

Economic Development Action Plan Report 2023–2025



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Plan context & objectives.

The 2023–2025 Economic Development Action Plan, adopted in October 2023, provides a roadmap for strengthening economic resilience, attracting investment, and enhancing community vibrancy in the Township of Esquimalt. Developed to align with Council’s Strategic Priorities, the 2020 Business Investment Roadmap, and the 2014 Economic Development Strategy, the plan reflects both long-term vision and immediate opportunities.

The objectives of the Action Plan are to:

- Support business retention and promote investment
- Strengthen Esquimalt’s brand and profile as a business and lifestyle destination
- Help revitalize commercial districts
- Improve economic partnerships and advance Indigenous economic reconciliation

Approach

The Action Plan serves as the Township’s blueprint for advancing local prosperity, competitiveness, and resilience. Building on the strategic direction established in the 2020 Roadmap, the plan is organized into four overarching themes that capture the community’s most important economic priorities.

Each project has been carefully selected and aligned with these themes, reflecting opportunities identified through previous stakeholder engagement, market analysis, and Council direction. Initiatives are strategically sequenced to balance immediate wins, medium-term outcomes, and foundational efforts that support long-term growth. This structure ensures efficient use of resources, strong partnerships, and measurable progress that can be reported to Council and the community.

Progress by theme & project

Theme 1 – Infrastructure & land

Revitalization and investment readiness. Improving key assets, enhancing corridors, and preparing the community for future investment.

Key projects, actions and progress

1.1 500 Park Place North options analysis

Currently in progress and scheduled for Council consideration in Fall 2025, this analysis will help define how 500 Park Place North, together with other Township lands, can support long-term land-use and investment opportunities.

Not yet initiated due to resource constraints

- Wayfinding and signage enhancements
- Commercial market feasibility/land-use study (Esquimalt Road and Esquimalt Business Park)
- Vision documents (Town Centre, Esquimalt Road and Esquimalt Business Park)

Theme 2 – Marketing & communications

Place brand and marketing. Telling Esquimalt’s story through branding, campaigns, and digital outreach.

Key projects, actions and progress

2.1 Place brand and marketing plan.

- In March 2024, open houses and online surveys invited residents to weigh in on potential campaign names, imagery, and messaging for the new brand. Feedback focused on the importance of representing Esquimalt’s friendly character and dispelling outdated safety perceptions
- The brand was formally adopted at the November 2024 Council meeting, marking the start of enhanced marketing and economic development initiatives.
- A brand guide and collateral were developed for “Esquimalt - The Place to Be”.

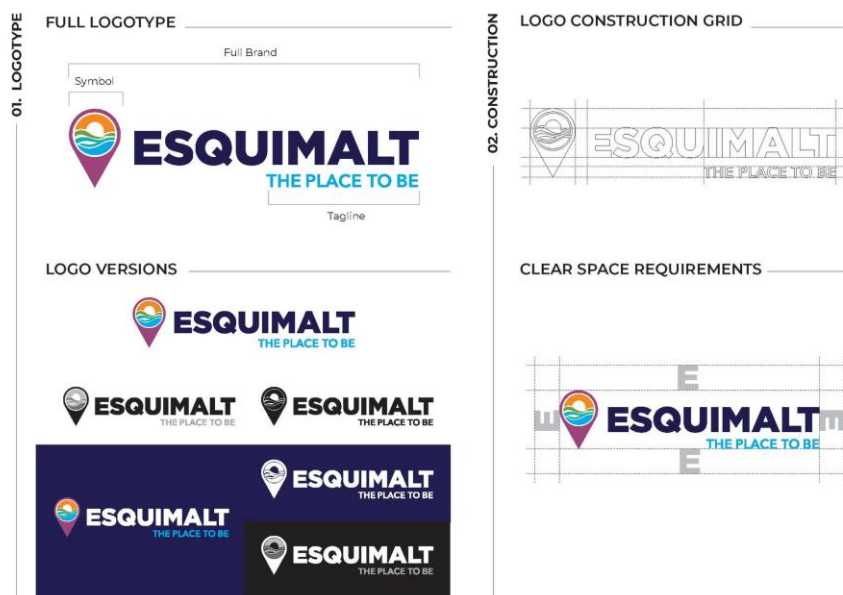


Figure 1 Esquimalt Place to Be logo

2.2 Economic development website and dashboard.

- WhyEsquimalt.ca is Esquimalt's new dedicated economic development and investment attraction website, officially launched in July 2025 to serve as the digital home of the place brand, "Esquimalt – The Place to Be." The website provides a central, accessible hub for current business owners, potential investors, entrepreneurs, and community partners to explore Esquimalt's economic landscape, with features supporting the needs of local and prospective businesses.
- Over 400 businesses are already registered on the site, and work will continue to grow this to our full complement of 850+ registered businesses.

