, more resilient downtown economy.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

CONCLUSIONS

Engagement with residents, businesses, developers, tourism leaders, and government representatives revealed several common priorities for Parksville Downtown.

Stakeholders consistently emphasized the importance of creating a more vibrant, active downtown that supports both residents and visitors year-round.

Strengthening the connection between the waterfront and downtown, improving public spaces and pedestrian infrastructure, enhancing safety and accessibility, and diversifying downtown retail, dining, and cultural offerings were all seen as critical steps. There was strong support for

preserving Parksville's small-town charm while introducing new amenities and experiences that reflect the community's evolving needs and aspirations.

The following SOAR analysis summarizes the community's strengths, opportunities, aspirations, and envisioned results for Parksville Downtown.

STRENGTHS	OPPORTUNITiES	ASPiRATIONS	RESULTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Natural setting and small-town charm• Strong sense of community pride• Connection to beaches, parks, and outdoor recreation• Established business and tourism foundation to build on	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fill gaps in nightlife, entertainment, and create unique retail offerings• Strengthen walkability, public spaces, accessibility and safety• Create a more attractive, vibrant, inclusive, welcoming downtown experience• Support creative industries and younger demographics	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create a vibrant, welcoming centre that reflects Parksville's identity• Maintain small-town feel while offering new amenities• Foster sustainable, year-round growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Downtown becomes a true year-round community gathering place• Strengthened local economy and more vibrant public spaces• A connected, active downtown that celebrates Parksville's unique character

STRATEGiC ASSESSMENT OF PARKSViLLE DOWNTOWN

In addition to community engagement, a professional assessment of Upper Downtown Parksville was conducted based on fieldwork, research, and experience with comparable downtown transformation efforts. This assessment was guided by two well-established frameworks: the Project for Public Spaces' placemaking principles, and Destination Development International's destination development criteria. Together, these provided a lens to evaluate how downtown functions as both a community space and a visitor destination.

The assessment identifies existing strengths that can be leveraged and key challenges that must be addressed to support downtown's continued evolution. These findings are intended to complement—rather than replace—the insights gathered through community and stakeholder engagement.

Appendix B offers a relevant case study from Chilliwack, BC frequently mentioned throughout the project, that demonstrates how strategic land use, design, and partnership can catalyze downtown transformation.

STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT OF PARKSVILLE DOWNTOWN

Current Strengths and Advantages

Upper Downtown Parksville has a strong foundation to build on. Several existing strengths create momentum for future revitalization:

- **Strong foundational assets:** The downtown area is clean, largely well-maintained, and free from significant derelict buildings with few vacant lots. Existing businesses provide an important base of activity and interest.
- **Desirable location:** Parksville's high quality of life, mild climate, and proximity to beaches, parks, and outdoor recreation continue to attract residents and visitors. The city's established tourism appeal can bring consistent foot traffic into the area.
- **Evolving and engaged community:** Parksville's growing and slowly diversifying population, combined with generational differences are bringing new expectations for vibrancy, culture, and entertainment. Residents demonstrate strong community pride and a desire for a downtown that reflects their evolving needs.
- **Proximity to a major anchor:** Community Park, located adjacent to Upper Downtown, is one of Parksville's most valuable assets. Strengthening the connection between the park and the downtown area offers significant potential to draw more people into the heart of the city.

Key Challenges and Barriers

While Upper Downtown Parksville has a strong foundation, several gaps and barriers limit its ability to reach its full potential. Addressing these areas will be critical to meet community aspirations:

- **Lack of a clear sense of place:** The Upper Downtown area does not strongly reflect Parksville's unique character, history, or natural surroundings. Few landmarks, limited architectural interest, and minimal visible storytelling create a generic experience that lacks distinction.
- **Fragmented public spaces:** Although functional, public spaces do not consistently invite people to stay, gather, or explore. Green space is limited, seating is basic, and key amenities such as public washrooms and shaded rest areas are missing.
- **Dispersed and service-oriented retail environment:** While Upper Downtown hosts a range of businesses, many are service-oriented rather than destination-retail- or experience-retail driven. The area lacks a critical mass of shops, restaurants, and attractions needed to create a vibrant, destination-worthy experience. There are no clear anchor experiences or complementary business clusters. Retail operating hours often do not fully align with the needs of visitors or residents.
- **Weak visual identity and arrival experience:** Downtown lacks a welcoming first impression,



New downtown resident developments



Community park serves as a strong anchor



Community pride and engagement

engaging signage, and a unified streetscape. Visual appeal is modest, and curb appeal does not consistently draw people in or encourage exploration.

- **Limited integration and connection with Upper Downtown:** Physical barriers such as Highway 19A, surface parking lots, and inconsistent building patterns fragment the downtown. Way-finding and active transportation connections have gaps, making it harder for people to navigate the area naturally.



Weak visual appeal



Limited convenient seating



Few green spaces and limited curb appeal



Challenging connections to Community Park



Largely service oriented businesses



Small and few district signs

FREQUENTLY DISCUSSED TOPICS

Balancing Parking and Placemaking

Parking is a debated issue in Parksville. Many businesses—and some residents—see a lack of parking as a key contributor to downtown's challenges. Others argue that downtown's car-centric design is itself a barrier to creating the kind of vibrant, walkable place the community aspires to.

Both perspectives are valid. For businesses that rely on convenience and quick access, concerns about losing parking are real and understandable.

Downtown today functions largely as a purpose-driven destination, where visitors arrive by car, complete a specific task, and leave. Maintaining accessibility is important for economic health.

At the same time, the community's vision for downtown is broader: a downtown that invites people to linger, explore, and gather. From a contemporary urban design perspective, surface parking lots are known to disrupt walkability, weaken the visual appeal of streetscapes, and break the flow between businesses.

"A rough estimate suggests that around 15% of downtown land is currently dedicated to surface area parking—rising to about 25% in the Upper Downtown area. While not unusual for small communities, this land use pattern has significant implications for downtown's cohesion and character.

Other communities facing similar challenges have

seen success by rethinking how parking is integrated into downtown areas—balancing the need for accessibility with the creation of more attractive, people-focused public spaces.

A dedicated parking study is recommended. However, it should move beyond simply assessing the number of stalls. The goal should be to understand how parking can best support downtown's evolving role as both a place of commerce and a place of community life. Solutions should balance access for businesses with the need to create a vibrant, connected, and welcoming downtown experience.

Reframing the Highway 19A Conversation

Highway 19A remains one of the most significant barriers to downtown Parksville's cohesion and vibrancy. For decades, it has disrupted the connection between the waterfront and the downtown core—undermining walkability, limiting public use, and weakening the area's potential as a unified destination. As far back as 1999, resident workshops raised concerns about the highway's negative effect. By 2012, 70% of participants in a community engagement initiative supported traffic calming measures along this stretch.

Today, the issues are still clear: Highway 19A is noisy, difficult to cross, and physically intimidating for pedestrians. Sidewalks are narrow and uninviting.

"The problem is that the city doesn't think we have a parking issue."

—PDBA Member Workshop

"I really wish the city got over its fascination with parking lots..."

—Resident Focus Group



Transportation and safety challenges along Highway 19A

Crosswalks are limited. The highway disrupts the natural flow between the waterfront and downtown, limiting the area's potential to become a cohesive, vibrant destination.

The challenge isn't recognizing the issue—it's reaching consensus on how to solve it. Solutions proposed over the years have met resistance, not because the impact is in question, but because of differing views about the right balance between vehicle access and pedestrian-friendly design.

Addressing Highway 19A's role in shaping downtown's future will require leadership with a clear and deliberate process. As the City updates its Transportation Master Plan, this section of the highway must be reconsidered not simply as a transportation corridor, but as a key element of downtown revitalization.

Successful engagement will involve clearly framing the issue: outlining the trade-offs, connecting the conversation back to the community's broader vision, and focusing on how changes can strengthen the local economy, public spaces, and overall

livability. Without strong leadership, there is a risk that this opportunity will be delayed once again, setting back downtown's evolution for another decade.

Balancing Growth and Community Identity

Parksville's growth is inevitable. Its natural setting, quality of life, and reputation as a retirement and lifestyle destination continue to draw new residents. As BC and Canada's populations expand, Parksville will see increasing demand for housing, services, and economic diversification to sustain its quality of life.

At the same time, Parksville's small-town character, natural beauty, and strong sense of community remain central to its identity. Residents are proud of what makes Parksville unique—and protective of the qualities that define their way of life.

This tension between growth and preservation influences many of the city's key conversations today. While much of the change underway reflects broader societal shifts, concerns about traffic, crowding, noise, and the loss of community

spaces remain real for many residents. Past experiences, such as the 2019 Boardwalk District proposal, highlighted the community's strong preference for development that respects Parksville's natural landscape, human scale, and timeless character.

