

**The Enhancement and Implementation
of
Sidney's Plan for Downtown Revitalization**

Prepared for:
The Town of Sidney
The Sidney Economic Development Committee
The Sidney Business Association

Heather J. MacDonald
Nora A. Wood

Consulting Research Report

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Approved by:

Approved by:

Approved by:

Dr. Ignace Ng

Dr. A.R. Elangovan

Dr. Steve Tax

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the last eighteen months, the Town of Sidney has made great strides towards developing a "Corporate Strategy Community Vision" to lead the community into the next millennium. Through its Vision 2000 process, the Town has identified seven issues of utmost importance to the community and its future. Included among these issues is downtown revitalization.

Recruited in November of 1998, the consulting team of *MacDonald & Wood* was assigned the task of providing the Town of Sidney, its Economic Development Committee and the Sidney Business Association with a clear and realistic strategy for maintaining and building its downtown core. To this end, the team performed in-depth research in the form of focus groups, personal interviews, surveys, and secondary research.

An analysis of the research performed by *MacDonald & Wood* allowed the team to determine the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats, perceptions, attitudes, needs and desires of Sidney's business community. Further more, the team was able to identify several key issues including lack of cohesion, lack of communication, and negative perceptions and attitudes.

Taking into consideration the results of its research, the team of *MacDonald & Wood* reviewed the Town's Vision 2000 strategy for downtown revitalization and developed recommendations for enhancing and implementing this strategy. Recommendations for implementation are divided into three essential phases: representation, planning and action. Recommendations for representation include the development of an umbrella organization, the creation of a Business Community Coalition, and the hiring of an Economic Development Officer. Planning requires a commitment to a common goal, to the essential elements of organization, design, economic restructuring and promotion, to implementation guidelines and to a future framework. With planning and representation in place, the Town must then move forward into action. Each phase is necessary for success.

The Town of Sidney possesses great potential for the future. The commitment to success already demonstrated suggests true ability to capitalize upon that potential. With the initiation of the

implementation phases recommended by the consulting team of *MacDonald & Wood*, it is expected that the Town will achieve its goals.

1.0 INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

The Town of Sidney sits at the northern end of Vancouver Island's Saanich Peninsula. As the Peninsula's commercial hub, Sidney is a seaside community with an easy-going attitude and a population of just over 10,000. With an expected population increase of 6.2% over the next twenty-one years, Sidney has begun to recognize the need for long-term planning. The existence of a proportionately large senior population has also resulted in a definite shift in community interests, requirements and the provision of certain services. As a result, the Town has begun to seek guidelines to help balance its values and priorities.

Recognizing the importance of community participation and a thorough situation audit in the development of visions and objectives, detailed recommendations and effective monitoring systems, the Sidney Council developed the Vision 2000 Committee. Created in August of 1997, the purpose of the Vision 2000 Committee was to aid in the development of the "Corporate Strategy Community Vision" that would enable the Town's Council to "make informed decisions, having input from several sources, on issues that will affect the future"¹ of the community. Through a Community Forum, attended by over eighty participants and forty-eight community organizations, the Vision 2000 Committee was able to identify the seven most important issues facing the Town of Sidney:

1. waterfront
2. downtown revitalization/friendly downtown
3. community culture
4. industry/commercial
5. tourism/attract key business
6. seniors/youth/families
7. transportation²

With these seven issues identified, the Vision 2000 Committee divided itself into seven sub-committees, each designated to address one of the key issues. Each sub-committee began by developing a "vision statement" outlining the focus and scope of the sub-committee. These statements defined the mandate of each sub-committee and acted as the guidelines against which all future discussions were measured. From these vision statements, each sub-committee was able to prepare a series of objectives contributing towards the realization of the vision. Objectives were analyzed and discussed, resulting in the creation of recommendations and

¹ Town of Sidney. Draft Final Report of the Corporate Strategy Community Vision Committee. October, 1998. Page 3.

