

Draft Economic Action Plan
Engagement Summary

October 2015



Introduction

On September 11, 2015, the Mayor's Task Force on Economic Development and Prosperity launched its draft economic action plan, *Making Victoria: Unleashing Potential* for public input at the *Thinklandia* kick-off event on the rooftop of the Bastion Square Parkade.

The Task Force's mandate is to advise on how City Hall can best deliver an economic development function that will increase the genuine well-being of citizens. Working with its many partners, City Hall has a role to play in increasing household incomes by making it easier for business to thrive and by supporting entrepreneurs and innovation.

"Create Prosperity Through Economic Development" is a key objective of the City of Victoria's strategic plan for focus and investment over the next four years. Appointed by City Council in April 2015, the Task Force is chaired by Mayor Lisa Helps and includes Councillor Margaret Lucas and community leaders in tech, tourism, labour, green business, commercial real estate, and community and regional economic development.

Public Input

Public feedback on the draft economic action plan was sought by way of an online survey at www.victoria.ca/prosperity, email correspondence to prosperity@victoria.ca and social media (#VicProsperity on Twitter) until the end of September.

The draft economic action plan and participation in the online survey were promoted on the City's website and associated Have Your Say portal, media release, social media channels (Twitter and Facebook), by email from the Mayor's office to local business, education, tourism and government stakeholders and neighbourhood associations, and by Task Force members sharing the opportunity with their networks.

The Task Force received input and support for the draft plan by email and by written correspondence from the University of Victoria and the Urban Design Institute (UDI). Emails and correspondence are included in the Appendices.

Earned media coverage of the draft plan and survey helped broaden reach. The "Team Victoria" San Francisco Trade Mission led by the Mayor with 31 representatives from local business, education, high tech and tourism sectors in mid-September, helped to promote the draft economic action plan and opportunity to provide input. Media clippings are available in the Appendices.

Social Media

While the City's social media posts were shared on Twitter and Facebook, input on the draft plan was not received on these channels. A social media summary is included in the Appendices.

Online Survey

The online survey was available for two and a half weeks and was completed in part by 149 respondents. The public had the option of completing the short version or the long version of the survey. Participants were not required to answer every question. The survey results are available in the Appendices.

Who We Heard From in Online Survey

Which neighbourhood do you live in? Of 149 respondents:

26	Outside of the City of Victoria
21	Fairfield
16	Downtown
13	Fernwood
11	James Bay
10	Victoria West
9	Hillside-Quadra
9	North or South Jubilee
7	Gonzales
7	North Park
7	Oaklands
6	Rockland
4	Harris Green
3	Burnside Gorge

How old are you? Of 147 respondents:

Number of Participants:	Age:
68	40 – 59
54	25 – 39
22	60 years or older
2	18 – 24
1	Under 18

Gender: Of 148 respondents:

72	male
70	female
6	prefer not to say

Number of Business Owners: Of 148 respondents:

55	business owners
93	not business owners

Number of years business operated: Of 62 respondents:

31	More than five years
16	Less than one year
11	3 – 5 years
4	1 – 2 years

Experience at City Hall for business: Of 64 respondents:

20	Noted their experience was Good to Excellent
26	Neutral
5	Fair
13	Not good

Number considering starting up a business in Victoria: Of 123 respondents:

27	Yes
96	No

What would help you make the decision to establish your business in Victoria? Out of 22 respondents, key themes included:

- Improved development approval processes
- Less red tape; can do attitude
- Promotion of locally-owned business; relaxed zoning regulations
- Affordable rental space, fees, taxes
- Accessible downtown space, walkable, transportation and parking
- Networking and fun learning opportunities

What We Heard

The survey contained both quantitative and qualitative questions on the draft economic action plan's proposed "Business Hub" at City Hall and six primary engines to drive Victoria's businesses, generate jobs, raise household incomes, and increase well-being over the next four years.

Business Hub at City Hall

The role of the "Business Hub" is to streamline and de-mystify business and development processes at City Hall; make it easier to do business in Victoria; advise on how to reduce unnecessary red tape; connect entrepreneurs with the resources they need; and accelerate the development of a vibrant downtown.