Downtown revitalization must navigate this tension carefully. Growth is necessary, but it must reflect the values and culture of the people who call Parksville home. Development decisions should prioritize a strong sense of place, meaningful public spaces, and designs that honour Parksville's environment, history, and community identity. Balancing change with continuity will be key to building a downtown that feels both renewed and deeply familiar.



Sidebar: The Community Response to the Boardwalk District Proposal

The proposed Boardwalk District was a major development concept for Parksville Downtown—an 8.3-acre project featuring approximately 300 residential units and 68,000 square feet of retail space. While ambitious in scale, the application was ultimately withdrawn due to concerns raised by both the community and the City.

At the heart of the issue was a clear mismatch with Parksville's identity. The design lacked trees and made no meaningful connection to the natural environment. Its contemporary, urban architecture resembling a big city felt out of place—generic in style and inconsistent with Parksville's timeless, small-town aesthetic.

PART 2: ViSiON

STRATEGiC FRAMEWORK

The following section outlines the strategic framework for Parkville Downtown. It begins with a clear, community-driven vision, then moves through the goals, objectives, strategies, and tactics that will bring that vision to life. Each layer builds on the one before it—moving from long-term ambition to focused, actionable steps.

This entire framework is grounded in Parkville's brand strategy, ensuring that every decision reflects the community's identity, values, and way of life. As you move through each element, the goal is clear: to create a downtown that not only functions well, but truly feels like Parkville.



A ViSiON FOR PARKSViLLE DOWNTOWN

How downtown evolves matters. To ensure Parksville's downtown reflects the community's identity and earns lasting support, it is essential to understand what drives local culture. This project builds on the foundational work completed in 2023 for Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism. It explores the attributes that shape the community—what influences how people live, what they value, and the kind of experience they want to share with visitors.

This understanding guided the development of a clear, community-rooted vision for downtown's future.

DOWNTOWN **ViSiON**

**PARKSVILLE DOWNTOWN IS THE
BEATING HEART OF OUR COMMUNITY
AND A WELCOMING DESTINATION FOR
ALL—A VIBRANT COASTAL HUB WHERE
MODERN LIFE BLENDS SEAMLESSLY WITH
SMALL-TOWN CHARM.**

**IT IS A PLACE THAT CELEBRATES LIFE, FOSTERS
CONNECTION, AND INSPIRES CREATIVITY—
WHILE HONOURING THE TRADITIONS AND
STEWARDSHIP OF THE QUALICUM AND
SNAW-NAW-AS FIRST NATIONS ON
WHOSE ANCESTRAL LANDS WE LIVE.**

DOWNTOWN GOALS

There's no single formula for realizing Parksville Downtown's vision. There is no silver bullet or specific playbook to follow. But there are clear goals that, when achieved, will bring the vision closer to reality.

Success will require creating the right conditions—an environment where more people want to spend time downtown, and where the right kinds of businesses see potential to start, invest, and grow.

Progress will depend on many stakeholders working together, steadily building momentum toward a tipping point—where larger transformations become possible, and downtown becomes the vibrant, inclusive hub the community has envisioned.

GOALS:

Placemaking

- By 2030, establish at least one location in Upper Downtown that meets the '10+ Rule'—a placemaking concept described in Appendix A.
- By 2035, expand to at least two such locations.

Anchor Tenants and Experiences

- By 2030, attract and sustain a minimum of two anchor tenants or primary experiences in Upper Downtown that draw repeat visitation and serve as key economic drivers.

Food and Beverage

- By 2035, ensure Upper Downtown offers at least ten food and beverage establishments—such as restaurants, cafés, ice cream shops, or specialty food stores—open seven days a week.

Retail Development

- By 2035, develop at least ten unique retail businesses in Upper Downtown—such as art galleries, bookstores, clothing shops, beach gear outlets, or home and garden stores.

Evening Entertainment

- By 2035, establish at least three evening entertainment options in Upper Downtown—such as wine bars, theatres, bistros, or live venues—open seven days a week and operating evenings.

DOWNTOWN OBJECTIVES

To move toward the vision and meet the established goals, Parksville Downtown must focus on clear objectives. These objectives are grouped into two strategic areas: strengthening downtown as a place for business and enhancing downtown as a place for people.

DOWNTOWN OBJECTIVES FOR BUSINESS

1. Attract more businesses to downtown, particularly in retail, food and beverage, and entertainment sectors.
2. Increase operating hours and activity from existing downtown businesses.
3. Support the growth and expansion of established businesses within the downtown core.

DOWNTOWN OBJECTIVES FOR PEOPLE

1. Attract more people to visit downtown throughout the year.
2. Increase the average length of stay per visit.
3. Encourage more frequent return visits by creating engaging, dynamic downtown experiences.



DOWNTOWN PLACE BRAND STRATEGY

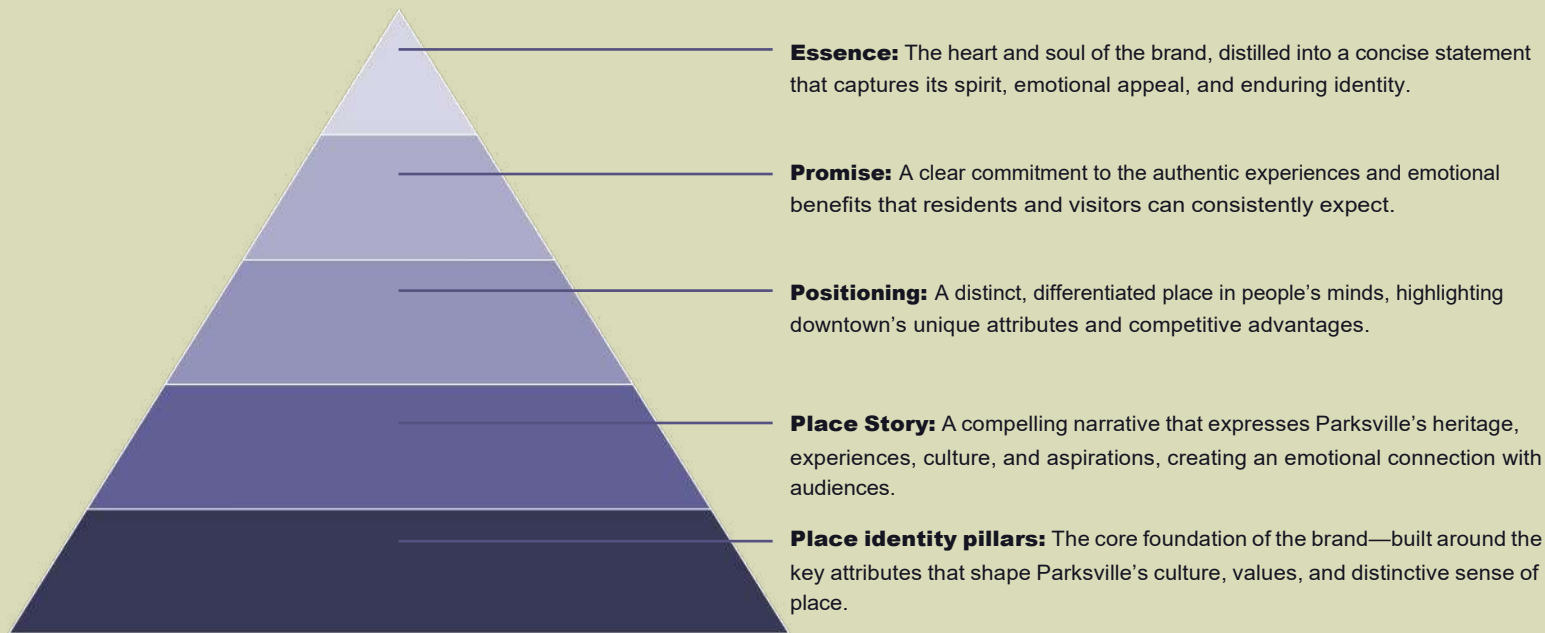
Successful downtown revitalization must reflect the community it serves. In Parkville, this means understanding the culture, values, and experiences that define local life—and ensuring that future changes build on this foundation.

To support this, a strong place brand strategy was developed. Using this place brand strategy as a foundation will ensure that future actions, investments, and designs consistently reflect the community's values and aspirations.

INTRODUCING THE DOWNTOWN PLACE BRAND FRAMEWORK

Built on the Place DNA® process completed in 2023, the framework below provides strategic guidance for downtown's evolution. Each element serves as a filter for decision-making—asking, "Does this action reflect and reinforce the brand strategy?"