² Ibid. Page 5.

related action plans.

Throughout the process, Vision 2000 sub-committees maintained continuous contact with community-based organizations, local businesses, decision-makers, professional resource people, residents, municipal staff, and those directly involved in the issues of interest. As a result, each sub-committee was able to develop a "vision for the community by the community of what Sidney is capable of being, including realistic and achievable strategies of how to make the vision a reality."³

Over the past eighteen months, the Town of Sidney has made great strides towards creating policies and action plans to guide the Town into the next millennium. The Vision 2000 process has allowed the community as a whole to identify the most important issues facing the Town and to work in partnership to develop a thorough road map for both the community and the Council of Sidney. The community now faces the challenge of moving ahead with its vision, implementing its recommendations and monitoring its progress into the future.

Concurrent with this challenge, the consulting team of *MacDonald & Wood*, comprised of two Master of Business Administration students at the University of Victoria, was seeking a consulting project to fulfil a key graduation requirement of the Faculty of Business' MBA program. In November of 1998, the consulting team was matched with the Town of Sidney.

Initial interviews with Mayor Don Amos of the Town of Sidney seemed to suggest industrial and commercial development as the most pressing concern of the Town. Subsequent meetings between the consulting team, the Town of Sidney's Economic Development Committee (EDC) and representatives of the Sidney Business Association (SBA) shifted the focus of the consulting team's project towards downtown revitalization and development. The consulting team would consider ways by which the community could ensure the future viability of the Town's downtown core, agreed to be the "heart" of Sidney.

1.1 Summary of the Project

As outlined within the consulting team's Terms of Reference, the original business objectives for the team's project included the following:

1. A profile of existing businesses within Sidney.

2. An investigation of industries compatible and complimentary to the Sidney business environment.
3. An examination of the downtown revitalization/improvement strategies of similar, viable municipalities.
4. An analysis of ways by which to attract the community and other consumers to the downtown core.

Through these objectives, the consulting team intended to develop a strategy for building and maintaining a strong business area for the community of Sidney and for developing a community spirit that ensures the continued viability of the downtown area. (See Appendix 1 for a detailed copy of the Terms of Reference).

In completing the project's first objective, the consulting team was able to determine the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats, attitudes, perceptions, needs and wants of the Sidney business community. The results of this process, which will be discussed in detail later in this paper, indicated that objectives three and four held more importance to the community and, as such, it is upon these objectives that the consulting team focused its efforts. Combining these efforts with a review of existing Town documents, the team was able to determine the existence of a clear, detailed downtown revitalization strategy developed through the Vision 2000 process. As such, the focus of the project was adjusted and the team assumed the task of enhancing the existing Vision 2000 strategy for downtown revitalization and suggesting ways by which to smooth its implementation.

1.1.1 Objective

The objective of this project is to provide the Town of Sidney, it's Economic Development Committee, and the Sidney Business Association with ways by which to enhance and implement its Vision 2000 strategy for downtown revitalization.

1.1.2 Scope

To meet this objective, the consulting team of *MacDonald & Wood* will provide the following:

1. An analysis of the key issues impeding the future viability of Sidney's downtown core.
2. An analysis of the current strategy for downtown revitalization as developed through the

³ Ibid. Page 7.

Vision 2000 process.

3. Suggestions for future actions to be taken towards developing and maintaining Sidney's downtown core.
4. An action plan to aid in the implementation of the Town's downtown revitalization strategy.

1.2 Methodology

Project research was conducted in several concurrent phases. The first of these was a series of focus groups; the second phase involved interviews with a variety of Sidney business people and residents; the third phase included a survey of Victoria residents while the fourth and final phase involved extensive secondary research conducted through various Internet and library resources.

Throughout the duration of the project, the consulting team maintained contact with client representatives from the Town of Sidney's Economic Development Committee and the Sidney Business Association. Marolyn Reiten-Stevens and Edward Connor were available to the team for consultation as the project progressed, and offered advice on methods of approach concerning various issues.

