



GOLD
RIVER

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

VILLAGE OF GOLD RIVER

2025-2029

SUMMARY

For all the grit of a booming 60s forestry mill town in a rear-view mirror and finding new footing in the economy of the future, what startles the senses in Gold River is the way nature's canvas paints magic here – where the waters carve, fall and roll in mossy rainforest, snow-capped mountain peaks, and a Nootka Sound that has rugged grace in eyes that think about infinity and opportunity in a Pacific Ocean that can be glass and feisty. The trees hurt the neck in up-turn of head to find their top.

Human nature will find its path forward in a pragmatic, specific, and action-oriented Economic Development Plan that recognizes the importance of continuing to build industrial legacy in rare, big block, deep ocean water industrial land facing a world of global resource development and trade opportunity. There's a desire to nurture a self-sufficient community that creates quality jobs, generates revenue that helps pay for desired services and amenities, and fully recapitalizes the Village's assets – from streets to recreation facilities. Industrial development is required to achieve this. Our 60% of effort.

Added to by intent to enable active outdoor adventure experiences in tourism product development with associated need for organization and marketing. Our additional 20% of effort.

Enabled by specificity of ideas generation and solution-seeking in high priority issues identified by the community: the return of a grocery store, nurturing a Village Centre that celebrates community pride and commerce, and greater housing affordability and choice. Empowered by pathways that nurture strong community leadership we will need for the generations. Specific, recognizing economic development resources to "do things" are limited and choices need to be careful. Human spirit is...free; impossibility is barrier of the mind. There is much we can do – presented in this Plan – as matters of policy here, or a paintbrush there, or empowered community leadership on an enduring basis. Our remaining 20% of effort.

Nature itself will continue to be unbridled, big self in its rhythm of the seasons...breathing itself into the souls and spirit of people here now, and inspired to move here. Nature whispers the secrets of the good life here: Get out...side. Smell the freshest air. Hear...the quiet. Feel the friendly in the locals. Feel free to imagine and create in new and unconstrained ways.

There's nothing usual about Gold River. As any Gold River resident would tell you, life is better that way. Join us on our ambitious journey to come.

Created with input from industry sector analysis, a community discovery workshop (20 attendees), a community survey (103 responses), 12 interviews, a tourism focus group, a community Economic Development Summit (22 attendees), and extensive interaction with Village of Gold River Council and Administration.

VISION STATEMENT

Enterprising By Nature

OUR STORY

With one of BC's rare coastal big block industrial land holdings, Gold River will thrive as a generator of quality export industry jobs. We are also the "wild west", where coastal mountain peaks, tumbling water, and old growth forest is the canvas on which our strong sense of community paints, not only inspiring people to move, live and visit this special place, but also empowering us to pursue positive environmental legacy. Housing, a revitalized village centre, strengthening of key services and amenities, and pragmatic and creative community leadership and collaboration enables our ambitious path forward.



VALUE PROPOSITION

WHAT MAKES GOLD RIVER DISTINCT? Answer this question and a community's economic development pathway is largely defined via connection to people and enterprise who best connect with value proposition. And the more unique or powerful the value proposition, the further the lengths people will go to pursue it. The Gold River value proposition serves as a guidepost for strategic actions in this Plan.

Single family home price:
• 50% Vancouver Island / BC
• 20% Vancouver Metro



LIFESTYLE

Community Survey Top 6:

- Natural environment
- Access to medical services
- Outdoor recreation opportunities
 - Safe
 - Small community feel
 - Clean air

goldriver.ca



NOOTKA SOUND

Rugged coastline, fjord-like inlets, pacific temperate rainforest – one of the rarest ecosystems in the world. Prime destination for kayaking, fishing, hiking, and wildlife watching. Renowned for salmon and halibut fishing.

explorenootka.com



BIG BLOCK OCEAN-ACCESS INDUSTRIAL LAND

- 180 acres+ net
- Deep water port (2 deep sea docks)
 - Pathway to 125 MW power
 - 12 wells/river water license
 - 3 ocean water leases
 - 225,000 sq. ft. floor plates
 - Low business costs
 - Fibre broadband drop

westcoastmarineterminals.com

Lifestyle factors deeply valued by local residents are a value proposition for resident attraction strategy (professional services, digital nomads, remote workers, creators, independent entrepreneurs).

GOALS

1

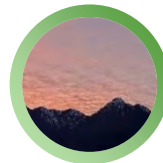
Grow industrial land employment by enabling, supporting, and advocating for industrial investments.



**INDUSTRIOUS
GOLD RIVER**

2

Organize, product develop, and market elevated tourism experiences.



**DESTINATION
GOLD RIVER**

3

Pursue housing, plaza, and grocery and governance performance solutions critical to community dynamism and ability to attract and retain investment.



**FOUNDATION –
BUILDING
GOLD RIVER**

1

GOAL

**INDUSTRIOUS GOLD RIVER: GROW
INDUSTRIAL LAND EMPLOYMENT BY
ENABLING INDUSTRIAL LAND
INVESTMENT AND KEY TARGET
INDUSTRY SECTORS.**

MUNICIPAL ROLE



**SHOVEL
READY
INFRASTRUCTURE**



**ADVOCACY &
SUPPORT**



**INVESTMENT
FRIENDLINESS: POLICY**



INDUSTRIOUS GOLD RIVER: MARINE

The pulp mill constructed 1964 in Gold River operated for 35 years until closure in 1999.

The pulp mill site was chosen for its flat delta land, deep-sea access for oceangoing freighters, and ample water. These factors remains a primary value proposition for new investment considering a Gold River location.

As 1 of only 5 deep water access industrial site ports on Vancouver Island with rare, flat big block heavy industrial land, Gold River offers opportunity for large-scale investment to step into expanded international trade relationships a productive and prosperous BC and Canada will require.

Now owned by West Coast Marine Terminals, Gold River has opportunity to turn a page and build a new and ambitious industrial legacy. Strength of Village relationship with key enterprise interests can make the difference between investment attraction success or failure.

The Village – and all its residents – can serve as an effective salesforce for, and enabler of, Gold River investment opportunity. HOW? 1) Community support in principle for industrial development; 2) Community support for Village leadership actions that further enable investment, including intentional awareness and understanding of key industry sectors / issues / opportunities, policy, business costs, shovel-ready issues resolution, and marketing.