PLACE BRAND STRATEGY FRAMEWORK



PLACE iDENTiTY

PiLLARS

The pillars below reflect the key attributes that shape Parksville's character and sense of place. They influence how the community looks and feels, and shape the experience of the people who live, work, and visit here.



BEACH

Ocean | Tides | Seaside | Sunsets | Resorts

The beach is one of Parksville's defining features and plays a central role in its identity. Its long, sandy stretches and dramatic tides shape the local lifestyle and the way people experience the region. The beach is more than a physical space—it is part of the community's rhythm and sense of place, valued by both residents and visitors.



NATURE

Biodiverse | Rivers | Trees | Eco-Aware | Scenic

As part of the Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Region, Parksville's natural environment is diverse and deeply embedded in local values. The region is defined by its biodiversity, coastal ecosystems, rivers, forests, and mild climate. Residents value the natural world not just for its beauty, but for the lifestyle it supports and the sense of connection it provides. Nature is part of everyday life in Parksville and a shared source of pride.



COMFORT

Mild Climate | Energetic | Peaceful | Events

Comfort is a key aspect of life in Parksville. Like the calm ocean that borders this side of Vancouver Island, the region is known for its peaceful atmosphere, sense of safety, and relaxed pace. But comfort here doesn't mean dull or boring—residents are active, enjoying events, gatherings, and shared experiences. It's about balance: a place where people feel at ease while still finding energy and connection.



TREASURES

Nostalgic | Spirited | Mini-Golf | Arts | Eclectic

Everyone finds their own treasures in Parksville. For some, it's the familiar—Community Park, a favourite trail, or a morning game of pickleball. Others feel a sense of nostalgia, returning to places and traditions they grew up with, like mini-golf with their grandkids where their own grandparents once took them. These personal connections are what create lasting bonds to Parksville and give the community its enduring warmth.



DOWNTOWN VITALITY

Local | Creative | Connected | Authentic | Evolving

Parksville Downtown is transforming into an active vibrant hub of local culture and everyday connection. Here, independent businesses, food experiences, arts, and events bring people together in new and exciting ways. With its walkable streets, emerging identity, and colourful seaside spirit, downtown is where Parksville comes alive.

PARKSVILLE PLACE STORY

Where the Beach Meets the Streets

Tucked between the tides and the trees, Parksville Downtown is where the calm of the coast meets the buzz of community life. It's a seaside town with a rhythm all its own — vibrant in summer, evolving every season, and quietly bursting with potential.

For generations, people have come to Parksville for the beach. Now, they're rediscovering the heart of town — a place that's transforming into something colourful, creative, and uniquely local. Here, cafés spill onto sidewalks, murals brighten cinderblock walls, and storefronts showcase the work of passionate entrepreneurs, artists, and makers. It's the kind of place where you might meet a friend by chance, discover your new favourite bakery, or stumble upon a street performance under a canopy of string lights.

Parksville Downtown is finding its voice — inspired by its natural surroundings, guided by community spirit, and animated by a desire to grow with intention. We honour the land and history we stand on, the stewardship of the Qualicum and Snaw-Naw-As First Nations, and the stories of those who've shaped this place.

This is not a town frozen in nostalgia — it's a place in motion. With every new shopfront, pop-up market, and gathering space, we're building a downtown that reflects who we are and who we're becoming: relaxed but lively, rooted but imaginative, small-town but full of life and energy. Parksville Downtown. Where the beach meets the streets — and something unexpected is always just around the corner.



PARKSVILLE DOWNTOWN POSITIONING

Reflects the core theme of a welcoming, relaxing, and beautiful coastal location.

WHERE COASTAL COMFORTS COME ALIVE.

Downtown is lively and dynamic, with events, retail, and experiences that set it apart from nearby places.

PARKSVILLE DOWNTOWN BRAND PROMISE

IN THE HEART OF PARKSVILLE, WHERE THE COAST CALMS AND THE COMMUNITY GATHERS, WE PROMISE A DOWNTOWN THAT IS LIVELY, WALKABLE, AND RICH WITH AUTHENTIC EXPERIENCES. A PLACE WHERE LOCALS FEEL PROUD, VISITORS FEEL WELCOMED, AND EVERYONE CAN FIND SOMETHING UNEXPECTED ALL-YEAR ROUND.

PARKSVILLE DOWNTOWN BRAND ESSENCE

A calm, welcoming
downtown authentic
character.

ROOTED IN CHARM ALIVE WITH POSSIBILITY

Downtown energy while preserving
the small-town vibe and lifestyle.

STRATEGiC APPROACH

Revitalizing Parksville Downtown will be a journey, not a single project or quick solution. It requires a sustained, collaborative effort—grounded in the community's vision, built through practical actions, and strengthened over time by small wins, learning, and collective leadership.

This strategic approach recognizes that success will come from fostering momentum, removing barriers, focusing energy, and working together across sectors. It is a framework for turning the downtown vision into an evolving, community-driven reality.

BUILDING MOMENTUM

Pilots, Tests, and Temporary Initiatives

Certain ideas can benefit from starting small. Pilot projects, temporary activations, and test initiatives allow concepts to be trialed at low cost and with limited risk. They offer a way to build confidence among the community, businesses, and government partners. Successful pilots can be expanded or made permanent. This aligns with the Power of 10+ principle (see Appendix A), which emphasizes the importance of layered, small-scale experiences in creating lively, people-focused spaces. When pilots don't succeed, they still provide valuable lessons and allow for adjustments without long-term impacts.

Building Momentum with Low-Hanging Fruit

Early momentum is critical. By starting with small, visible wins—projects that show immediate progress. Confidence can be built, participation can grow, and belief in downtown's future can take hold. Quick wins demonstrate that change is possible and help rally broader community and business support for more ambitious initiatives over time.

Collaboration and Collective Implementation

Downtown revitalization must be a collective effort. The business community, tourism sector, property owners, developers, residents, the arts community, First Nations, and others all have a stake in shaping downtown's future. Their ideas, energy, and leadership will be essential to turning the vision into reality. Formalizing collaboration across sectors will build stronger momentum, foster innovation, and ensure the downtown reflects the diversity and spirit of the community.

Removing Barriers for Change

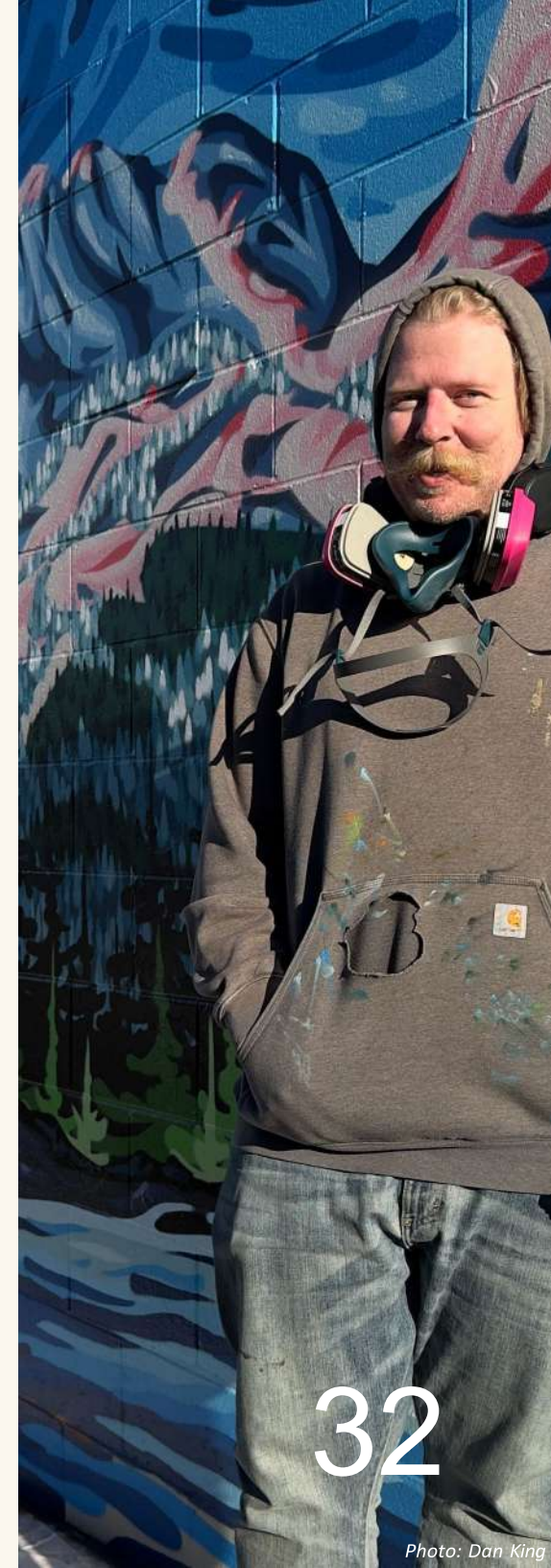
Several barriers must be addressed to unlock downtown's potential. Reviewing and updating bylaws, lease agreements, zoning regulations, and permitting processes will be key to creating an environment where positive change can happen. Support tools such as incentives, grants, and streamlined processes can help attract anchor businesses, activate vacant spaces, and create a welcoming environment for entrepreneurs, creatives, and investors.