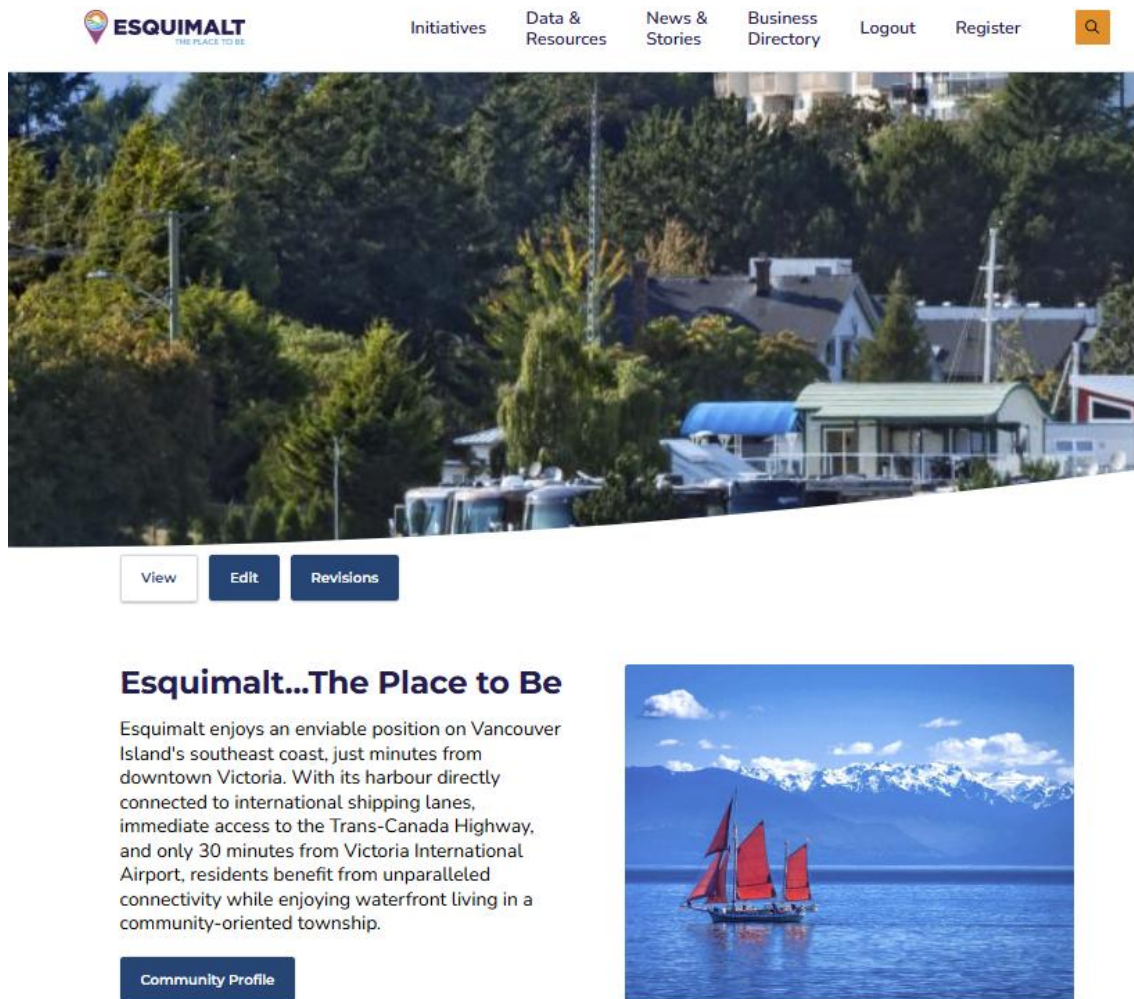


Figure 2 Why Esquimalt front page

2.3 Investment prospectus.

- The investment prospectus is available digitally on the “Build Your Future Here” page at WhyEsquimalt.ca and provides an overview for prospective investors, highlighting Esquimalt’s strategic advantages within the capital region and southern Vancouver Island. It details the township’s integrated economy, scenic coastal setting, strong community and business networks, and proximity to downtown Victoria, outlining new development opportunities in commercial, residential, and tourism sectors.
- This page will continue to evolve and grow as feedback from sector users is incorporated into it.
- A mini visitor guide is currently being developed and will be available as a downloadable document.

