

# STRATEGIC PLAN

## 2023 – 2028

DOWN  
TOWN  
VAN

DOWNTOWN VAN



We acknowledge with gratitude that our work takes place on the on the unceded traditional territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish) and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

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This acknowledgment informed development of this Strategic Plan, and will continue to inform our work going forward.

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# MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR

As the 41st Mayor of Vancouver, I welcome with excitement Downtown Van's 5-year Strategic Plan. The City of Vancouver and Downtown Van have a long history of successful collaboration. For many years, we have shared similar visions and missions around public safety, neighbourhood revitalization, and cultural vibrancy. I look forward to our continued partnership as the Association delivers on the goals of this 2023 – 2028 Strategic Plan.

Through new investments being made in Vancouver's downtown core, we have an opportunity to showcase the best of what our city has to offer. There is no better time than now to focus on unlocking Vancouver's potential, and delivering a safe, prosperous, and vibrant city for generations to come.

As we work together to write Downtown Vancouver's next chapter, it's important that we build off the downtown core's rich history and share in excitement and optimism about the future of our city. As a community, we can create a vibrant downtown core, and uphold Vancouver's status as a world-class city to visit, live, work, and play in.



Mayor Ken Sim



# MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

As Downtown Van begins a new chapter, this five-year strategic plan reflects our commitment to creating a thriving, inclusive, and safe downtown community. Through months of consultation and deliberation with members and key stakeholders, this plan outlines our vision and mission statements, identifies our goals, and provides a roadmap for our actions to achieve them.

The plan focuses on ensuring safety as the foundation, attracting people back to the downtown core, boosting the economy, fostering community engagement, and championing the vibrancy of Granville Street. I'm excited about the future of Downtown Van, and with this strategic plan as our compass, we'll achieve our vision of a vibrant downtown core. Let's embark on this journey together and enhance Downtown Van as a great place to live, work, and visit.



Melissa Higgs

Board Chair, Downtown Van

# MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

As I step into my new role as Downtown Van's President and CEO, I am acutely aware of the challenges our community faces, yet I am also filled with optimism for the future. The past few years have posed numerous challenges as the global pandemic transformed our way of life, work, and business operations. However, in times like these, we must unite and channel our collective energy into building a thriving and resilient downtown.

Over the next five years, our strategic plan will chart a course for success, ensuring that our downtown remains a vibrant hub for culture, commerce, and community engagement. While we acknowledge the challenges ahead, we view them as opportunities for growth and transformation. Together with our members, partners, and stakeholders, we aim to create an environment that fosters thriving businesses, enhances residents' quality of life, and offers visitors a unique downtown experience.

With your support and involvement, our downtown will emerge stronger than ever. Let us embark on this journey together.



Jane Talbot

President & CEO, Downtown Van



# WHO WE ARE

Downtown Van (Downtown Vancouver Business Improvement Association) is the largest BIA in Western Canada and home to 8,000 members. We are a diverse community spread across 90 downtown city blocks, comprised of property and business owners who share one common goal: Making downtown Vancouver a safe, sustainable, and welcoming place for all.

We're proud to have had our current 10-year mandate renewed by Vancouver City Council in 2020, and we're prepared to continue our mission. We have an annual operating budget of approximately \$6.5 million that funds our initiatives, most of which comes from a municipal levy on all our members.

Our team of 40 full-time staff includes 24 Safety Ambassadors, and a Clean Team Members – public safety in downtown Vancouver is one of our top priorities, and we take it seriously. Our Downtown Van team is always quick to support in economic development, placemaking, events, and community safety.

At Downtown Van, we believe in the power of collaboration, and that's why we have partnered with a number of BIAs, organizations, and allied stakeholders to promote and support downtown Vancouver as the vibrant, safe, and inclusive heart of our city.

# WHAT WE DO

We manage large-scale downtown events, public spaces, and placemaking activities and sponsor over 50 festivals and events in the downtown core. We also support numerous programs and activities that align with our vision.

Our members are our top priority, and we take great pride in listening to them, understanding their needs, and advocating on their behalf. We work collaboratively to ensure active involvement and are always up for a challenge. We continuously strive to deliver the best possible experience.

Our Strategic Plan is a testament to our commitment to lead with integrity and actively involve our members in everything we do. No matter the business, big or small, all voices deserve to be heard, which is why we have consulted several stakeholder groups and numerous individuals to develop this plan.



# WHERE WE ARE





# VISION

Downtown Vancouver is the regional heart of culture and commerce, delivering an incomparable urban experience that is inclusive, safe and inspiring.

# MISSION

Downtown Van delivers a diverse, dynamic, and economically strong community by providing leadership and fostering collaboration among its members.

# VALUES

## LEADERSHIP

We lead on issues of importance to our members and advocate on their behalf.

## COLLABORATION

We develop strategic alliances to achieve our mission.