1.2.1 Phase One – Focus Groups

During December and early January, the consulting team approached, by telephone, business owners and operators in Sidney to participate in 90-minute focus groups. Twenty-nine individuals were confirmed to participate in three focus groups on January 8th, 1999. These groups were held in the Dogwood Room of Sidney's Municipal Hall beginning at 9am, 1pm, and 5pm. The first of these three groups involved five participants; the second was conducted with eight participants and the third resulted in only one participant out of the eight originally confirmed participants. MacDonald facilitated the three groups and Wood prepared transcripts.

The purpose of these focus groups was to determine how the business community views Sidney as a place to do business, its perceptions of the Town's strengths and weaknesses, and its suggestions as to what direction the Town should take regarding downtown development. (See Appendix 2 for detailed transcripts of focus groups).

The first two groups lasted the full ninety minutes, the participants being very eager to share and discuss their feelings on the relevant issues. It was discovered that the majority of focus group participants are actively involved in the Sidney community. Although these individuals had a great deal of information to share with the consulting team it was unfortunate that other, less vocal members of the community did not come forward.

1.2.2 Phase Two – Personal Interviews

Beginning in December 1998, personal interviews were conducted with business owners and operators in the Sidney community. Over the course of several months, business people from all sectors and areas of the community were approached to participate in these interviews.

Individuals known to be involved in development projects within the downtown area of Sidney were specifically targeted. One dozen interviews were conducted, each spanning approximately one hour.

As with the focus groups discussed above, the purpose of these interviews was to further explore the opinions, perceptions, and suggestions of Sidney business operators regarding the Town as a place to do business.

In addition to the pre-arranged personal interviews, the consulting team also conducted casual, “drop-in” interviews with business owners and operators within their operating environment. Approximately fifteen individuals were approached to answer a few short questions regarding their experience as merchants in the downtown core.

1.2.3 Phase Three – Victoria Residents Survey

On February 12-14th, 1999, forty-two surveys were conducted within Downtown Victoria.

Individuals were approached randomly in downtown shopping and recreation areas in an attempt to attain a representative sample of Victoria consumers. The survey was administered by the consulting team and was completed in writing by the respondent. (See Appendix 3 for a copy of the survey.)

The purpose of this survey was to determine the perception held by Greater Victorians of Sidney as a place to visit and shop. The survey provided a brief demographic profile of the respondents. It included both yes/no and open-ended questions, allowing respondents to expound upon their perceptions when necessary. The survey was relatively short in deference to the fact that respondents had to stand and fill it out on the street. Furthermore, this form of personal intercept survey was chosen due to its ability to reach the correct respondent, its low cost, its high response rate, and the richness and quality of information attained.

1.2.4 Phase Four – Secondary Research

Throughout the duration of the project, the consulting team conducted in-depth secondary research:

1. Information was attained regarding economic development methods such as the Business Improvement Area program, the Main Street America approach, the Empowerment Zone and Enterprise Community program, and the Business Improvement District plan.
2. The application of economic development strategies within various municipalities was examined. Included among these municipalities were the following: Temple, Texas; Ontario, California; Salmon Arm, British Columbia; Hilton Head, North Carolina; Leavenworth, Washington; Key West, Florida; Carmel, California; Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario; and Fergus, Ontario.
3. The consulting team was provided with literature detailing previous economic development initiatives within the Town of Sidney and relevant Town information. These documents were reviewed as a means of providing the consulting team with background information.
4. Research was also performed on the subjects of collaboration and coalitions.

2.0 RESULTS

2.1 Interview & Focus Group Results

Combining the information attained through focus groups, interviews, and surveys, the consulting team was able to determine the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats facing the Town of Sidney.