\ Industrious Gold River: West Coast Marine Terminals

1.1 VILLAGE ADVOCACY AND SUPPORT

- 1.1.1 Develop a written Village of Gold River industrial advocacy agenda in collaboration with West Coast Marine Terminals..
- 1.1.2 Implement an investment attraction support structure to ensure Village awareness of, and alignment with, industrial investment attraction opportunities.
- 1.1.3 Establish Nootka Sound aquaculture development – including salmon farming – as a municipal strategic priority to be reflected in Council strategic planning and marketing material.
- 1.1.4 Work to identify and fast-track fibre Internet installation to the industrial site, and enhancement of cell phone service.
- 1.1.5 Ensure distribution of marine industrial opportunity prospectus (Tactic 1.3.4) to Trade and Invest BC, local MLA, and local MP given site features / economic importance / foreign direct investment opportunity.

INDUSTRIAL INVESTMENT ATTRACTION ADVOCACY

Examples: Brownfield remediation / enhancement funding, multi-year economic transition funding, housing funding, aquaculture, power.

Mechanisms: UBCM motions, issues-based regional collaboration (e.g. aquaculture), published advocacy platform, Mayor/Council/Village internal and external communications re importance, updates, issues and resolution pathways.

ADVOCACY: an issues/opportunities agenda for dialogue with key external industrial enablers including provincial and federal governments.

SUPPORT: “concierge” Village service (EDO or CAO) to assist industrial landowner(s) with investment attraction leads, and issues resolution.



INDUSTRIAL INVESTMENT ATTRACTION SUPPORT

Enterprise Relationship: regular/frequent line of communications between landowner and Village to identify challenges and assist landowner with resolution on request.

Investment Lead Management: support landowner requests for information or requests for support, including but not limited to meetings, support letters, ministerial/trade office briefs, site tour presence, co-market opportunities.

Familiarization: participate in site tour(s), invite industrial subject matter expertise to present to Council to enhance Council understanding of industrial opportunities and issues – in support of ongoing development and maintenance of an industrial support strategy and advocacy agenda.

ELECTRIFYING OUR FUTURE

1.1.6 Support West Coast Marine Terminals in advocacy for BC Hydro pathway to 125 MW power to the industrial site.

A support and advocacy framework is presented as follows:

- Request support from the BC Government Economic Development liaisons in the North Island to create a partnership (Gold River working group) with BC Hydro that focuses on major capital infrastructure projects (multi-community and indigenous communities) with a primary focus on marine industrial site power enhancement – including addressing opportunities, costs, upgrade timelines, and key transition needs. Include discussion of a Gold River pilot project to plan and streamline the process to support investment enquiries.
- Ensure that Gold River and the West Coast Marina Terminals site infrastructure project is included in the BC Hydro GIS digital mapping tool, and understand transmission mapping on the Gold River line.
- Register Gold River with BC Hydro as a community partner to ensure Gold River is sending clear signals that future power needs are critical to residents and tied to potential economic development investment.
- Work with BC Hydro local government Account Team to ensure understanding of Gold River OCP and future development plans and asset management.
- Ensure Gold River is aware of the 2025 call for power launching in summer 2025 focused on large, clean and renewal projects and expression of Interest.
- Work with MMFN to secure support for local priorities.



ENHANCED POWER CAPACITY

MARINE INDUSTRIAL LAND VILLAGE OF GOLD RIVER - GENERAL

Power is catalytic for redevelopment of the marine industrial lands. Larger scale enterprise on large block lands typically have very significant power requirements that can't be met with current infrastructure. Power supply to the former mill site was much higher than present capacity. Significant power re-investment is required. This situation exists amidst broader BC Hydro challenges meeting demand (e.g. 25% of all the electricity used in B.C. in 2024 was imported from outside the province). It is critical that Gold River position its power need, and economic significance of the marine industrial site, with BC Hydro and the province.

The Village of Gold River's intention is to work together with the Province and BC Hydro to upgrade Gold River's electrical services to ensure long term residential, commercial and industrial growth – with primary focus on large scale marine industrial hydro needs, while also advocating for easier and quicker ability to connect to power.

240 ACRES GROSS, 180 ACRES NET

INDUSTRIAL LAND

OWNER – WEST COAST MARINE TERMINALS



BIG BLOCK OCEAN-ACCESS INDUSTRIAL LAND

Pulp mill constructed 1964. Location choice: flat delta land, deep-sea access for oceangoing freighters, ample water. Employment in 1999 at closure: 360 employees.

Current site employment: 75.

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: Block E, District Lot 587, Nootka Land District, Light Industry, Lease/Permit/Licence 114415

LOCATION: In corporate boundary of Village of Gold River. 12 km village centre to site on paved Highway 28.

ACCESS: Sea – 20 nautical miles within Nootka Sound and Muchalat Inlet; Land 100 km paved road to Campbell River via Highway 28.

SIZE: 240 acres gross (97 ha), 180 acres (73 ha) net

ZONING: M-1 Heavy industrial

SUBDIVISION: Re-configurable.

WATER FRONTAGE: HIGH

AREA: Heavy industrial zoning with waterfront/port access.

TOPOGRAPHY: Flat

IMPROVEMENTS: Buildings on premises, previously used by pulp mill. 250,000 sq. ft.

OWNERSHIP STRUCTURE: Current: Lease. Open to fee simple purchase.

PORT: Two (2) deep sea docks: 660 ft long with 36 ft draft (201m with 11m draft) and 550 ft with 26ft draft (167m with 7.9m draft) with power & water hookups. Foreshore water lot lease – 74 acres (30 hectares). Located in a protected inlet that is shielded from high winds by a large mountain located on the northwest corner of the property.

WATER: 12 wells/river water license.

ELECTRICITY/HEAT: BC Hydro. Pathway to 125 MW power.

WASTEWATER: Lagoon/septic independent of Village services.

ENVIRONMENTAL: Certificate of Compliance, BC Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy. Pulp mill decommissioning conducted by LNA, including environmental remediation of site (production areas, chemical & storage areas, port/dock facilities, marina, landfills, water treatment facilities).

STORM SEWER: Not available.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS: Current Starlink. Fibre installed on poles to waterfront in 2025.

PROPERTY TAX RATE: 64.0239 (\$64000/\$1M (CAD) assessment.

POSSESSION: TBD

LIST PRICE: TBD



OPPORTUNITIES: energy (including power generation, hydrogen), forestry fibre innovation manufacturing, marine aquaculture, bio-foods and novel foods including processing, data centres, other heavy industrial.