District Focus Areas

Rather than trying to tackle all of downtown at once, this strategy takes a more focused approach. It identifies several informal focus areas, or "districts," to concentrate action and build visible momentum.

While these districts will not be formally designated or heavily branded, they offer a way to align priorities and cluster complementary businesses and experiences.

Focusing geographically supports placemaking, enhances walkability, and strengthens Parksville's small-town character. It also helps guide investment, programming, and policies to deliver meaningful results over time.



PARKSVILLE DOWNTOWN

DiSTRiCTs

Community Park

A “10+ Place” and well-loved destination for residents and visitors, centred around the beach, public parks, and recreational amenities.

Resort District

Defined by the presence of the Beach Club Resort and Pacific Palms RV Resort, serving as a key tourism anchor for downtown.

Entertainment District

The most suitable area for clustering entertainment-focused businesses and experiences. Centrally located, with an existing base of restaurants, cafés, and shops.

Heritage and Cultural District

Centred around Memorial Plaza, Memorial Avenue, and the McMillan Arts Centre (MAC), this area forms a starting point for Parksville’s cultural life and local history.

Services and Wellness District

A concentration of service-oriented businesses, including retirement living, healthcare providers, and wellness-focused enterprises.

Essentials District

A practical, convenience-based area offering everyday retail and services, including grocery stores, gas stations, pharmacies, and everyday services.



FOCUS AREAS

Successful revitalization often begins with a focused start, testing ideas in one or more areas to build momentum and show what's possible. These areas have strong potential to evolve into 10+ places, as defined in Appendix A.

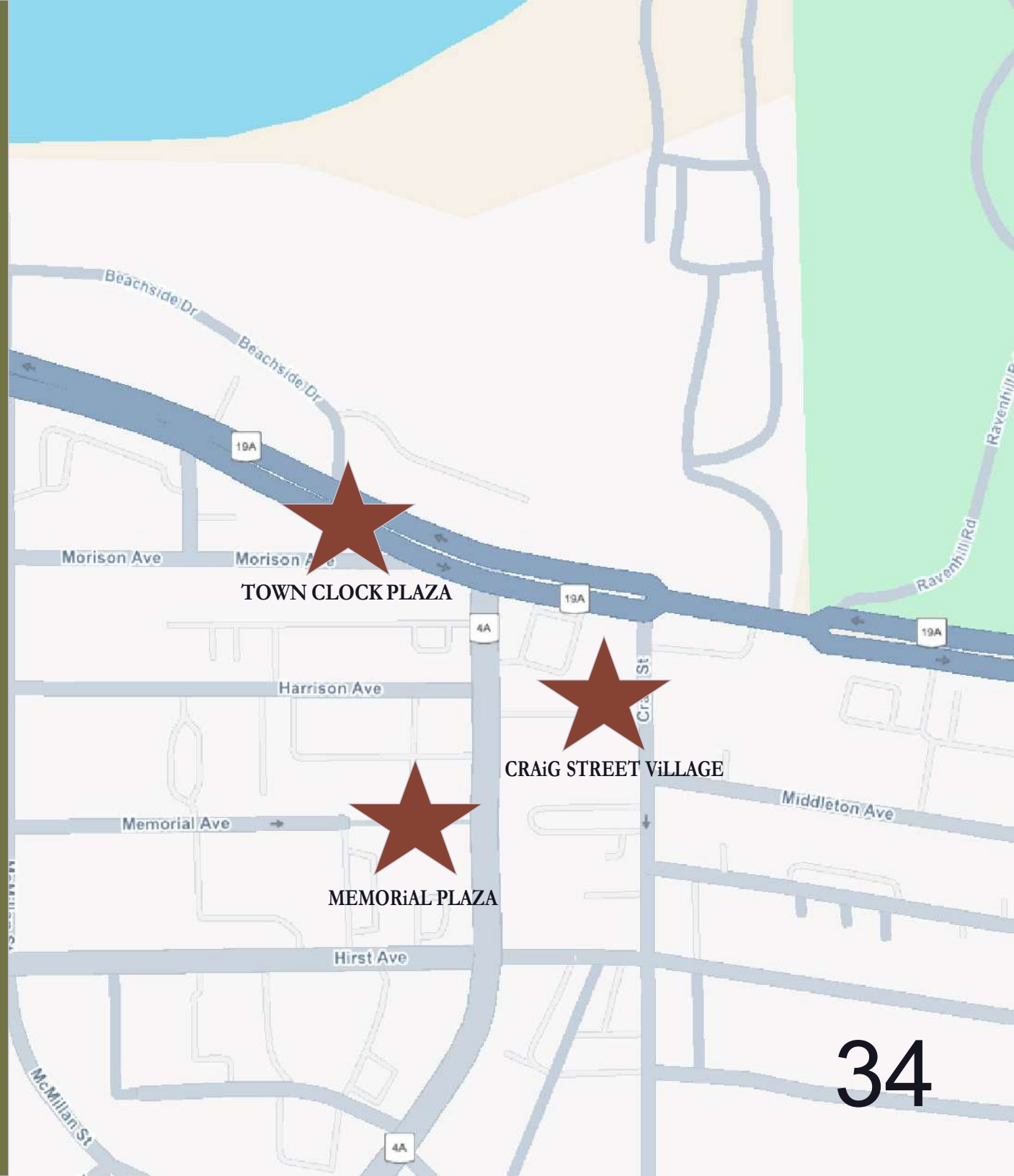
In Parksville, three opportunity areas have been identified in Upper Downtown's Entertainment District.

Focus Area Criteria:

- A visible Upper Downtown location
- Located in or near the proposed Entertainment District
- A base to build toward the Power of 10+
- Potential for traffic calming or street closure
- Sufficient space for seating, markets, or outdoor activation

Where to begin will ultimately depend on:

- Support from businesses, property owners, government, and residents in the area
- Interest from local businesses and residents to participate
- Availability of basic infrastructure
- Alignment with the downtown vision and revitalization goals
- Potential to build visible momentum and inspire broader participation



FOCUS AREAS

Craig Street Village

Just a short walk from Community Park and Memorial Plaza, Craig Street is home to the popular summer Craig Street Market and a café with a well-used patio. Its strong visibility, pedestrian scale, and consistent foot traffic make it a strong candidate for future activation.



Town Clock Plaza (Morrison Ave)

Located near Community Park and Memorial Plaza, this area features a historic town clock, mature trees, benches, and a welcoming streetscape. The triangular plaza is already framed by restaurants and retail, creating a natural environment for window shopping, casual strolls, and community gathering.



Memorial Plaza

Opened in 2022, Memorial Plaza is the de facto gathering place for Upper Downtown with a steady calendar of events and the Parkville Downtown Business Association (PDBA) office next door. Key challenges include the absence of public washrooms and a lack of businesses or experiences directly fronting the plaza.



STRATEGiES & TACTiCS

With a clear approach in place, the next step is to focus energy on the strategic priorities that will move Parksville Downtown toward its vision.

The five core strategies outlined here provide a foundation for progress, each supported by a range of tactical actions. These tactics are not a rigid work plan, but a curated list of opportunities—each one capable of building momentum, strengthening downtown's vitality, or bringing the vision closer to reality.

Many of the actions identified fall outside the direct roles and responsibilities of the PDBA. The association's role will be to rally stakeholders and rightsholders, champion the strategy, and help facilitate collective action.

Together, these strategies and tactics offer a practical, evolving framework for revitalization—one that depends on collaboration, leadership, and steady momentum.

1.

CREATE VIBRANT, INCLUSIVE PUBLIC SPACES

Parksville Downtown must stand apart by embracing its unique character and telling its authentic story. Enhancing downtown's identity and visual appeal will create a stronger emotional connection for residents and visitors alike, building pride and repeat visitation.