2.1.1 Strengths

The people who live and work in Sidney enjoy the "small town" aspect of the town, many of them having moved to Sidney to take advantage of the lifestyle that a small town provides. Most agree that they appreciate the familiarity of small town living and the friendly atmosphere that is created when residents know each other on a first name basis. This feeling of familiarity and friendliness lends strength to the community by providing a common bond on which to build constructive development strategies. Sidney's small town atmosphere is conducive to a high standard of living that many cherish and will bond together to preserve.

Many believe that, as a small town, Sidney suffers from less bureaucracy than many other municipalities. Although this perception depends upon individual backgrounds and occupations, if used effectively, it may provide Sidney with an advantage when attracting businesses and residents to the area.

Many feel that Sidney's strength lies in the approachability of its Mayor and Council. Again this point was argued, but holds firm in the minds of many participants, suggesting a distinctive advantage for the Town when attempting to retain, expand, and attract businesses within the area.

Council has demonstrated a progressive, open-minded attitude in several ways. Most importantly, the current Mayor and Council instigated the creation of the Vision 2000 Corporate Strategy Community Vision. This compilation of strategies and action plans will guide Sidney into the next millennium with the co-operation and support of the whole community. Council has also demonstrated a willingness to participate in various studies, such as this one, opening itself up to outsider scrutiny in order to provide a clearer understanding of the issues that exist in the Town. In thoroughly researching these issues, the Council strengthens its knowledge of Sidney's needs and opens its doors to the development of concrete growth for Sidney.

Many downtown revitalization strategies revolve around the creation of anchor attractions that provide the base for continued economic development. Sidney is fortunate to have the ocean at one end of Town, a naturally existing anchor enhanced by the Port of Sidney, and the Sanscha

Community Hall at the opposite end. Although both of these sites require further development and improvements, they do provide Sidney with two pillars around which to develop its downtown.

Finally, Sidney benefits from its location. On the northern end of the Saanich Peninsula, Sidney enjoys easy access to the BC and Washington State Ferries, the Victoria International Airport and the local highway system. As a result, many industrial firms have located their businesses in Sidney for ease of transportation. Sidney's location also provides beautiful scenery, which is a strong tourist draw. Research shows that residents and visitors have a great appreciation for the beauty surrounding Sidney and the recreational opportunities that the natural landscape affords.

2.1.2 Weaknesses

Although discussed as a strength of the community, Sidney's small town atmosphere also acts as a weakness. Sidney does not have a large population base to support its retail and commercial outlets. In fact, the proximity of Victoria with its more varied selection of offerings may cause many to bypass Sidney for the bigger city. However, it must be noted that all Sidney residents who were approached indicated that they prefer to support Sidney businesses whenever possible and only travel to Victoria for items that are unavailable closer to home.

The small town atmosphere also promotes an adversity to change amongst its population. A large percentage of Sidney's residents is made up of retired men and women who have chosen to settle in Sidney specifically for its ambience and atmosphere. These individuals have no desire to see the Town change. This attitude has caused difficulties for the progressive development strategies that Sidney's Town Council is advocating.

Despite the perception outlined above of Sidney as a less bureaucratic community than most, many feel that Sidney's progress is mired in bureaucracy. An easily accessible Mayor and Council able to respond quickly and effectively are vital to Sidney's continued viability. The Sidney Council has instituted many changes over the duration of its term. Some of these changes have caused consternation amongst the Sidney community as a result of its general adversity to change. However, the root of the community's frustration with red tape may be a manifestation

of a greater problem, namely a lack of communication. Although there are inherent difficulties in trying to communicate with an entire town's population, this perceived lack of communication must be resolved.

A small town can easily become overwhelmed with committees and interest groups that represent and argue issues specific to their cause. This is the case within the Town of Sidney. There is an excess of representative organizations in the Town that are not collaborating to Sidney's benefit. In fact, their existence is a detriment to the successful implementation of the Town's Vision 2000 strategies. The many organizations representing Sidney business people make it very difficult for consensus to be reached on even the simplest of issues.