There was high support for the proposed five main functions of the Business Hub. Out of 110 respondents, most agreed or strongly agreed with the following:

- Streamline and de-mystify all business and development processes at City Hall. (85.4% agree to strongly agree)
- Make it easier to do business in Victoria. (90.09% agree or strongly agree)
- Advise on how best to reduce unnecessary red tape. (82.9% agree or strongly agree)
- Connect entrepreneurs with the resources they need. (83.6% agree or strongly agree)
- Accelerate the development of a vibrant downtown. (85.3% agree or strongly agree)

Key themes for what is missing in the Business Hub function included:

- Work with the region on economic development
- Share data collection and analysis
- Encourage sustainable businesses (e.g. low carbon footprint, environmental protections)
- Ensure accessibility
- Develop co-working/incubation spaces
- Encourage young entrepreneurs
- Develop and accelerate business partnership models
- Involve First Nations and promote aboriginal business
- Celebrate local business
- Create a positive streetscape

Of 106 respondents, 81 (76.4%) supported the Business Hub being located at City Hall. Suggestions for other locations for the City Hub included:

- Revitalize an empty storefront; retail location
- Downtown business space
- High profile location on Government street with exposure to tourists and events
- Accessible for all
- Free parking
- Regional space

Of 105 respondents, 95 (90.5%) agreed the Business Hub service would be of benefit to entrepreneurs and new businesses in Victoria.

Of 32 responses, key themes for additional feedback on the proposed Business Hub included:

- To be effective it needs to be well-funded
- It should not duplicate the current role of the Downtown Victoria Business Association and the Greater Victoria Chamber of Commerce
- It should deal with cross-municipality bylaw conflicts
- Leadership from private and public sectors
- Make it casual and approachable
- Include social entrepreneurs and social enterprise
- No fees
- Think beyond downtown
- We need it yesterday

Six Primary Engines

Of the 93 – 95 respondents, there was strong support for four of the proposed engines, with the highest support for the Technology engine, followed by Entrepreneurship, Start-ups and Social Enterprise. The Government engine received moderate support.

- Advanced Education and Research & Development (75.6% agree or strongly agree)
- Ocean and Marine Sector (76.3% agree or strongly agree)
- Experiential Tourism (80% agree or strongly agree)
- Government (66% agree or strongly agree)
- Technology (87.2% agree or strongly agree)
- Entrepreneurship, Start-Ups and Social Enterprise (86% agree or strongly agree)

Key themes in the general feedback on the six proposed engines and draft plan included:

- Downtown UVic Campus and major art gallery – use space on the waterfront
- Consider accelerating start-ups over next four years
- Need to be more specific on what Experiential Tourism includes; include cycling and walking
- Include "accessible" tourist experiences
- Define "Social Enterprise" earlier in the plan
- Include green energy/sustainable development
- Strengthen partnerships and knowledge sharing
- Ensure there are no derelict buildings
- Business should lead economic change in partnership with government
- Include arts and culture as a primary engine
- Include health and wellness as an economic engine
- Is there a need to grow government?
- Keep rents low for business
- Focus on creating private equity systems
- Connect newcomers to Victoria with jobs
- Partner with Gustavson School of Business at UVic as partner for development projects
- Consider return to work programs
- Expand focus from cruise ships representing tourism
- Consider new tourist attractions downtown and develop waterfront
- Enhance downtown storefronts (e.g. clean, new awnings, empty spaces)
- Emphasis should be on attracting small, green manufacturing companies (light industrial)
- Make plan less linear and more as an "economic ecosystem"
- Reduce homelessness

At this point of the survey, out of 95 respondents, 54 (56.8%) chose to complete the long version of the survey, while 41 (43.2%) chose to complete the short version of the survey.

The long version of the survey asked participants to provide feedback on what can be improved and is there anything missing for each of the six engine's objectives, actions and metrics.

Below is a summary of feedback for each of the six engines.