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1 of only 5 deep water access industrial site ports on Vancouver Island: Gold River, Port Alberni, Nanaimo, Bamberton, and Port Alice. Nanaimo is the only deep-water port on Vancouver Island with cargo handling facilities and specialized services.



1.2 ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION —MARINE INDUSTRY

MARINE INDUSTRIAL LAND OPPORTUNITIES

1) Forestry (incl. fibre advanced manufacturing); 2) Aquaculture including salmon farming; 3) Hydrogen; 4) Data centres; 5) Marine storage and staging (port); 6) Film (temporary use).

MARINE INDUSTRY – WHAT IS IT?

- 1) Fishing and Aquaculture.
- 2) Shipping and Maritime Transport (cargo, passengers).
- 3) Offshore Energy – conventional and renewable.
- 4) Biotech – research, development, production of marine organisms for pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, and food additives. E.g. seaweed, algae, alternative feed sources, bio-products (e.g. collagen, functional foods such as omega 3 supplements), novel foods (e.g. sea grapes, jellyfish snacks).
- 5) Naval and Defense Operations.
- 6) Conservation and Environmental Monitoring.
- 7) Research and Education – oceanographic studies, climate monitoring, and marine biology research conducted by universities and institutes.
- 8) Construction and engineering – building ports, harbours, offshore structures.
- 9) Policy and regulation – governance, law, international agreements, fishing rights..
- 10) Tourism and Recreation.

1.2.1 Develop and maintain Village awareness and understanding of current and emergent marine industrial land investment opportunities via regularity of interaction with West Coast Marine Terminals.

1.2.2 Explore and maintain Village awareness and knowledge of general marine industry opportunities .





1.2 ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION —MARINE INDUSTRY

1.2.3 Develop and implement a government relations program to better enable aquaculture and generally support industrial investment.

GOVERNMENT RELATIONS STRATEGY FRAMEWORK

- Consider working jointly on Government Relations with Industry Associations and potential private investors to ensure that the interests of Gold River are in front of all levels of government and the appropriate government agencies.
- Develop deeper relationships with the different levels of government via establishment of an optimal communications network and utilizing prioritized messaging tools for communications and interactions.
- Enable efforts to prepare and equip Gold River Council for communicating with internal stakeholders such as the executive management teams at key Federal Departments including Fisheries and Oceans Canada and the political staff in the Ministers office.
- Develop strategies to gain Provincial and Federal awareness of the West Coast Terminal Opportunity and needs, with the aim of opening windows to site tours by Energy and Climate Solutions Ministry, Agriculture (responsible for aquaculture), Finance, Infrastructure, Jobs, Economic Development and Innovation, Water Land and Resource Stewardship.
- Strengthen Gold River's focus on relationships with governments and government agencies to leverage and advance BC Government Mandate letter priorities over the short and long term.
- Follow a strategic partnership approach specific to West Coast Marine Terminals with materials that are well-formulated, strategic, actionable, and communicate clear pathways and plans;
- Regularly monitor and report on degree of support from local provincial and federal constituencies;
- Undertake research and intelligence gathering; relationship maintenance; policy insight and analysis; and issues management.





1.3 ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION - GENERAL

1.3.1 Pursue economic diversification in Gold River's sector strengths. Including resident communication and external marketing of key facts, figures and success stories.

AQUACULTURE

- #1 exporter (35% of all exports).
- #2 highest jobs multiplier (ability to generate further support jobs).
- #2 biggest prospect for supply chain purchases import replacement.
- #4 biggest employer.
- 65 local jobs, 260 jobs on the north island
- #4 highest competitive effect (expected vs actual job growth).
- #4 highest sector wages.
- #7 fastest growing industry sector (2014-2024, 12 jobs).

Grieg Seafood (hatchery) – \$25 M expansion in 2022 that doubled smolt capacity to 900 metric tonnes of fish annually.

Opportunity: Aquaculture and marine industry expansion.



MOBILE PROFESSIONALS: RESIDENT ATTRACTION

12.4% of workforce self-employed / 6.7% work from home. 95% of self-employment is in the forestry sector (logging).

Tech – 10.2% of jobs (82% 10-year growth focused on coastal water transportation). Creative Industries – 5% of jobs (30% 10-year growth).

Opportunity (based on local data): professional services import replacement (\$3.7M annually). Draw: Housing affordability, Natural environment, Access to medical services, Outdoor recreation opportunities, Safe, Small community feel, Clean air. Enablers: Fibre broadband installed 2025.

Aquaculture contributes significantly to B.C.'s economy. With its mild climate, good water quality and sheltered bays, the province's coastline is well suited to all forms of aquaculture.

Three main groups currently cultured are: Finfish (including salmon); Shellfish; Aquatic plants. Src: [BC Government](#)

More broadly, Agriculture, Food and Beverage is a key [BC target sector](#):



TOP 5 GOLD RIVER EMPLOYMENT SECTORS

- #1 Forestry
- #2 Healthcare
- #3 Accommodation and food services
- #4 Aquaculture
- #5 Transportation & warehousing

FORESTRY: HARVESTING AND MANUFACTURING

#1 economic sector. 24.5% of total jobs (logging, sawmills).

#1 exporter: 37.7% of exports (logging 30%, sawmills 7.7%).

#1 ratio of forestry to total employment of comparable Vancouver Island communities (7). Biggest economic sector in Gold River at 24.5% of jobs by industry sector and 37.7% of exports (logging 30%, sawmills 7.7%).

#1 biggest prospect for supply chain purchases import replacement. -44% 10-year employment growth (2014-2024).

Anchor: Western Forest Products logging/wood sort, Gold River Single Mill (cedar)

Forestry is a key [BC target sector](#), including forestry innovation (e.g. [Mass Timber](#)).

Opportunity: supply chain import replacement (support activities, trucking), value-add milling/manufacturing.



TOURISM

#2 fastest growing industry sector between 2014 and 2024.

3rd biggest industry sector (traveller accommodation).

#5 biggest export industry. 10.3% of total employment – double Vancouver Island ratio of total tourism workforce.

Tourism is one of BC's leading economic base and natural resource sectors, and has significantly contributed to BC's GDP in [recent years](#).

Opportunity: Shoulder and winter season product development. MMFN marketing collaboration.



INDUSTRIOUS GOLD RIVER: GENERAL

Industrial and commercial land connects dots between quality job creation, key industry sector development, and generation of enhanced financial ability to pay for resident-desired services and amenities. Land must have competitive advantage. For the Village of Gold River, advantage can be derived from big block industrial land with west coast ocean access to trade corridors.