Opinion seems to suggest that Sidney business operators pay relatively high taxes and rent compared to similar districts within Greater Victoria. This perception, whether fact or fiction, may deter business from settling in Sidney, when similar space with a larger client base may be found in Greater Victoria. Sidney lacks the uniqueness necessary to differentiate itself from surrounding municipalities and to remain the hub of the Peninsula.

2.1.3 Opportunities

Sidney is located along major land, air, and water transportation routes, used not only for transporting people, but also products. For this reason, Sidney is an attractive place for retail, service and industrial business. The Victoria International Airport, the Swartz Bay Ferry Terminal, the Anacortes Ferry Terminal and the Pat Bay Highway all provide Sidney with a means of attracting businesses, especially those that involve transportation of heavy machinery and parts. In turn, service and retail operations benefit with the arrival of visitors via all of these facilities. Sidney should acknowledge the importance of these transportation providers and work to build strong partnerships with them.

The airport, ferries and highways also provide Sidney with access to a large number of consumers. This number is expected to grow even larger in the future. Victoria residents, although unaccustomed to the drive to Sidney, have easy access to the businesses and events in Sidney via the Pat Bay Highway. Furthermore, the ferries and airport bring visitors from all over

the world to the area. The community must place greater emphasis on drawing these visitors into Sidney for some small town hospitality. Vancouver Island is becoming well known as a tourist destination. Sidney is in an excellent position to capitalize upon this reputation.

The west side of Sidney contains most of the Town's industrial business. Large portions of the land on Sidney's west side are held by the Airport Authority. The Airport Authority is focused on its own profitability and is considering the development of this land. However, both Sidney and North Saanich, who are also involved in this decision, are struggling to come to an agreement on a proposal for development. Working in partnership to develop this land represents a major opportunity for the Town.

The creation of the Vision 2000 plan by the community has provided the Town with a major opportunity. This plan gives Sidney an economic development road map in line with the community's requirements. Capitalizing upon this opportunity is the next step in the process. The creation of a Community Vision is often the most difficult stage within an area's economic development. Sidney has successfully completed this stage and is now ready to collaborate on the implementation of its Vision.

2.1.4 Threats

The largest overall threat facing Sidney is the present state of the British Columbia economy. The failure of the logging, fishing and mining industries has put many communities into times of economic hardship. Although Sidney does not directly rely on any of these industries for its well being, business will inevitably be affected by the downturn in the general economy. Sidney is in the midst of a period of change. The Town must ensure that its growth plans do not exceed its means.

Sidney is indeed experiencing a time of growth and change. In fact, several large projects on the table for the Town amount to a proposed \$240 million worth of development. These projects include two hotels, a Sidney Business Centre, the Centre Block Development, the Snapdragon Development, development of the Post Office building, renovations at The Latch, and a potential "Geocentre" for the Sidney area. Empty retail and commercial spaces in the downtown area

suggest that this planned growth may intensify the threat of over-development in Sidney.