2.4 Community dialogue on economic development event

- South Island Prosperity Partnership (SIPP) convenes the annual Rising Economy Conference and Local Leadership Forum, bringing together elected officials, municipal staff, and regional partners to collaborate on shared economic priorities. These events provide an important platform for advancing regional dialogue, and SIPP’s Impact Report highlights them as key avenues for municipalities to engage collectively on the annual Rising Economy Conference and Local Leadership Forum, bringing together pressing economic issues.



Figure 3 SIPP Local Leadership Event 2025

- At the local level, the Esquimalt Chamber of Commerce, in collaboration with Township economic development staff, is exploring a series of business engagement events to ensure community voices are included in shaping future priorities. This initiative would build momentum toward the upcoming Official Community Plan review, creating a bridge between local dialogue and regional collaboration.

2.5 Street banners and cultural banners

- In December 2024, the Township of Esquimalt unveiled a refreshed Street Banner Program aimed at enhancing the visual appeal of public spaces and reinforcing community identity. The initiative includes the installation of 30 welcome banners and 84 seasonal fall/winter designs.
- The retired nylon banners will be upcycled into reusable bags as part of the sustainable "Banner to Bag" initiative, with sales planned for fall 2025.
- In early 2025, the Township launched a public art call for new designs for a series of cultural banners at Esquimalt Gorge Park. The winning artist created 4 designs honouring the Japanese connection to the park, which are printed and installed on streetlight poles throughout the Gorge Park parking area. The banners enhance the visitor experience, celebrate community diversity, and contribute to the revitalization of public spaces. The new banners were in place for the Japanese Cultural Family Day hosted at the Pavilion on Aug 23, 2025.



Figure 4 Street Banners

Not yet initiated due to resource constraints

None.

Theme 3 – Business development

Business development and retention. Helping existing businesses, attracting new enterprises, and encouraging a business-friendly environment.

Key projects, actions and progress

3.1 Customer Relationship Management (CRM) & Business Retention Expansion (BRE).

- The CRM was identified early in the plan as a critical tool for Business Retention and Expansion (BRE), enabling the team to centralize business contacts, track interactions, and monitor engagement trends over time.
- One of the most effective features of the CRM is the built-in newsletter module, which enables staff to target specific groups of businesses with information that is directly relevant to them — for example, outreach to Emergency Essential Services or requests for feedback on parking changes affecting businesses in a particular corridor.
- Over the past two years, 13 newsletters and 13 electronic direct mail (EDM) campaigns have been conducted, reaching more than 800 businesses totaling just under 12,000 email communications.
- The CRM has also supported cross-departmental efforts, helping deliver economic development communications for department-specific projects, including the Active Transportation Plan and the Official Community Plan review.

3.2 Business Façade Improvement Program.

The program is now in its third year with increasing interest year on year. The following businesses and properties have been approved or are in progress.

- 2023 – Fraternal Order of Eagles, Fort Properties, Vamp Hairdressers
- 2024 – Errant Herbal, Splashpad Mural, Warm Gift Shop
- 2025 – Panago, 1314 Esquimalt Road
- In progress/under consideration – 829 Admirals, Reactive Wear, Miche Café, Kid Sister Ice-cream, 845 Viewfield Road



Figure 5 Splashpad mural

3.3 Disaster preparedness and recovery

- Under the leadership of the Emergency Program Manager, the Economic Development team has been actively engaged in Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) preparedness activities. This has included contributing to planning discussions, identifying potential economic impacts of disaster scenarios, and ensuring business continuity considerations are embedded in preparedness measures.
- The Economic Development Manager also serves as an active board member of the BC Economic Development Association (BCEDA), where resources and best practices on emergency preparedness and recovery are regularly shared and leveraged from the BCEDA website to support local businesses.