Gold River has three employment land components, in order of priority: 1) Marine Industrial land – where the municipality can be helpful to larger-scale investment attraction; 2) Commercial land – where intensification of use (retail, professional services, entertainment, accommodation and food services) in the village centre – including enhancement of the Plaza – offer further development opportunity; 3) industrial services – where current lands contiguous with the village are full and additional smaller-lot land supply can offer local and regional services while generating employment.

Village of Gold River actions can support investment and re-investment in employment generation opportunities.

1.3 ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION –GENERAL CONT'D



\ Industrious Gold River 1.3.2 Community Forest

Continue to explore potential; (incl. funding sources) for creation of a [Community Forest](#) that includes enterprise access to fibre for value-add forestry manufacturing. Success story: [Nakusp](#).
Note: Gold River, Tahsis and Zeballos previously had a community forest license (1997). The license has since expired. Intent to pursue a new Community Forest License was established in the Economic Development Strategy (2018).



\ Industrious Gold River 1.3.5 First Nations

Maintain ongoing dialogue and collaboration with MMFN re waterfront/tourism and/or industrial development initiatives.



\ Industrious Gold River 1.3.3 Municipal Policy

1. Create a Revitalization Tax Incentive Bylaw to further develop business cost value proposition for industrial lands.
2. Maintain a fast-track permitting process for industrial approvals.
3. Consider reduction of light industrial tax differential to average of Vancouver Island communities* at 4.98 (current 8.12) to enhance business cost value proposition.



\ Industrious Gold River 1.3.6 Resident Attraction

Create a resident attraction web page on Village of Gold River site, including downloadable Resident Attraction Guide. E.g. [Canal Flats](#), [Prince Rupert](#).



\ Industrious Gold River 1.3.4 Marketing

1. Develop a “shared” industrial property investment attraction prospectus in collaboration with West Coast Marine Terminals that provides consistent marketing of industrial opportunity and value proposition. Include promotion of BC and Canada investment incentive programs.
2. Create a database of land-based investment opportunities (private and public). Create a PDF map (Phase 1) of land-based investment opportunities for housing, commerce, and industry.



\ Industrious Gold River 1.3.7 Additional Land

Identify 10–15 acres (net) of additional industrial land in OCP/Zoning Bylaw update (2025) to provide smaller parcel industrial services enterprise opportunities. *Note: current industrial park is approximately 16 acres and is full.*

2

GOAL

**DESTINATION GOLD RIVER: ORGANIZE,
PRODUCT DEVELOP, AND MARKET
ELEVATED TOURISM EXPERIENCES.**



ORGANIZATION



MARKETING



**ENABLING
INFRASTRUCTURE**



DESTINATION GOLD RIVER

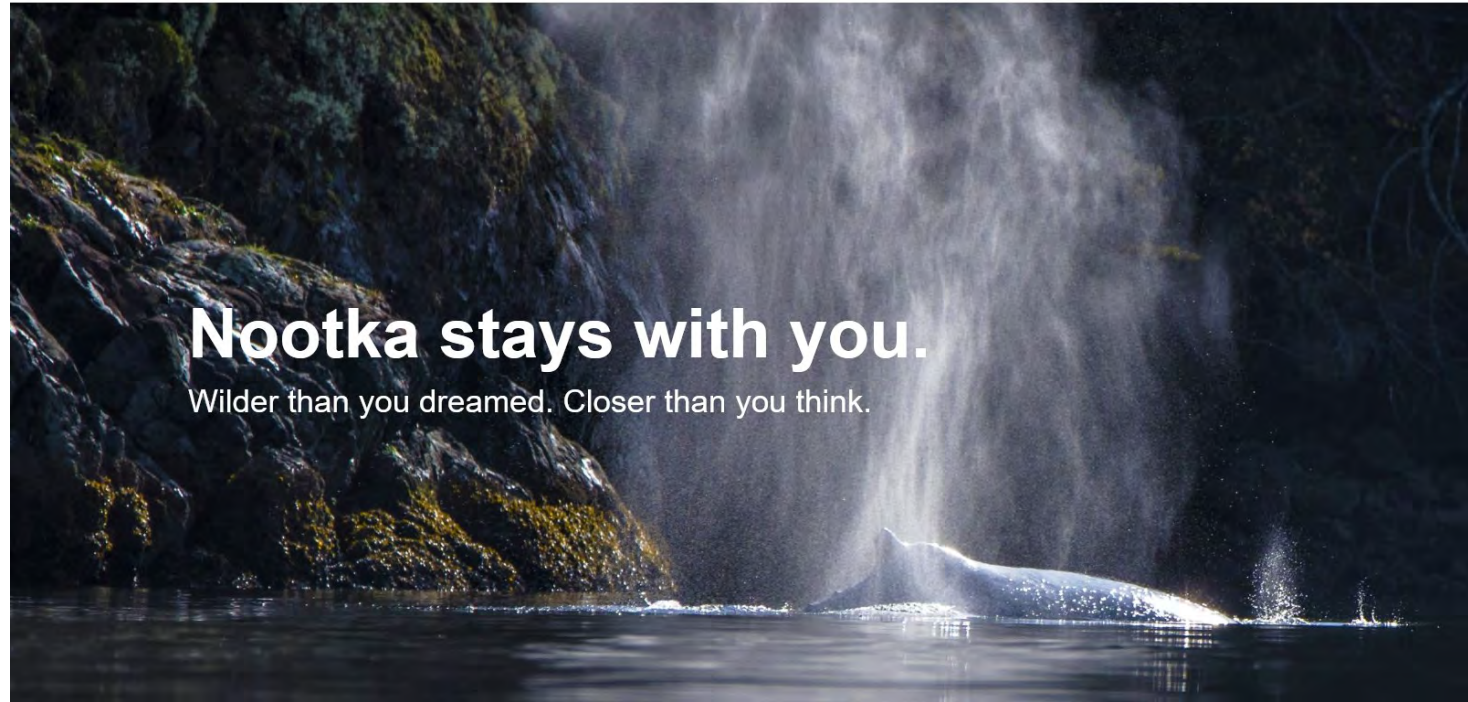
NARNIA – fantasy-like, magical, mythical.

Maybe C.S. Lewis' inspiration was Gold River and Nootka Sound. On the banks of the Gold and Heber Rivers and the ocean shore of the Muchalat Inlet leading into the Nootka Sound. Surrounded by high coastal mountains, glacier-fed lakes, and moss-adorned rainforest. Gateway to Strathcona Provincial Park (the oldest Provincial Park in British Columbia featuring the tallest mountain on Vancouver Island), and the Upana limestone caves.