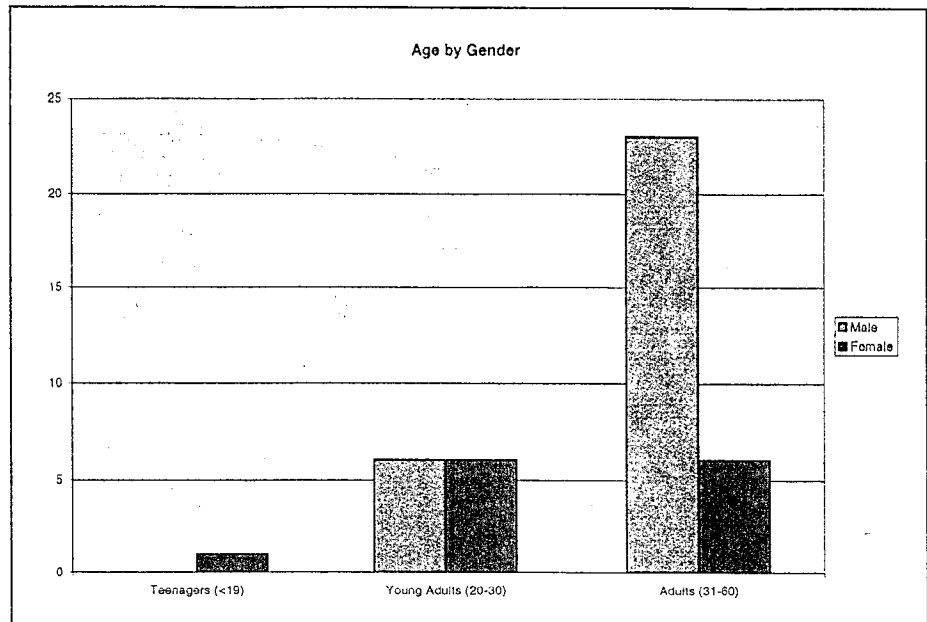
In order to answer this growth, Sidney must focus on attracting a diverse range of unique business to its downtown area. The surveys conducted by the consulting team were especially enlightening in this aspect. Most respondents indicated that they would only venture to Sidney if the Town had something to offer that Victoria did not. In other words, Sidney must differentiate itself both in terms of its retail and commercial offerings and the services it provides to the public. This perceived lack of uniqueness must be rectified with increased promotion throughout the Peninsula and the attraction of new, one-of-a-kind businesses.

Another threat to Sidney's successful future lies in the existence of other growing communities on the Peninsula and the rest of Vancouver Island. Currently, Sidney is the retail and commercial hub of the Saanich Peninsula. However, this advantageous position will be usurped if Sidney does not continue with its plans for economic development. For example, the Peninsula is in need of an entertainment/community centre that could be ideally located at the Sanscha Hall site. Unfortunately, neither construction nor renovations can take place until an agreement is reached between all factions of the community. If Sidney does not act soon in this respect, another community may take its place as the focal point of the area.

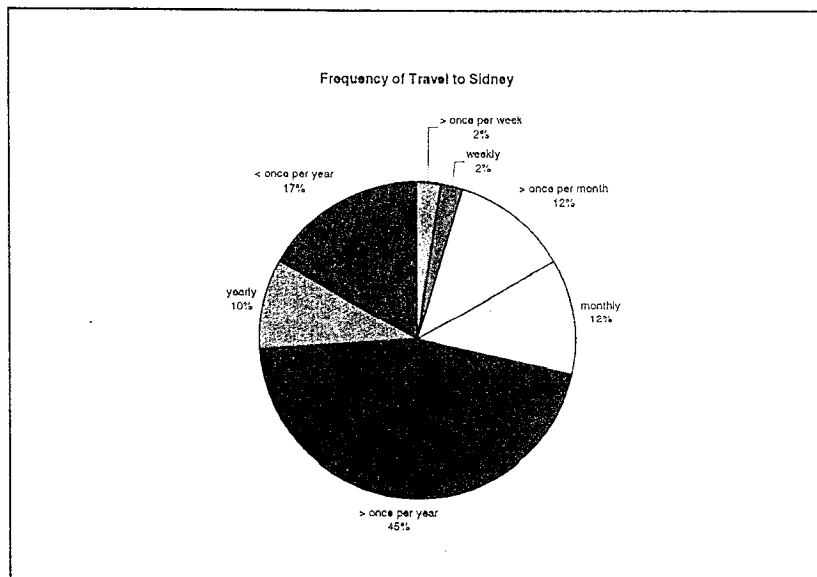
A final and very real threat that Sidney faces is the potential loss of the Anacortes Ferry route. This ferry brings significant numbers of visitors to Sidney from Washington State every year. These people patronize the Sidney shops and services and provide the Town with a strong tourist base in the summer months. If this ferry service were to be discontinued, businesses in Sidney would suffer both the loss of buying customers and the ambience and draw created by bustling streets. Control of this situation may, however, rest beyond that of the Sidney community. As such, the Town must focus on developing a solid working relationship with Washington State Ferry operators in order to strengthen their position. In addition, the Town must consider the worst case scenario and develop a strategy to minimize the potential loss.