## INTEGRITY

We are accountable to our membership and lead with a strong moral compass.

## INCLUSIVITY

We seek diverse perspectives and expertise to nurture a welcoming and innovative downtown.

# WHAT OUR MEMBERS TOLD US

Downtown Van surveyed its membership in March 2023 while preparing this Strategic Plan to better understand their needs and priorities.

## Key Survey Highlights

- 84% of the surveyed members identified Crime and Safety, along with Homelessness as their greatest concern for the current state of downtown Vancouver.
- Our members ranked Clean Team, Economic Development, and Downtown Safety Ambassadors as the most important Downtown Van programs.
- Crime and Safety, Homelessness, Cleanliness and Festivals & Events were identified as the main opportunities Downtown Van should focus on in the next five years.
- Affordability (relating to taxes, rents and housing) was identified as a key concern.





# STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Much has changed in the world, including in downtown Vancouver, over the past few years. Recognizing this, Downtown Van is committed to focusing our attention on realizing or advancing the following key Strategic Priorities in the next five years:

- 1. Create a Safer Downtown**
- 2. Provide Reasons for People to Come Downtown**
- 3. Elevate the Downtown Economy + Reduce Barriers to Doing Business**
- 4. Strengthen Engagement with Our Members + Stakeholders**
- 5. Champion a Thriving Granville Street**

As we work towards advancing these Strategic Priorities, we are conscious of several emerging key issues. Consequently, we will consider economic development, climate change, reconciliation and inclusiveness in our decision-making and actions.



# STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1

## CREATE A SAFER DOWNTOWN

### ACTIONS

- Focus Downtown Van's advocacy to the municipal and provincial governments to address public safety downtown as a high priority
- Enhance the profile of Downtown Van's community safety program
- Strengthen Downtown Van's partnerships/ coordination with the Vancouver Police Department, Vancouver Coastal Health and the City of Vancouver to address public safety in downtown

### WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

- Strengthened relationships with municipal and provincial government through increased meetings
- Increased meet & greet visits to businesses
- Enhanced and increased member surveys related to sentiments on the perception of safety
- Increased frequency of data reporting to membership and public





## STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2

# PROVIDE REASONS FOR PEOPLE TO COME DOWNTOWN

### ACTIONS

- Advocate for and support policies and incentives to bring office workers back downtown
- Lead efforts to create new placemaking initiatives, programs and special events that make for a more dynamic, fun, safe and attractive downtown Vancouver for all people
- Create beautiful streetscapes and interactive public spaces through urban design and laneway transformations
- Create, sponsor and facilitate events, festivals and experiences to increase exploration and engagement in downtown and bring new and exciting experiential opportunities to downtown

### WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

- Expansion of larger-scale events and tracked visitation
- Increased number of festivals, events, and activations
- Decreased number of vacant storefronts
- Increased seasonal activations and installations in public spaces and addition of new laneway transformations



# STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3

## ELEVATE THE DOWNTOWN ECONOMY+ REDUCE BARRIERS TO DOING BUSINESS

### ACTIONS

- Advocate for faster, more streamlined development, building and special event permitting processes by the City of Vancouver, and simpler regulations and fees
- Partner with other key organizations, agencies, corporations and stakeholders to support more initiatives, events and programs downtown and to lobby municipal government for key policy changes in support of downtown economic growth
- Advocate for and actively support new development in downtown Vancouver, including more hotels, retail/ commercial space, cultural facilities and new/ enhanced public amenities (such as public washrooms, daycare spaces, public transit infrastructure, etc.)
- Advocate for more affordability broadly: e.g. affordable housing, construction costs, and the cost of doing business

### WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

- Increased number of hotel rooms downtown
- Decreased barriers for downtown workforce, including enhanced transit services and access to childcare
- Increased speed of permit approvals



# STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4

## STRENGTHEN ENGAGEMENT WITH OUR MEMBERS + STAKEHOLDERS

### ACTIONS

- Strengthen the Membership Engagement & Communications function within Downtown Van, and aim to increase engagement with more of our members by the end of this Strategic Plan cycle
- Increase the frequency, diversity and number of annual Membership Engagement opportunities/ events/outreach activities
- Continue to work with external stakeholders on implementing the Strategic Priorities in this Strategic Plan
- Develop a plan to engage with the host xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations

### WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

- Increased attendee numbers at Downtown Van events
- Increased number of member contacts in database
- Increased engagements with external stakeholders
- Established key relationships with xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations to develop a process for seeking guidance and input on crucial initiatives impacting downtown



## STRATEGIC PRIORITY 5

# CHAMPION A THRIVING GRANVILLE STREET

### ACTIONS

- Allocate appropriate resources and funding to address the socioeconomic challenges of Granville Street as an urgent, high priority for Downtown Van
- Take an active, leading role in the City of Vancouver's Granville Street Planning Program, to ensure our members' interests are represented in this process
- Lobby the municipal and provincial governments to support the continued renewal of Granville Street
- Support the advancement of an Office for the Night-time Economy to enhance a 24-hour economy
- Ideate and advocate for the entire length of downtown Granville Street 'from bridge to water,' including initiatives to enhance both the north and south ends of the street



### WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

- Increased occupancy of commercial spaces on Granville Street
- Increased new development on Granville Street
- Improved safety on Granville Street
- Increased number of public events on Granville Street



# GLOSSARY

This list of the definitions of some key terms and words used in this Strategic Plan is provided to ensure clarity for all readers of this Plan.