POTENTIAL TACTICS

Tactic	Impact	Ease of Implementation	Rationale	Comments	Lead / Partners
Build new public washrooms downtown	Medium	Moderate	Encourages clear, deliberate process greater use by making downtown more comfortable and accessible.	Must be paired with nearby gathering/activity spaces to maximize use.	City of Parksville
Commission murals and public art installations	Medium	Quick Win	Adds vibrancy and visual interest, enhances aesthetics, and helps express community identity. Public art can become a visitor attraction and create a stronger sense of place.		City of Parksville, PDBA, property owners, arts community, First Nations
Launch a façade improvement program	Medium-High	Moderate	Improves visual appeal, supports business pride, and creates a more inviting environment.	Requires consensus on design guidelines.	City of Parksville, developers
Pilot a pedestrian-only zone in the entertainment district	Medium-High	Moderate	Demonstrates potential for people-first design while managing risk.	Requires support from businesses.	City of Parksville, businesses
Encourage licensed street musicians	Medium-High	Quick Win	Adds street-level vibrancy and helps create animated, people-centred places."	Part of activating spaces.	City of Parksville, PDBA
Increase shaded or weather-protected seating areas downtown	Medium	Quick Win	Improves comfort and usability of public space.	Part of activating spaces.	City of Parksville
Establish permanent spaces for food trucks and coffee carts	Medium-High	Moderate	Activates space, supports entrepreneurs, and encourages people to linger.	Part of activating spaces.	City of Parksville, developers
Launch pop-up retail initiatives	Medium	Quick Win	Low-barrier way to test new ideas and activate underused space.		PDBA, property owners
Integrate more plant life and landscaping	Medium	Complex	Enhances livability and reinforces Parksville's natural identity.		City of Parksville
Develop a parking strategy for Upper-Downtown in the context of this strategy.	Medium	Moderate	Align business needs with downtown vision.		City of Parksville
Improve walkability through pedestrian enhancements	Medium-High	Moderate	Small changes (crosswalks, curb cuts) improve access and safety.		City of Parksville, developers
Expand bike-friendly infrastructure downtown	Medium-High	Moderate	Connects residential and resort areas to downtown, supports active transport.		City of Parksville
Install visible symbols of inclusivity, in collaboration with the arts community	Medium	Quick Win	Reinforces Parksville's inclusive identity while enhancing downtown aesthetics.	Community-driven and meaningfully placed	City of Parksville, PDBA, community groups

2

STRENGTHEN DOWNTOWN'S BUSINESS ECOSYSTEM

A resilient downtown economy depends on a strong, diverse mix of businesses. Strengthening the business ecosystem means attracting anchor tenants, supporting entrepreneurs, expanding offerings, and making it easier for businesses to succeed and grow downtown.

POTENTIAL TACTICS

Tactic	Impact	Ease of Implementation	Rationale	Comments	Lead / Partners
Attract and secure key anchor business(es)	High	Moderate	Drives visitation and foot traffic, supports smaller businesses, and helps define downtown's identity	E.g. a high profile restaurant or brewery.	PDBA, City of Parksville, property owners
Develop a signature downtown attraction or experience	High	Moderate	Creates a distinctive reason to visit and helps Parksville stand out from nearby communities	Connected to Parksville's brand and identity.	PDBA, City of Parksville, Tourism partners
Implement incentives to attract targeted business types in districts	Medium–High	Moderate	Directs the businesses makeup that aligns with strategic goals (e.g., food, retail, nightlife).	E.g. Cafés and restaurants in the entertainment district.	City of Parksville, property owners, PDBA
Establish a permanent farmers market downtown	Medium–High	Moderate	Adds vibrancy, supports local producers, and draws regular foot traffic.		City of Parksville, local farmers/vendors, PDBA
Develop an indoor auditorium or performance space	Medium–High	Complex	Brings people downtown, anchors cultural life, supports local events, and drives evening activity.		City of Parksville, arts groups, developers
Launch mentorship programs for young entrepreneurs	Medium	Quick Win	Encourages new business creation and strengthens succession opportunities.	Consider pairing new entrepreneurs with experienced retirees	PDBA, Chamber of Commerce
Support individual business beautification projects	Medium	Quick Win	Improves curb appeal, supports pride of ownership, and contributes to overall aesthetics.	Provide resources, guidance, and potential incentives.	PDBA, City of Parksville, businesses
Establish coordinated retail opening hours and days	Medium	Moderate	Builds consistency for visitors and improves the overall downtown experience.	Ensures consistent evening options throughout the week.	PDBA, downtown businesses

3.

ENHANCE DOWNTOWN'S IDENTITY AND APPEAL

Parksville Downtown must stand apart by embracing its unique character and telling its authentic story. Enhancing downtown's identity and visual appeal will create a stronger emotional connection for residents and visitors alike, building pride and repeat visitation.

POTENTIAL TACTICS

Tactic	Impact	Ease of Implementation	Rationale	Comments	Lead / Partners
Strengthen branding and design guidelines and rename Upper-Downtown	High	Medium	This will better reflect downtown's evolving identity and align with Parksville's vision.	Includes a name for Upper Downtown, creative platform, and design guidelines.	PDBA, City of Parksville, businesses, residents
Update retail signage rules and regulations	Medium-High	Moderate	Enhances visual coherence, reduces clutter, and improves the downtown experience.	Part of rebranding	City of Parksville, businesses
Create prominent gateway signage for downtown areas	Medium-High	Moderate	Enhances the visitor experience and strengthens downtown's brand presence.		City of Parksville, PDBA
Increase First Nations' visibility and participation in public spaces and storytelling	Medium-High	Moderate	Recognizes and honours local First Nations, provides opportunities and enriching downtown's cultural identity.	Requires collaboration and partnership with Qualicum and Snaw-Naw-As First Nations.	PDBA, First Nations partners
Commission murals and public art installations	Medium	Quick Win	Adds vibrancy and visual interest, enhances aesthetics, and helps express community identity. Public art can become a visitor attraction and create a stronger sense of place.	Most impactful when placed in high-visibility, high-foot-traffic areas.	City of Parksville, PDBA, property owners
Install visible symbols of inclusivity, in collaboration with the arts community	Medium	Quick Win	Reinforces Parksville's inclusive identity while enhancing downtown aesthetics.	Must be community-driven and meaningfully placed.	City of Parksville, PDBA, community groups

4.

IMPROVE DOWNTOWN ACCESSIBILITY AND CONNECTION

Great downtowns are easy to reach, easy to navigate, and feel seamlessly connected to their surroundings. Improving accessibility and connection will strengthen the links between key assets, encourage active transportation, and make downtown more welcoming to all.

POTENTIAL TACTICS

Tactic	Impact	Ease of Implementation	Rationale	Commentary	Lead / Partners
Transform Highway 19A into a complete, pedestrian-friendly street	High	Complex	Unlocks downtown's full potential by improving access to Community Park and enhancing walkability.	Part of the transportation masterplan.	City of Parksville
Add and improve pedestrian crossings along Highway 19A	Medium–High	Moderate	Increases safety and accessibility, especially in key east–west corridors.	Part of the transportation masterplan.	City of Parksville
Develop a parking strategy for Upper-Downtown in the context of this strategy.	Medium	Moderate	Align business needs with downtown vision.	Aligns with tactic in Strategy 1.	City of Parksville
Expand way-finding signage	Low	Moderate	Helps visitors and newcomers navigate downtown more confidently.	The existing way-finding signage is largely adequate.	City of Parksville, PDBA
Create a shuttle service linking Community Park and Upper Downtown	Low	Moderate	May increase movement between districts, but unlikely to shift behaviour without compelling downtown draws.	An extended shuttle service to tourism areas could gain support from the tourism industry.	PDBA, Tourism industry
Improve walkability through pedestrian enhancements	Medium–High	Moderate	Improvements enhance safety and connectivity.	Improvements are ongoing.	City of Parksville, developers
Expand bike-friendly infrastructure downtown	Medium–High	Moderate	Links nearby residential areas and resorts to downtown; encourages active transportation.	Bike infrastructure is being expanded on an ongoing basis.	City of Parksville

5.

FOSTER A STRONG DOWNTOWN COMMUNITY

Downtown revitalization is ultimately about people. Fostering a stronger downtown community means encouraging collaboration, strengthening networks, and empowering local champions to help lead downtown's evolution from within.