2.2 Victoria Residents Survey Results

The survey was administered to forty-two respondents, twenty-nine male and thirteen female. Of these twenty-nine males, six were between the ages of twenty and thirty while the remainder were between the ages of thirty-one and sixty. Of the thirteen females,



one was below nineteen years of age, six were between the ages of twenty and thirty, and the remainder were between thirty-one and sixty. Forty-one of the respondents live within Greater Victoria with thirty-four respondents working within the same area. The remainder work and live on the Saanich Peninsula or elsewhere.

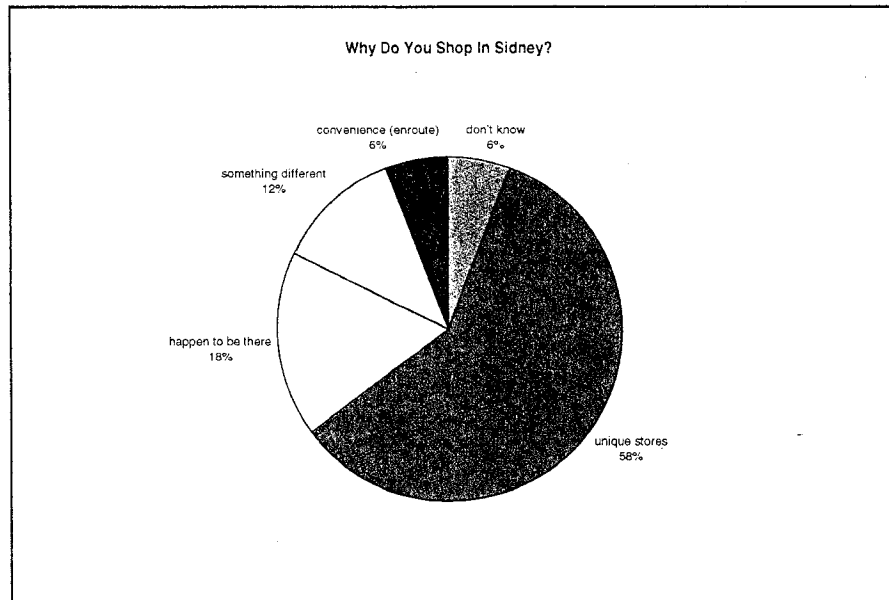


Forty-five percent of respondents indicated that they visit the Town of Sidney more than once per year but less than once per month. Twenty-four percent indicated that they visit the Town at least once per month. Only four percent stated that they visit Sidney at least once a week.

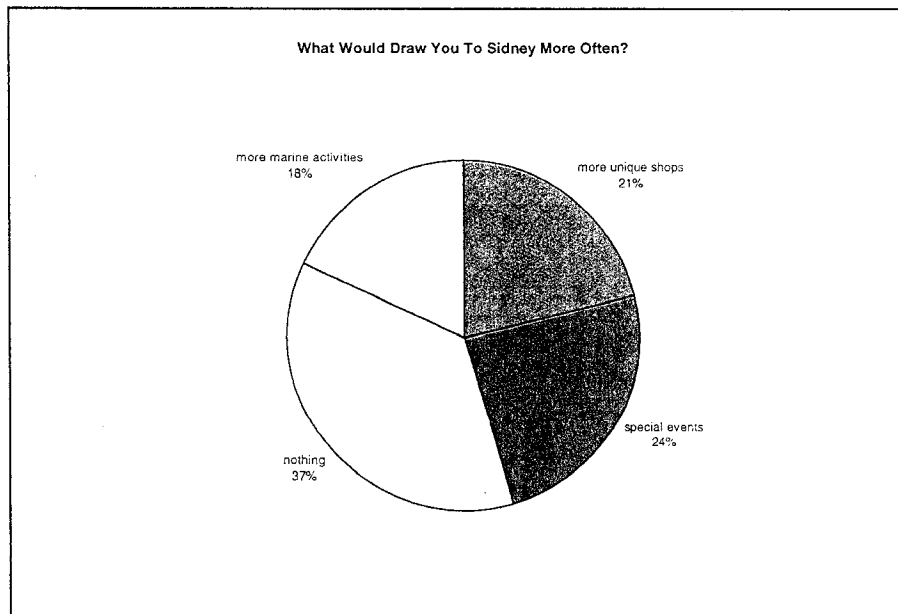
More than fifty percent of survey respondents listed shopping or recreational activities as reasons