The Gold River area and Nootka Sound's outdoor experiences are highly marketable, but under-leveraged as an economic activity.

Notable gaps that can enhance tourism revenue and economic impact are: 1) organization and marketing; 2) shoulder and winter season product development that drives economic multiplier (including support for enhanced local retail and services); 3) grocery as an essential service; 4) waterfront access and amenity; and 5) affordable housing (including rental) for tourism workers.

This Plan aims to step into these identified gaps.



Nootka stays with you.

Wilder than you dreamed. Closer than you think.



\ Destination Gold River

2.1 Organization and Marketing

2.1.1 Establish a formal tourism development and marketing collaboration (Nootka Tourism Partnership) between the Villages of Gold River and Tahsis, Strathcona Regional District, and Mowachaht/Muchalaht First Nation (MMFN) to focus on differentiated, high-mountain coastal and Nootka Sound experiences.

2.1.2 Pursue infrastructure and other grants through the Nootka Tourism Partnership to support tourism development.

2.1.3 Develop a pathway for the Villages of Gold River and Tahsis to create a Municipal & Regional District Tax Program (MRDT, up to 3% on overnight accommodation presently not including camping) to contribute financially to the Partnership. Note: this tactic assumes MMFN would operate and contribute its own Destination Marketing Fund to the partnership.

2.1.4 Select a preferred marketing contractor to implement an MRDT-enabled program.

2.1.5 Develop distinguishing and compelling marketing campaign creative that features differentiated tourism experiences.

DESTINATION GOLD RIVER

MATTERS OF FACT

Top 3 Preferences for Economic Diversification

- Tourism
- Marine industrial
- Forestry innovation (fibre, mass timber, community forest, etc.)

Src: Community Survey, 2025

Top 6 Tourism Product Development Opportunities

- Waterfront marina
- Guided trail, water, cave adventures
- Hiking
- Events
- Caving
- Off-road motorized adventuring/tours

Src: Community Survey, 2025

Top 3 Shoulder/Winter Season Attraction Opportunities

- Trails and hikes (Hesquiat Trail, Nootka Trail, Scout-Antler Lake Trail System)
- Tournaments (curling, hockey, figure skating)
- Snowshoeing
- Waterfall tour

Src: Community Survey, 2025

A domestic visitor spends \$124 per day.
An overnight visitor spends \$553/day.

Src: [Statistics Canada](#)

There are an estimated 7 lodges in Nootka Sound in the Strathcona Regional District.



\ Destination Gold River

2.2 Shoulder and Winter Season Product

Collaborate within the Nootka Tourism Partnership to further develop shoulder and winter season product that drives all-season positive tourism impact.



\ Destination Gold River

2.5 Accommodation

2.5.1 Encourage B&B/Airbnb operations to better leverage multiplier effect from tourism visits. Enable Airbnb with three-unit zoning in select areas (see tactic 3.1.6), and promotion of accessory dwelling unit zoning (Bylaw No. 706.11, 2024) as long and short-term rental income opportunity for local residents.

2.5.2 Promote glamping as an investment attraction opportunity, including waterfront dock, MMFN, and municipal campground location considerations.

2.5.3 Explore potential for additional C.D.-1 (Tourist Commercial – Comprehensive Development Zone) and/or C.D.-3 (Recreational Commercial) zoning in an OCP/Zoning Bylaw update (2025) to enable tourist accommodation.

2.5.4 Explore opportunity to further develop campground infrastructure.



\ Destination Gold River

2.3 Mowachaht / Muchalaht First Nation (MMFN)

Collaborate with MMFN to encourage further MMFN investment in tourism services and amenities in the Village of Gold River.



\ Destination Gold River

2.4 Guiding and Entrepreneurialism

Align local tourism entrepreneurial spirits with learn-to guided experience developers and mentors. E.g. Vancouver-based [Guest Focus](#)

Investigate potential to align guide training programming with grant funding.

Learn To: fish, hunt, forage, track, cook, birdwatch, identify plants, photograph (scope of activity only limited by entrepreneur passion/skillset).

Learn To Linkages: culinary field/yard to table, indigenous experiences, wellness and spa incl. outdoor yoga, forest bathing, etc.

GLAMPING OPPORTUNITY

ACCOMMODATION OPPORTUNITY

Overnight accommodation is critical for the Village of Gold River and its residents to realize deep economic benefit from tourism. A domestic BC/Canadian visitor (the majority of tourism in Gold River) spends \$430 more per day as an overnight visit vs a day-tripper. This spending multiplier includes accommodation, but also includes spending in local restaurants and retail and services enterprises, and generates revenue support for existing amenities such as the recreation centre. A “chicken or the egg” dilemma requires consideration of need for further development of shoulder and winter season tourism product to drive accommodation demand, while also recognizing that experiential accommodation drive demand for tourism product development. Experiential accommodation can also be a destination itself.

There is currently not enough fixed roof accommodation to sustain a robust, year-round tourism industry. At the same time, lack of mid week demand outside peak summer tourism season makes the hotel business model challenging. Glamping offers a flexible locational option (e.g. waterfront land or on-dock, municipal campground, lands zoned for tourism recreation) with lower capital costs and enough potential experience differentiation to draw as an accommodation destination. Short term rentals offered by local residents generates a means for residents to directly benefit from tourism growth.

Accommodator profitability needs to be supported by tourism marketing focused on demographic and independent work markets with ability to travel any time including mid-week, and thematic rest and relaxation, wellness, or romantic getaways.

E.g. this [Vancouver Island resort](#) just unveiled their new cedar yurts.

Fixed Roof Accommodation: Baymont by Wyndham: 49 Units, Ridgeview Motel: 32 Units, 1 B&B, approximately 8 Airbnb.

Glamping Examples: [Smith Lake Farm](#) – Comox Valley, [Wild Pod](#) – Tofino

Build Examples: [Amazon](#), [Wayfair 1](#), [Wayfair 2](#), [Viking Dome](#)

Src: Viking Dome



Src: Amazon



Src: Wayfair



Src: Wayfair



Banff Springs Hotel

WILD ABOUT

Step into the rainforest, and the world softens—moss blankets the earth, waterfalls whisper secrets, and fog curls through the trees like something alive.