POTENTIAL TACTICS

Tactic	Impact	Ease of Implementation	Rationale	Comments	Lead / Partners
Establish a downtown revitalization advisory group	Medium–High	Moderate	Creates a structured way to guide implementation, gather input, and maintain momentum.	Critical for building and maintaining support and momentum.	PDBA, City of Parksville, community reps
Create a coordinated, year-round downtown events and festival calendar	High	Moderate	Activates downtown consistently, drives foot traffic, and builds local pride and habit.	Consider reviving legacy events in a modernized format.	PDBA, arts groups, tourism partners
Strengthen collaboration among PDBA members	Medium	Quick Win	Builds a stronger network of shared ownership, support, and business alignment.		PDBA
Increase First Nations' visibility and participation in public spaces and storytelling.	High	Moderate	Strengthens cultural identity, inclusion, and recognition of local Indigenous history and contributions.	Requires sustained collaboration with Qualicum and Snaw-Naw-As First Nations.	City of Parksville, PDBA, First Nations partners
Encourage licensed street musicians	Medium–High	Quick Win	Adds street-level vibrancy and helps create animated, people-centred places."	Requires base-level foot traffic and designated performance spaces.	City of Parksville, PDBA
Install visible symbols of inclusivity, in collaboration with the arts community	Medium	Quick Win	Reinforces Parksville's inclusive identity while enhancing downtown aesthetics.	Must be community-driven and meaningfully placed.	City of Parksville, PDBA, community groups

PARKSVILLE DOWNTOWN BUSINESS ASSOCIATION

PRIORITIES

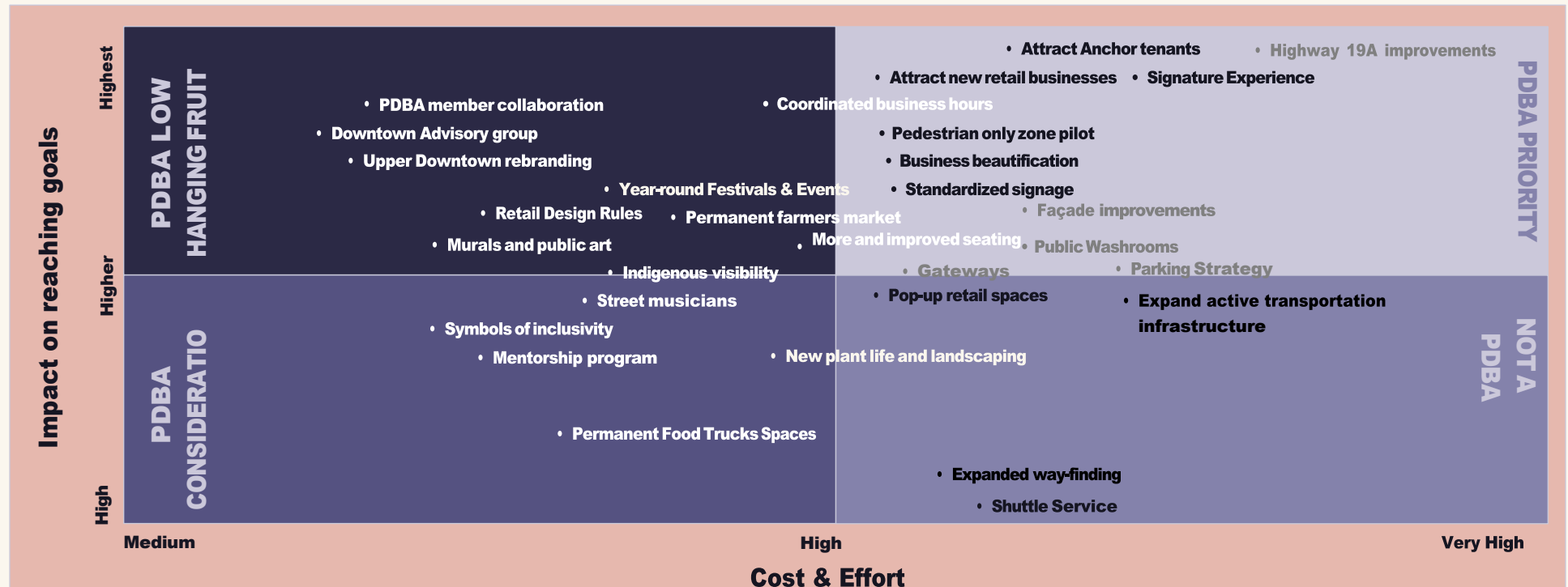
The matrix below organizes tactics based on their impact and cost/effort, while also showing where the PDDBA can take an active role.

- **Black or white items** are tactics the PDDBA or its members can lead, initiate, or advocate for.
- **Grey items** are important but rely more heavily on others—such as the City or developers—for implementation.

The layout helps identify:

- **Low-Hanging Opportunities:** High-impact, lower-effort actions the PDDBA can help move forward quickly.
- **PDDBA Consideration:** Actions that require more coordination or resources but are still within reach.
- **PDDBA Priority:** Larger initiatives where the PDDBA can play a key advocacy or support role at the right moments.
- **Not a PDDBA Priority:** Valuable initiatives best led by other partners.

This tool isn't a fixed plan—it's a way to help focus energy, build momentum, and guide collaboration as implementation progresses.



MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER

This strategy provides a clear, community-driven vision for reimagining Parksville Downtown—not as a single project, but as a process. A series of deliberate, coordinated actions that layer over time, creating momentum, belief, and lasting change.

It reflects the voices of residents, businesses, developers, tourism leaders, First Nations, and local government. It draws on best practices in placemaking and destination development. And it balances ambition with practicality—recognizing what’s possible now, and what must be built over time.

The role of the Parksville Downtown Business Association is clear: to help lead where it can, advocate where it must, and bring people together around a shared direction. Success will depend on many partners working in sync—guided by the vision, values, and priorities outlined in this strategy.

Parksville Downtown has strong foundations. It already works for many. But the opportunity now is to make it better—for more people, more of the time.

Let’s build a downtown that reflects who we are, welcomes who we’re becoming, and inspires what’s next.

PART 3: APPENDICES

APPENDiX A

THE POWER OF 10+

The Power of 10+ is a placemaking principle developed by the Project for Public Spaces. It highlights the importance of variety and vibrancy in public spaces—suggesting that the more reasons people have to visit, the more successful and lively a place becomes.

The idea is simple: a great place should offer at least 10 things to do or reasons to be there. These can include sitting, eating, shopping, people-watching, enjoying public art, attending events, or simply spending time with others. Activities may be active or passive, social or solitary, permanent or temporary. The “plus” recognizes that success isn’t about hitting a fixed number. Vibrancy comes from variety, continuity, and the active involvement of people over time.

A strong local example is Community Park, which clearly functions as a 10+ place. It brings together a beach, bike park, volleyball courts, large playground, food trucks, shaded seating, washroom facilities, and gathering spaces—all in one walkable, social environment. It works not because of one feature, but because of the layered experiences available in one place.

The Power of 10+ is both a diagnostic tool and a call to action. It helps identify where a place is thriving—and where more could be done. It also encourages collaboration across sectors to shape more engaging, people-focused spaces.

In Parksville Downtown, this concept reinforces a key idea: successful revitalization doesn’t come from a single major project, but from building on many small, meaningful experiences. Each new reason to visit adds momentum, helping downtown become a place people choose to spend time—not just pass through.

For more information, visit pps.org/article/the-power-of-10



APPENDIX B: CASE STUDY

DISTRICT 1881, CHILLIWACK BC

Overview

District 1881 is a 3.75-acre redevelopment in downtown Chilliwack—a revitalized urban village just slightly smaller than Parksville's Pacific Palms RV Resort. The project includes 45 commercial units and approximately 160 residential units, built around a walkable commercial core of independent businesses.

At the heart of District 1881 is a commitment to preserving and reimagining Chilliwack's historic buildings. Original structures have been modernized with care, creating a distinctive mix of old and new that resonates with both locals and visitors.

The Backstory

Downtown Chilliwack had been in long-term decline, with retail activity gradually shifting toward the Highway 1 corridor. In response, the City launched a coordinated effort to reimagine its downtown.

- In 2010, the Chilliwack Downtown Land Use and Development Plan laid the groundwork.
- The 2011 Downtown Core Task Force Final Report called for strategic land assembly.
- In 2014, the City adopted Downtown Design Guidelines to support cohesive, heritage-driven development.
- By late 2017, land had been assembled and rezoned for a mixed-use district.
- On July 9, 2018, Algra Bros. Developments Ltd. was announced as the successful proponent.
- By 2020, the first businesses in District 1881 opened. The final of nine buildings is now nearing completion.



What Made It Work

The success of District 1881 wasn't the result of a formula—it was the outcome of vision, urgency, and a series of bold, well-supported decisions. Key factors included:

- A municipal commitment to assembling land specifically for downtown redevelopment
- Clear, heritage-focused design guidelines
- A local developer—Algra Bros.—with a distinct vision and tolerance for risk
- Prioritized people over cars
- Preserved and repurposed heritage buildings
- Curated a walkable mix of small, independent businesses

As Dave Algra puts it: “We haven’t redeveloped the downtown—we’ve just created a project in the downtown that is hopefully a catalyst for more to happen here.”