## **Advocate** (verb)

Refers to Downtown Van's role as advocating for, or on behalf of, an initiative, policy change, event, program, development application or other similar things, rather than leading or partnering on delivering such things

## **City of Vancouver/city**

When capitalized, refers to the Vancouver municipal corporation, including City Council. When not capitalized or without the words "of Vancouver" following, "city" refers to the general urban area of Vancouver rather than the Vancouver municipal corporation

## **Clean Team**

Refers to Downtown Van's employees within the Community Safety Program focusing on downtown sanitation

## **Community Safety Program**

Downtown Van's Safety Ambassadors and Clean Team members

## **Diverse, Diversity**

Refers to diversity in socio-economic, ethnic, religious, sexual orientation and age demographics, and to Downtown Van's inclusive embrace of the diverse variety of individuals, groups, businesses and organizations that are welcome in Downtown Vancouver

## **Downtown Van**

Refers to the Downtown Vancouver Business Improvement Association, formally called DVBIA.

## **Downtown/downtown Vancouver**

Refers to the core downtown area of Vancouver, approximately corresponding with the Downtown Van's boundaries

## **Granville Street Planning Program**

Refers to the City of Vancouver's current (2023–2024) comprehensive planning review of Granville Street, including land use and zoning, development and design guidelines, and heritage policies

## **Inclusiveness**

Refers to Downtown Van's recognition that Downtown is for everyone and that our efforts are focused on including our members, workers, stakeholders, visitors, Indigenous people, and the marginalized

## **Lead** (verb)

Refers to Downtown Van's role as leading an initiative, event, program, policy change or other similar things, rather than advocating for or partnering on delivering such things

### **Night-Time Economy Office**

Refers to a single point of contact at the City of Vancouver that supports and promotes a safe, vibrant, diverse, and sustainable night-time economy that benefits residents, businesses, and visitors alike

### **Partner (verb)**

Refers to Downtown Van's role as partnering with other organizations, agencies or corporations on delivering an initiative, event, program, policy change or other similar things rather than advocating for or leading such things

### **Placemaking**

Refers to organized activities, events, installations and physical infrastructure that supports the creation and sustainment of public events and activities in the public realm

### **Public Realm**

Refers to public open spaces (streets, sidewalks, plazas, lanes, parks, etc.) and privately owned open spaces that are publicly accessible

### **Reconciliation**

Refers to Downtown Van's acknowledgement of historical discrimination against Indigenous peoples and our ongoing efforts at meaningful reconciliation

### **Stakeholders**

Refers to both individuals and groups that have a shared stake or interest in downtown Vancouver, and includes Downtown Van members, Downtown Van staff, other organizations, agencies, corporations, governments, community service agencies, workers, customers, visitors, tourists, residents and students

### **Street Animation / Activation**

Refers to programming or events in public places, designed and delivered by Downtown Van or others, to showcase a space, artwork, attraction or milestone, attract customers or visitors, bring people together to enjoy entertainment or an activity, and to celebrate, commemorate or demonstrate



# CREDITS

This Strategic Plan was developed by Downtown Van (Downtown Vancouver Business Improvement Association) and its consultant, with input from multiple stakeholders and interest groups including, but not limited to:

- Building Owners and Managers Association of British Columbia
- Ceres Terminals Canada
- Destination Vancouver
- EventLab Productions
- Gathering Place Community Centre
- LOCO BC
- SFU Public Square
- UBC Robson Square
- Vancouver Art Gallery
- Vancouver Economic Commission
- Vancouver Fraser Port Authority
- Vancouver Hotel Destination Association
- Vancouver International Marathon Society
- City of Vancouver BIA liaison staff

Downtown Van:

- Strategic Plan Working Group
- Policy Advisory Committee
- Board of Directors and past Chairs
- Granville Street Stakeholders Group
- Senior Management Team and Staff
- Membership at large (through a survey that received 311 responses)

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# APPENDICES

Other information sources and reference documents:

- State of Downtown 2023 Report
- Granville Street Reimagining 2021 Report
- ReImagine Downtown 2015 Report

To access these documents visit [dtvan.ca/research](http://dtvan.ca/research)  
or scan the QR Code.

DTVAN.CA/RESEARCH



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