And that's only where the laundry list of rainforest high mountain coast activity adventure on wheels, feet, boat, or in spirit begins.

Step into the Wild. Stay for the Wonder.

VISIT

GOLD RIVER

3

GOAL

**FOUNDATION-BUILDING: PURSUE
HOUSING, PLAZA, GROCERY, AND
MUNICIPAL PERFORMANCE SOLUTIONS
CRITICAL TO COMMUNITY DYNAMISM
AND ABILITY TO ATTRACT AND RETAIN
INVESTMENT.**



HOUSING



PLAZA



GROCERY



GOVERNANCE



3.1 HOUSING = ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

This Economic Development Plan is focused on job creation, which is catalytic for demand for more housing. Additionally, in context of housing affordability challenges in BC and Canada, affordable housing can be economic development in and of itself via attraction of those with more flexible work arrangements, retirees, etc. Housing choice also enables residents to find housing at all stages of life and age in place.

Gold River has a significant housing value proposition that can attract newcomers and job creators – with median household income 75% of BC, but house prices 44% of BC and housing operating costs 58% of BC (Src: Census Canada 2021 and online real estate statistics).

Key supply and choice challenges moving forward are three-fold:

- 1) The Gold River Housing Needs Assessment (2024) estimates a new housing requirement of 254 units over the next 20 years in a variety of forms (not just single family) to meet local household need, regional population growth, and the needs of vulnerable groups in particular (e.g. homelessness, suppressed household formation). However, only one new home has been constructed in Gold River over the last 10 years.
- 2) Affordability is slipping in Gold River, with representative house values that increased 89% between 2019 and 2024 (Src: BC Stats) – double the rate of BC increase.
- 3) Key economic sectors like tourism have much lower wages than traditional industry like logging, generating need for significantly more affordable pricing in addition to housing form such as rentals (Gold River has half the rate of rental of BC). A tourism worker in Gold River at present has a significant affordability gap.

This Economic Development Plan considers the fundamental question of how to instigate more housing supply in tandem with deeper affordability. A key means to do this is enabling urban planning policy. This opportunity aligns with an OCP and Zoning Bylaw refresh to be completed in 2025. Housing densification and alternative housing forms (e.g. smaller lots, multi-family, accessory dwelling units, short term rentals) is a key means to generate further choice and greater relative affordability, and participate in the tourism economy (short-term rentals).

AFFORDABILITY – housing is considered “affordable” if it costs less than 30% of a household’s before-tax income. Src: CMHC

ATTAINABILITY – the ability of households to enter, and graduate (via range of housing choice for range of income levels) to successively higher levels of the local housing market.

THE TOURISM HOUSING CHALLENGE

Tourism Jobs as % of Total Workforce

10.3% Gold River
5.7% Vancouver Island

Traveller accommodation annual wages (Gold River): \$22,349

28% of...
Logging: \$79,942

Median monthly shelter costs*:

Owned – \$773 – 41% of tourism worker salary
Rented – \$995 – 53% of tourism worker salary (2025)

*Src: Census Canada 2021, adjusted for inflation to 2025

THE GOLD RIVER NEW SINGLE FAMILY AFFORDABILITY GAP: \$400,000

Gold River annual household income of \$78,556 inflation adjustment to 2025 can afford a house priced at \$320–\$350,000 (\$2550 maximum monthly housing cost)¹. New single dwelling construction on current R1 zoning in Gold River is currently estimated² at \$750,000 based on \$300/sq. ft. standard build and \$400/sq. ft. mid-range build (\$300/sq.ft. used for calculation). Lot price \$120,000. House size 1600 sq.ft. and adding 5% for permits/fees/design & architectural, 15% profit for the builder (typical in the market), and 5% GST.

¹Online mortgage affordability calculator.

²Build and lot cost src: Chat GPT with search specific to Gold River/north Vancouver Island.

Residential cost of building³: 45% construction costs, 15% permits/fees, 10% land costs, 5% financing and administration, 5% design / approval / architectural / marketing, 5% GST on final price. These %s are sourced from May, 2025 builder posts on social media in Calgary, AB. These numbers are illustrative and should be adjusted for Gold River context.

FOUNDATION - BUILDING GOLD RIVER

HOUSING

Housing choice and affordability, a revitalized village centre (plaza), return of a full-size grocery store, and community leadership are key catalysts that enable achievement of economic development goals.

Top Tier Economic Development Enablers

- Downtown enhancement
- Enhanced grocery store

Middle Tier Economic Development Enablers

- Highway 28 maintenance
- Incentives to attract/retain business
- Waterfront services/marina
- Collaboration with Mowachaht/Muchalaht First Nation
- Housing choice/affordability

Src: Community Survey, 2025



\ Foundation-Building Gold River

3.1.1 Accessory Dwelling Units

1. Permit accessory dwelling units in all single family zoning with a maximum of two units per property in combination of single family dwelling and/or secondary suite, accessory dwelling unit.
2. Create “one-stop shop”, pre-approved accessory dwelling unit templates to unlock residential property owner ability to have an accessory dwelling unit built. Best practice – [City of Seattle](#), [City of Quesnel](#), [City of Williams Lake](#).
3. Conduct information sessions to communicate housing policy change impact/opportunities for residents.
4. Create short-term rental policy in the business license bylaw to regulate impact / potential conflict (e.g. Radium Hot Springs, Invermere – no outdoor hot tubs).
5. In the OCP, require short-term rentals to be associated with a principal resident only to nurture short-term rental as local income-generating potential, and to reduce potential for impact / conflict in operation.
6. Hold a Builder/Community Forum to communicate accessory dwelling unit/Airbnb building opportunity and align property owners with builders / contractors.



\ Foundation-Building Gold River

3.1.2 Hybrid Code

Review and refresh Gold River OCP and Zoning Bylaw using more investment-enabling (broader permissions) Hybrid Code (performance standards focused more on visual/less on functional, fewer land uses, more permitted uses, reduced parking standards, minimum two-unit residential. [Hybrid Code Backgrounder](#).



\ Foundation-Building Gold River

3.1.3 Home-Based Business

1. Establish each of a Home-Based Business Minor and Major classification to enable Minor home-based business in all residential zoning, with Minor permitted in all multi-family zoning, and Major permitted in all single family and duplex zoning (R1, R2, R3, RM!). A Minor – encompassing office and persons engaged in craft – is permitted in all forms of housing, may include no more than one client visit per day, and must not otherwise have visual or other impact. A Major may have one non-resident employee, have retail when incidental to service being provided, have retail sales of product produced on site, and a sign. E.g. Canal Flats, Radium Hot Springs, Grand Forks, Fort St. John.
2. Move home-based business regulation out of business license bylaw and into zoning bylaw to relate policy to land use vs business ownership..