What's Next?

District 1881 raises questions relevant to other communities:

- Would this have worked without a developer like Algra Bros.?
- What happens if the property changes hands?
- Can its quality, experience, and design integrity be maintained over time?

What's clear is that District 1881 demonstrates what's possible when vision, planning, and partnership align. Although a unique situation, it offers a valuable reference point for communities—like Parksville—that aim to reimagine downtown in ways that are bold, lasting, and locally grounded.



APPENDIX C:

BRAND CREATE PLATFORM RECOMMENDATION

Brand Creative Platform

Creating a strong sense of place requires more than good design—it demands a cohesive visual identity that reflects a destination's values and character. Successful downtown areas, like Chilliwack's District 1881, have established distinct visual languages that tie together signage, storefronts, programming, and wayfinding. This cohesion contributes directly to the vibrancy, legibility, and overall appeal of the space.

In contrast, Parksville Downtown's current brand creative lacks alignment with the broader brand strategy. It leans heavily on bright, synthetic tones that feel disconnected from the organic, nature-inspired identity captured in the Place DNA® framework. A refreshed brand creative platform—grounded in Parksville's authentic coastal character—would better reflect community values and improve the downtown experience for residents and visitors alike.

Importantly, this update does not require a wholesale rebrand. It can be phased in over time. The goal should be a shared creative system that works across all stakeholders: the PDBA, City of Parksville, local businesses, and event organizers. This cohesion will help build recognition, pride, and a stronger sense of place.

Renaming Upper Downtown

While Community Park is widely recognized and well-loved, the remainder of downtown lacks a distinctive identity. Though it is known as "Parksville Downtown," the name doesn't convey aspiration, purpose, or destination appeal.

Renaming this area could serve as a strategic placemaking move—repositioning it in the minds of both residents and visitors. A more inspiring and memorable name would help set the tone for its evolution and signal the shift toward a more vibrant, cohesive downtown experience. This could also support storytelling, branding, and future development initiatives across the district.



District 1881's consistent creative makes it unique and cohesive.

APPENDIX D: BIG IDEAS

Anchor Experiences

An anchor experience is a defining attraction—something visitors shouldn't miss, and a place residents return to or proudly share with out-of-town guests. More than a single feature, an anchor creates energy and momentum. It invites people to stay longer, explore more, and see downtown as a destination rather than a pass-through.

Interpretive Centre

The Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Region (MABR) is a UNESCO-designated biosphere reserve that spans 1,186 square kilometres, centred around Mount Arrowsmith—the highest peak on southern Vancouver Island. The region contains a mosaic of alpine, forest, and coastal ecosystems, and is deeply significant to local Indigenous communities and environmental stewards.

The MABR is managed through the Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Region Research Institute—a partnership between Vancouver Island University and the City of Parksville—focusing on sustainability, conservation, education, and reconciliation. Its mandate aligns naturally with a community-driven visitor experience.

A downtown interpretive centre dedicated to the MABR would not only advance the organization's goals, but also provide Parksville with a compelling, place-based anchor attraction. Through exhibitions, public programming, and educational storytelling—especially those highlighting the region's ecosystems and First Nations heritage—it could become a signature downtown experience, drawing both visitors and locals.

Inspiration: Clayoquot Sound Biosphere Centre – Tofino

Tofino's Clayoquot Sound Biosphere Centre is a \$15-million, three-storey community facility currently under development within its own UNESCO-designated site. It will focus on experiential learning, science, culture, and conservation, with deep integration of Indigenous perspectives—guided by ceremonial contributions from the ʔaḡuukwíḡaḥ First Nation. The project received unanimous support from Tofino Council and is expected to open in 2026.

Consideration

The PDBA and City of Parksville should explore the feasibility of a downtown Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Interpretive Centre as a long-term anchor experience. Early steps could include discussions with the Research Institute, Indigenous partners, the tourism sector, and relevant funders to assess potential programming, location, and governance models. If pursued, this could become a cornerstone attraction—one that reflects Parksville's natural setting, educational leadership, and values of stewardship and connection.



Watchtower Landmark

People are naturally drawn to elevated views. Watchtowers—whether in historic cities or nature preserves—offer more than just a place to look around. They serve as landmarks, orientation points, and destinations in themselves. They tap into a core human instinct: curiosity. We're drawn to see what lies beyond, how far we can see, and what the world looks like from above.

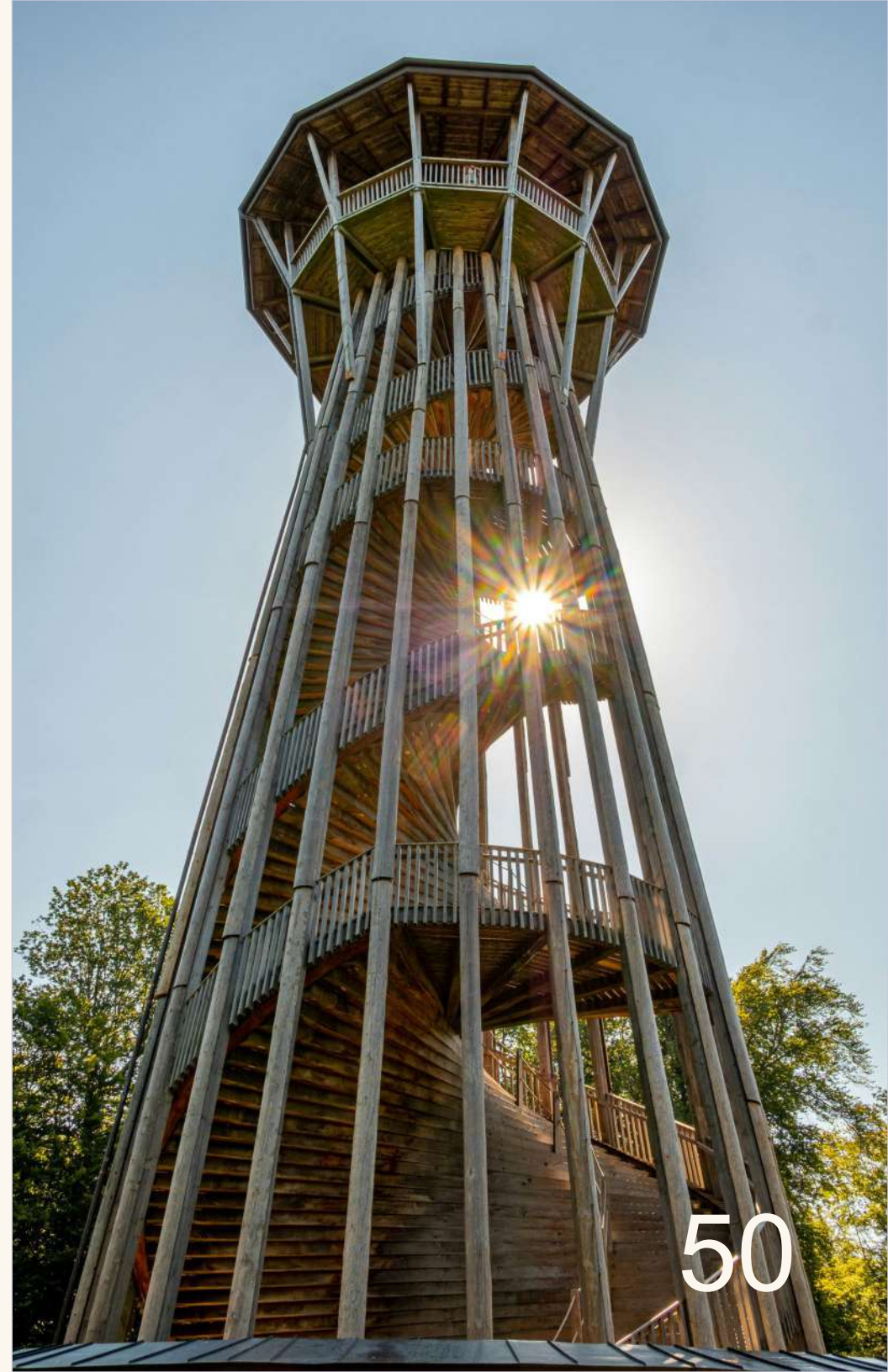
In communities around the world, modern watchtowers have evolved into sculptural icons, cultural gathering points, and interpretive platforms. They provide panoramic views, serve as backdrops for events, and strengthen a community's identity through form and story.