Advanced Education and Research & Development

- Create a downtown campus for post-secondary institutions
- Take a leadership role
- Strengthen co-op placements
- Bursaries for co-ops
- Plan for people to find jobs who have experience but are not recent graduates
- Offer informal and formal education, professional development
- Become a Learning City
- Include private equity investment
- Lower taxes for entrepreneurs
- Offer tax credit/benefit/reward/grant for studying and staying on Vancouver Island
- Consider non-profit contribution
- Be clear on leadership and people-power

Ocean and Marine Sector

- Consider separating oceans and marine in objectives section of plan
- Skepticism of how Victoria can become an "Ocean City". Halifax tried this.
- Need to better define "global knowledge hub"
- Build capacity and knowledge
- A vision for partnerships, leadership and collaboration
- Victoria waterfront needs a master plan
- Work with multiple stakeholders to advocate and demand safety protocols
- Need metrics to reflect engagement with First Nations and revenue generation

Experiential Tourism

- Improve waterfront services between Ogden Point and Oak Bay
- Enhance streetscape of Government Street for tourists
- Customs pre-clearance may run into problems – maybe hire more staff to improve current system
- Need to expand scope to include conferences, training session and professional development that are offered by institutions, organizations, business – social entrepreneurs
- Private equity
- More money for global advertising
- Be careful tourism doesn't inflate costs
- Don't need more whale-watching boats
- More tax breaks for local cottage industries
- Ongoing stewardship
- Requires cost-benefit analysis and financial projections

Government

- Collaborate with other municipalities and the region
- Need to include non-profit sector as a significant economic player
- Create a culture of excellence at City of Victoria
- Get unnecessary government offices out of downtown
- Need to stop depending on government jobs
- Focus less on solely downtown and increase revitalization of north end
- Define partnerships with government in plan
- Hire local grads into government positions
- Expand and improve Ogden Point cruise ship facilities

Technology

- Recognize linkages between technology and education
- Attract highly qualified personnel to the region
- Be specific on what aspects of technology are being targeted in plan
- Make sure Better Business Bureau and Chamber of Commerce are encouraged to continue in their good work as tech sector grows
- Include "retention" in the Actions section of plan
- Foster a strong sense of teamwork
- Infrastructure investment and development plan and budget
- Monitor and measure tech companies success
- Measure local tech services provided by local firms vs imported services; exported services
- Don't levy too many new taxes as it will slow growth
- Need more government regulations in this sector
- Hire local talent

Entrepreneurship, Start-Ups and Social Enterprise

- Need to establish a youthful vibe
- Define which businesses are run by Songhees and Esquimalt peoples
- Need incubation space in downtown core for start-ups
- A procurement program is needed to encourage purchasing from small companies
- Need an inventory of what currently exists in local market
- Let market decide which businesses to support
- Lack of arts and culture reflected in plan
- Make sure there is a government committee to recommend solutions
- How does "made in Victoria" loan program differ from the Community Micro Lending?
- Need more clarity about specific sectors
- Why were just credit unions mentioned? What about banks?
- Need to be specific in metrics
- Include partnerships and collaboration with key stakeholders, e.g. Social Planning Council, credit unions, post-secondary schools, etc.

Some key themes for the question “**What does a prosperous City look like to you?**” included:

- Socially, culturally and economically diverse
- Beautiful, vibrant and creative City of Victoria
- Less empty storefronts and vacant space
- Thriving local business.
- Pride in neighbourhoods
- Respectful
- A green, walkable city with improved bike paths and secure bike storage
- “A” level attractions downtown and vibrant waterfront (e.g. shops, restaurants, pubs)
- Reduced homelessness
- Affordable housing
- Healthy city with strong arteries
- Busy streets including holidays
- Inclusive, shared and distributed wealth
- A \$15 minimum wage
- Opportunities for citizens regardless of education, age or economic level

Next Steps

Public input will inform the recommended economic action plan that will be presented by the Mayor's Task Force on Economic Development and Prosperity to City Council for consideration at the Governance and Priorities Committee meeting on October 22, 2015.

Appendices

- Survey results
- Email correspondence
- Urban Development Institute letter
- University of Victoria feedback
- Social media summary
- Media release
- Media coverage
- Website content
- Stakeholder email and list