FOUNDATION – BUILDING GOLD RIVER

HOUSING



\ Foundation-Building Gold River **3.1.4 Two-Unit Zoning**

Enable minimum two-unit zoning in R1, R2, and R3.



\ Foundation-Building Gold River **3.1.5 Three-Unit Zoning**

Create new 3-Unit zoning on greenfield R1, R2, and R3 zoning in north, east, and southeast Gold River. Permissions: residential building – 1 unit, residential building – modular home, residential building – 2 units, residential building – 3 units, accessory dwelling unit. Maximum density: maximum number of dwelling units – 3 per parcel (inclusive of all accessory units on the parcel). Include a policy that permits a third unit short term rental conditional on a second unit long-term rental in instances where the built form is one single family dwelling / secondary suite / accessory dwelling unit. E.g. Village of Canal Flats.

FOUNDATION – BUILDING GOLD RIVER

GENERAL



\ Foundation-Building Gold River 3.1.6 Film

Identify a land parcel and consider land and temporary use permitting – including fast tracking for temporary accommodation – to support up to 200 people associated with film industry shoots.



\ Foundation-Building Gold River 3.1.9 Property Maintenance / Redevelopment



\ Foundation-Building Gold River 3.1.7 Marketing

1. Create an investment-friendly advertisement (post OCP/Zoning Bylaw refresh) to indicate Gold River's investment-friendly planning policy, including two-unit zoning, downtown mixed use, and permissive industrial, home-based business, housing, and short-term rental zoning.

2. Engage a planning or urban design firm to generate visualization of cornerstone investment-enabling policy to build community acceptance / embrace of policies, and communication of vision to the development community indicated in 1.



\ Foundation-Building Gold River 3.1.8 Grocery

1. Investigate potential for a re-constituted co-op model grocery store considering employee-owned or community-owned model, and accessing enabling facilitation resources such as the [BC Co-op Association](#) (and the [BC Government](#), and/or private sector consultants via the BC Co-op Association to help de-risk a co-op investment. Success Story – [Kootenay Co-op, Nelson](#).

2. Generate a Grocery Investment Opportunity Sheet targeted at and distributed to Vancouver Island chains (e.g. [Quality Foods Chain](#) and/or privately owned grocery investments that may consider expansion to Gold River.

1. Establish and maintain ongoing communication with key property owners re remediation and/or redevelopment opportunities and challenges.

2. Consider establishing a Building Standards Bylaw that identifies minimum standards for structural safety, cleanliness, and habitability, identifies power for inspection, issues repair or clean-up orders, assigns penalties for non-compliance, and identifies cost recovery provisions. E.g. City of Vancouver Standards of Maintenance Bylaw and Untidy Premises Bylaw, City of Victoria Property Maintenance Bylaw, City of Kelowna Nuisance Property Bylaw, City of Port Alberni Building Standards Bylaw. City of Merritt Good Neighbour Bylaw. Note: derelict or unsafe buildings (rental housing) can also be regulated under the Public Health Act (Island Health), particularly when they pose a health hazard.



3.2 THE PLAZA

A Village Centre is the SOUL of the Village of Gold River – the heartbeat of commerce. It's where we connect to people and place, where we find inspiration in our most distinctive architecture and creativity of nature and humanity, and where visitors and investors form their most memorable impression. The Plaza is the de facto Village Centre in Gold River. Loss of the grocery store, vacant storefronts, excessive interior parking, and lack of community centre gathering spot compromise community sense of place...and soul. Mixed land use, reduced parking standards, intensity of use of land, more permitted types of businesses, maximum site coverage, and strategic fast tracking of downtown-related development approvals are key means to incentivize investment via policy.

VILLAGE CENTRE MIXED USE

Intent: To provide a Zone to accommodate a mix of Uses with active commercial frontages that will contribute to a vibrant downtown for residents and visitors.

Permitted Uses – Animal Services Veterinary Clinic, Assembly Facility, Cannabis Retail, Childcare Centre – Major, Emergency & Protective Services, Financial institution, Food and Beverage Services – Neighbourhood Pub, Food and Beverage Services – Restaurant – Take-Out, Institutional Uses, Custom Indoor Manufacturing, Medical Clinic, Microbrewery & Craft Distillery, Offices, Overnight Accommodation – Large, Personal Service, Public Transit Facility, Recreation – Outdoor, Recreation & Entertainment – Indoor, Residential Dwelling Unit – Mixed Use Building, Retail Store, Short Term Rental – Stand Alone, Art Gallery, Pop-Up.

Accessory Uses – Accessory use, building or structure, Bed & Breakfast, Home-Based Business Minor, Home-Based Business – Major, Short-Term Vacation Rental, Secondary Use, Residential Dwelling Unit – Employee Accommodation, Mobile Catering Food Services.

DESIRED VILLAGE CENTRE ACTIVITIES / FEATURES

First Tier: Retail, Unique events / entertainment.

Second Tier: Artisanal manufacturing (e.g. food products, brewpub), Bakery, Farmers market – indoor and outdoor, Restaurants, Mixed commercial/residential buildings, Celebration of art, creativity and whimsy – placemaking and beautification.

Src: Community Survey, 2025

3.2.1 Nurture a relationship with the Plaza owner to consider initiatives that would revitalize the Plaza.

3.2.2 Enable more entrepreneur and investment-friendly planning policy that considers a buildable/redevelopment investment model for 3–4 storey mixed use development that maximizes site coverage and site animation in updated OCP/Zoning Bylaw, including but not limited to a new “Village Centre Mixed Use” zone that replaces current Central Commercial C1 zoning, smaller business spaces, non-residential parking standard reduction or removal (e.g. Village of Canal Flats OCP), increased building height to 15m from current 11m, and a more animated set of permitted uses.

3.2.3 Proactively seek affiliation with an academic school (e.g. planning/architecture) to facilitate a design charrette seeking visual ideas for Plaza enhancement, including infill, intensification of use, and visual corridors that signify “village centre”.

3.2.4 Create Design Guidelines to help investment visualize possibilities via design charrette, in collaboration with the property owner, or independently as a Village covering a broader geography (e.g. Village of Canal Flats Downtown Design Guidelines – grant funded).