3.4 Business licence bylaw review

- The Economic Development team led a comprehensive review of the Township's Business Licence and Regulation Bylaw to ensure it reflects current business practices, aligns with provincial standards, and supports a business-friendly environment. This review resulted in updated definitions, gender-inclusive and simplified language, reorganized sections, and alignment of liquor licence categories with the Liquor and Cannabis Regulation Branch.

Not yet initiated due to resource constraints

To carry out business walks and data collection, additional capacity will be required. The Township will engage the Esquimalt Chamber of Commerce and local businesses to identify potential volunteers to support this effort.

Theme 4 – Partnerships

Partnerships harness collective strengths and resources to increase economic impact, drive innovation, and advance community priorities through collaboration.

Key relationships

4.1 Esquimalt Chamber of Commerce

- Joint efforts and collaboration on the Business Façade Improvement Program, as well as ongoing relationship building through meetings with board members and participation at mixers and community events.
- Funding provided for the Shop Local Program, which is a digital platform that will connect local businesses and shoppers.

4.2 Kosapsum Nation and Songhees Nation – Economic Reconciliation

- Council approved a new budget allocation of \$5,000 per nation to assist their economic development initiatives
- Meetings/resources/support on topics of procurement, support to business and local government information
- The South Island Indigenous Business Directory is featured on the front page of WhyEsquimalt.ca. The Indigenous Business Directory lists self-identified Indigenous businesses in southern Vancouver Island to make it easier for businesses and procurement professionals to find and use their services.

4.3 South Island Prosperity Partnership (SIPP)

- A strong relationship with SIPP positions Esquimalt to amplify its local priorities on a regional stage, ensuring our community benefits from shared advocacy, investment opportunities, and an integrated economic ecosystem.

4.4 Destination Greater Victoria (DGV)

- Engagement with DGV has involved meetings with the executive leadership team, providing support for the hotel prospectus, participating in future tourism product development and attending mixers and industry events.

Summary

The 2023–2025 Economic Development Action Plan has provided clear direction and momentum for advancing Esquimalt’s economic priorities. Progress has been achieved across all four themes:

Infrastructure & Land. Options analysis for 500 Park Place North is helping define how municipal holdings can contribute to a broader land-use and investment strategy.

Marketing & Communications. Adoption of the “Esquimalt – The Place to Be” brand, launch of WhyEsquimalt.ca, and delivery of a digital investment prospectus have strengthened Esquimalt’s profile.

Business Development. Implementation of the CRM and BRE program, growth of the Business Façade Improvement Program, and bylaw modernization have enhanced Esquimalt’s business-friendly environment.

Partnerships. Stronger ties with the Chamber of Commerce, SIPP, Destination Greater Victoria, and local First Nations have created new opportunities for collaboration and investment attraction.

Overall, more than 850 businesses are now engaged through newsletters, outreach, and WhyEsquimalt.ca, and Esquimalt is gaining regional recognition for its collaborative approach and successful initiatives that support business growth and community vitality.

Forward plan

Building on these achievements, the Township will focus on completing unfinished projects and addressing resource needs to ensure full delivery of the Action Plan. Priorities for 2026-2027 include advancing Infrastructure & Land initiatives, expanding marketing tools, deepening business engagement, and strengthening regional partnerships.

Unfinished Priorities

1. Infrastructure & Land. Advance wayfinding and signage, the commercial market feasibility/land-use study, and vision documents. These projects will require consultant support and budget allocation and will be coordinated with the Facilities Master Plan and Development Capacity Study to align 500 Park Place North with other Township lands.
2. Marketing & Communications. Complete the mini visitor guide and continue updates to WhyEsquimalt.ca and the investment prospectus.
3. Business Development. Initiate business walks and data collection with Chamber and community volunteers. Expansion of the Business Façade Improvement Program may require increased funding as demand grows.
4. Partnerships. Sustain collaboration with SIPP, Destination Greater Victoria, and local Nations. Continued funding for SIPP membership is critical to access regional advocacy, research, and investment opportunities.

Resources

Several initiatives were sequenced later in the Action Plan to account for staffing and funding needs. Consultant expertise will be required for technical studies, while volunteer partnerships can support data collection.

With Council's continued support for both people and budget resources, the Township will be positioned to complete these priorities and sustain the momentum established in 2023-2024. This will ensure Esquimalt remains a competitive, resilient, and welcoming place to live, work, and invest.