For Parksville, a contemporary watchtower could play a similar role. Situated in Upper Downtown, it would become a striking visual beacon—anchoring downtown and framing its connection to the ocean, the forested hills, and Mount Arrowsmith. Its design could reflect local materials, coastal influences, and regional ecology.

Importantly, a watchtower also acts as a “Weenie”—a term from Disney Imagineering for a landmark that draws people in. Visible from surrounding areas, it would signal that something worth exploring is happening downtown. And once people arrive, it becomes a reason to stay longer, discover more, and return often.

The Big Idea

Build the Haven Watchtower—a bold, sculptural landmark that symbolically watches over the city. Positioned as both a visual icon and public gathering space, it would offer a place to pause, reflect, and experience Parksville from a new vantage point. More than a viewing platform, it becomes a stage for storytelling, a backdrop for events, and a long-term anchor attraction that embodies the community's identity and aspirations.



Watchtower Examples:



UFO Watchtower – Hooper, Colorado: A low-cost, high-imagination tourism success. Built on local lore, it has attracted over 30,000 visitors since 2000—demonstrating the draw of a simple elevated perspective paired with storytelling.



Marsk Tower – Denmark: A 25-metre Corten steel spiral tower by BIG Architects, opened in 2021. Located in a UNESCO World Heritage site, it combines sculpture, story, and spectacle—becoming a landmark and catalyst for regional tourism.



“Nest Tree” Tower – Rõuge Parish, Estonia: A 30-metre illuminated tower shaped like a tree, featuring two platforms (bird's nests) and a golden egg crown. Funded through EU cohesion funds and environmental programs (~€260,000 total cost).



Watchtower Einderheide – Netherlands: Completed in 2024, this 26-metre wooden tower includes bat habitat features and offers elevated forest views. Cost reported at €600,000, funded by municipal and regional partners.

Commission Murals and Public Art Installations

Public art and mural programs have become powerful cultural and economic development tools for communities of all sizes. From major urban centres like Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver to smaller municipalities such as Chemainus, BC and Lacombe, Alberta, these programs help transform public spaces—delivering measurable benefits in tourism, community engagement, and downtown revitalization.

The most successful programs are formalized, often supported by clear policies, funding structures, and dedicated delivery models. These may be led by municipalities, non-profits, or business associations, and are frequently supported by municipal grants, private sponsorships, or public–private partnerships. Many also incorporate festivals, tours, and participatory activities that extend the program’s reach and impact.

In several communities, mural programs have become key drivers of visitation. They enhance the visitor experience, reflect community identity, and contribute to a more vibrant, walkable downtown.

Examples

- **The Kelpies** are a pair of monumental steel horse-heads in Scotland, created in 2013. Each head is 30 metres (98 ft) high. According to a study commissioned by Scottish Canals and Falkirk Council, the £8.35 million investment resulted in £48.8 million in GVA, and £29.1 million in wages in its first 10 years while the tourism economic impact in the regions increased 73% from £79.3 million in 2011 to £137 million in 2022.
- **The Mural das Etnias (Mural of Ethnicities)** is a world record-breaking street art masterpiece created by Brazilian artist Eduardo Kobra for the 2016 Rio Olympics that has become an iconic attraction in Rio de Janeiro.
- The **"A Dog of Flanders"** statue in Antwerp depicts Nello and his dog Patrasche from an 1872 English novel that became immensely popular in East Asia. This monument was created in response to existing tourism, as Belgian officials noticed Japanese and Korean visitors seeking locations from a story locals had never heard of, transforming Antwerp into a "site of secular pilgrimage" for thousands of international tourists annually.

Funding and Resources

Numerous public and private sources exist to support public art initiatives. These include the Canada Council for the Arts (CCA), BC Arts Council, and non-profit



The Kelpies



The Mural das Etnias



A Dog of Flanders

organizations such as Arts BC and STEPS Public Art. Platforms like SmartGrant offer searchable databases of grant opportunities. The Creative City Network of Canada (CCNC) serves as a valuable resource for municipal cultural planning and public art best practices.

Program Examples from Other Communities:

- **Back Alley Art Gallery – Kamloops:** Led by the Kamloops Central BIA since 2010, this initiative has turned alleyways into an open-air gallery of over 30 murals, reducing graffiti and highlighting local talent.
- **BUMP – Calgary:** The Beltline Urban Murals Project launched in 2017 and is now one of Canada's largest programs. It has produced over 150 pieces, including the world's tallest mural (310 ft.), painted in 2022 by German artist DAIM.
- **Programme d'art mural – Montreal:** Evolving since 2007, this program features three distinct funding and delivery streams: High-Visibility Murals, Neighbourhood Murals, and the Municipal Public Art Collection.
- **Charleroi, Belgium "Urban Dream" project.** The initiative invited Belgian and international street artists to create 11 monumental murals and dozens of smaller works across the city's industrial landscape transforming the former coal mining city from a post-industrial wasteland into a cultural destination.
- **Blanketing the City - Vancouver** (2018–present). This public art project began as a collaboration between xwməθkwəy̓əm (Musqueam) artist Debra Sparrow and the Vancouver Mural Festival, developed in response to the 2015 Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's 96 Calls to Action. Numerous murals have resulted in increased visibility of First Nations in the city.

The big idea

Develop a pARTsville downtown public art program by convening a working group of key partners—including the arts community, City of Parksville, Indigenous Nations, and the tourism sector. The goal should be to co-develop a sustainable public art strategy that reflects local identity, enhances vibrancy, increases Indigenous visibility, and positions downtown Parksville as a creative destination. Enhance the program by creating a mural festival where every year a new piece is created, perhaps in conjunction with the Beach Festival.

To build momentum for the program, a Destination Artwork should be commissioned. A Destination Artwork stands out by speaking to imagination, created by an artist of fame, through the size or scope of the artwork, or the message it portrays.



Programme d'art mural – Montreal



Blanketing the City - Vancouver

APPENDIX D:

SELECTED TACTICAL THOUGHT STARTERS

Makers Retail Space

Parksville is home to a strong community of artists, artisans, and makers, with even more concentrated across the wider Vancouver Island region. Yet downtown currently lacks a dedicated retail outlet that showcases and supports this creative economy. Establishing a central space for locally made goods would not only serve this community—it would also enrich downtown's retail mix and strengthen its cultural connection to residents and visitors alike.

Shop Makers is a Canadian retail concept that offers physical storefronts for local artisans through a membership model. Makers pay a flat monthly fee for display space and retain 100% of their sales, allowing them to scale their businesses with minimal overhead. This model has proven effective in supporting creative entrepreneurs while bringing distinctive, hand-crafted products to downtown retail districts.

PDBA could explore opportunities to establish a makers retail space in downtown Parksville—either by supporting an existing local business or attracting a new venture, such as Shop Makers. The PDBA can play a catalytic role by facilitating discovery, helping develop a viable business case, and offering targeted support or incentives to help bring the concept to life.

Popup Retail Space

Pop-up retail spaces are temporary storefronts that allow businesses to test new ideas, showcase seasonal products, or create immersive brand experiences—without the long-term commitment of a traditional lease. These spaces are ideal for new entrepreneurs, artists, and makers seeking to trial retail concepts, and they also activate vacant storefronts, bringing energy and variety to downtown streetscapes.

The Wee Shoppe in Chilliwack's District 1881 is a dedicated pop-up space located in the heart of a revitalized downtown district. It offers short-term, flexible retail opportunities that support small business growth and downtown vibrancy. On Granville Island, the Public Market partnered with Flavours of Hope, a non-profit supporting newcomer women through pop-up retail and food programs that build confidence, visibility, and market access.

PDBA can explore opportunities for pop-up retail in vacant or underused spaces. Encourage participation by offering preferred rates or flexible lease terms from property owners, and explore partnerships with entrepreneurial support organizations to help activate these spaces and foster local business growth.



Mentorship and Start-Up Support for Entrepreneurs

Parksville is uniquely positioned to foster entrepreneurship through its population of skilled and experienced retirees—many of whom are eager to share their knowledge. These individuals bring a wealth of expertise across sectors and represent an untapped competitive advantage. Structured mentorship programs, typically involving monthly meetings over a 6–12 month period, can provide invaluable support to aspiring entrepreneurs.

Across Canada, Chambers of Commerce and Business Improvement Areas (BIAs) have launched successful initiatives pairing seasoned professionals with emerging entrepreneurs. In addition to mentorship, many programs are supported by education, training, and funding offered through national, provincial, and regional organizations—such as Community Futures, Futurpreneur Canada, and Small Business BC.

PDBA can explore partnerships with existing organizations and local business leaders to develop a Parksville-based entrepreneurship program that can include training, coaching, mentoring and startup support specific to Parksville Downtown needs.