3.2.5 Consider removing parking requirement/parking from central plaza area (using ample parking to the south and west) to facilitate infill redevelopment, placemaking, and beautification. Note: there is ample parking

3.2.6 Consider municipal purchase of the central parking area to enable a municipal village square vision, with: a) ability to pursue beautification grants; b) a beautified gathering and entertainment space for the community. And/or promote consideration of a business cost-friendly and more animated entrepreneur container market in the central portion of the plaza.

3.2.7 Promote creation of a market enterprise business that offers small spaces to local home-based business, creators, and micro-enterprise to sell products. E.g. Main Street Market, Okotoks.

3.3 EMPOWERED COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

3.3.1 Community Leadership Empowerment: Economic Development

1. Conduct subject matter expertise issues-based online or in-person learning sessions in relation to the OCP/Zoning Bylaw refresh process (e.g. housing).
2. Conduct subject matter expertise issues-based online or in-person learning sessions with partner provider(s) based on an operating framework. E.g. good governance and decision making, indigenous relations & reconciliation, climate and resilience leadership, industrial key sector development (issues and opportunities), inclusive leadership, tech / data / innovation, political leadership & collaboration (media/public speaking training, conflict resolution, inter-municipal relationships), asset management, finance and budget.
3. Create a simple Communications Strategy with Gold River residents focused on 1-2 communications channels most preferred by local residents, and support programming with human and financial resources.
4. Maintain regularity of economic issues/strategic-based communications with Gold River residents.

LEADERSHIP...IS EVERYTHING

Support. Advocacy. Community dialogue. Global decision-making environments that are increasingly conflict-based. Today's leadership challenges are considerable. But community legacy-building is as important to our better future as ever.

Village of Gold River residents wish to see strong and enduring community leadership (Src: Community Survey, 2025) – including vision, communications, process streamlining, community issues awareness-building, asset management, sense of ambition, and desire for visible progress.

Leadership requires passion at its heart, supported by knowledge, grit, and communications prowess. A roadmap for consistent, high-performance governance is identified in a framework presented on this page.

FOUNDATION - BUILDING GOLD RIVER

COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP



\ Foundation-Building Gold River 3.3.2 Grants

1. Maintain ongoing familiarization with grants that may assist with infrastructure, capacity and other strategic village needs.
2. Position grant funding applications as economic diversification (vs capacity) initiatives with specific focus on supporting industrial lands investment attraction – including village human resources capacity and shovel ready land infrastructure or other requirements.



\ Foundation-Building Gold River 3.3.5 Marketing



\ Foundation-Building Gold River 3.3.3 Land Ownership

Consider Village ownership, land assembly, re-sale, as a catalyst for achievement of strategic aspirations (e.g. non-market or rental housing, Village square). as property owner/catalyst – e.g. Castlegar. Note: the Village presently owns 5 acres on Conuma, another 2 acres near the school that backs onto Eagle Crescent, and the Jack Christenson Centre.



\ Foundation-Building Gold River 3.3.4 Asset Management

1. In context of the Village of Gold River Asset Management Plan, consider creation of an annual, fully-funded infrastructure investment reserve (e.g. City of Castlegar Infrastructure Investment Levy) to position the Village for long-term business cost competitiveness at the heart of successful economic development and investment attraction.
2. Explore potential for marina expansion.
3. Pursue asset re-investment in the village wharf.

Implement foundation-building investment attraction marketing initiatives as follows:

- 1) Create a Gold River **brand story** – including marketing campaign titles, creation of differentiated images, creation of key economic development-specific, value-proposition focused messaging, and further brand extension in creation of template graphic elements for economic development marketing materials – that collectively communicates a compelling tourism, resident attraction, and industrial investment attraction story;
- 2) Create a **Business section of Village of Gold River website** with site architecture and content focused on provision of information to investors: comparative value proposition (vs raw data), key industry sectors, site-selection focused investor data and information, sector news, and success stories;
- 3) Generate a downloadable **Investment Guide** focused on value proposition, map, economic development vision, key facts (demographics, industry profile – comparative), investment opportunities, development incentives, quality of life amenities, business resources. E.g. District of Squamish;
- 4) Generate a downloadable **Resident Relocation Guide** that includes targeting of “The Independents” – e.g. Canal Flats – Guides: Resident Relocation, Digital Nomad/Creator.;
- 5) Create **Investment Opportunity Sheets** for investment attraction priorities;
- 6) Create Key **Industry Sector Profiles**: Aquaculture, Forestry, Tourism;
- 7) Generate **Development Guide** (planning) to facilitate investment;
- 8) Produce a web-based regional, provincial, and national **Business Resources page** to assist local entrepreneurs with financial, business planning, and other success-building opportunities.



KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Indicators monitor Economic Development Plan progress. Chosen indicators focus on core macro demonstration of success vs initiative measures.



Gold River's population shrank 8.3% from 2001-2021. However, population grew by 34 people or 2.8% between 2016 and 2021. Projection with economic development inaction is -4% workforce (Src: Lightcast) and -7.5% population growth (Src: BC Stats) to 2031. Median age at 56.4 is 14.8 years older than BC and aging 4x faster than BC.

Economic Development Plan success will generate positive 5 and 10-year population and job growth, and lower 5 and 10-year median age via attraction of working age population.



/ Key Performance Indicators

POPULATION & JOB GROWTH

Two key inputs to population growth are industrial investment and housing starts. Positive 5-year trends are measures of successful implementation of core elements of the Economic Development Plan.

Annual housing start baseline: 0.1 (10-year average 2014-2023).

Annual industrial building permit value baseline: \$1.4 M.



/ Key Performance Indicators

INDUSTRIAL INVESTMENT & HOUSING STARTS



/ Key Performance Indicators

BUSINESS LICENSES PER CAPITA

With a baseline of .095 business/capita established in 2025 (118 licenses with 2021 population of 1246, an upward-trending number indicates the entrepreneurial heart of economic growth is dynamic).

WILD ABOUT

Water stirs the soul
awake,
In every wave, a leap
we take.
Its rhythm beats
within our chest,
A call to rise, to seek,
to quest.
From rushing falls to
quiet streams,
It feeds our fire, fuels
our dreams.
In water's dance, we
find our flight—
Endless motion,
endless light.

You can:

- Find an affordable house.
- Find a doctor.
- Have fibre Internet.
- Connect to a community with all the feels.
- Find your spirit-self in our Narnia of west coast enchantment.

RELOCATE TO

GOLD RIVER