for visiting Sidney. Twenty-one percent travel to the Town to conduct business while nine-percent visits friends in the area. Thirteen percent simply pass through enroute to ferries and other destinations while only six cited special events as the reason for their visits.

Of the forty percent of respondents who do shop in the Town of Sidney, fifty-eight percent listed the Town's unique retail offerings as their reason for doing so. An additional twelve-percent indicated that they shopped in Sidney because it offers something different from what they



are accustomed to. Six percent were unsure as to why they chose Sidney as a place to shop and another six percent found it a convenient stop enroute. Eighteen percent of purchases made by respondents were simply the result of being in the area.



When asked to indicate what would draw them to the Sidney area more often, the most common response at twenty-four percent of those surveyed was special events. Twenty-one percent suggested more unique retail offerings

while eighteen percent indicated an interest in increased marine activities and services. Thirty-seven percent were doubtful of being drawn to the area more often, regardless of the actions of

the Town.

Most survey respondents, when asked for their overall perception of Sidney, replied with variations on the theme of small, boring, and quaint. Although the small and quaint qualifiers were often used with positive connotations, several respondents definitely indicated the opposite. As indicated, some felt that nothing could attract them to Sidney other than a quick stop for gas, coffee, or beer on the way to the Ferries. These same respondents also felt that Sidney was too far away and had nothing special to offer when compared to Victoria and its interesting neighbourhoods. Many also believed the Town to be a retirement community. Some believed this to be an asset to the community while others felt it made the Town of little interest to a younger population.

3.0 KEY ISSUES

As can be noted from the preceding section, a variety of topics were discussed during the interview and survey processes. Although all points were valid, it became apparent that several overwhelming issues exist for Sidney business owners, operators and residents. The clarification of these issues allowed the consulting team to refocus its efforts and more effectively address the topics of relevance to the community. These issues have been classified under the following subject areas: lack of cohesion, lack of communication, and negative perceptions and attitudes.

3.1 Lack of Cohesion

3.1.1 Representative Organizations

One of the most significant problems facing Sidney is the existence of multiple representative organizations that battle their individual causes. It appears that although these numerous organizations are struggling to improve the economic well being and ensure the future viability of the Town of Sidney, their existence makes it difficult for the community as a whole to work together. The personal agendas of these organizations often prevent the sharing of ideas and the overwhelming community support of any one organization. The Saanich Peninsula Chamber of Commerce, the Sidney Business Association, the Breakfast Club, the Home Business Association, the Sidney Association of Merchants, the Saanich Peninsula Tourism Association,

the Memorial Park Society, the Sidney Rate Payers Association and others are all playing a role in Sidney's future.

The need to bring the Sidney community and its various representative organizations together was recognized and addressed through the Vision 2000 Call to Action. The development of the Vision 2000 plan involved significant input from all aspects of the community: commercial, retail, residential, professional, and industrial factions were all represented. The resulting Vision 2000 plan provides Sidney with policies and strategies developed by the community that will lead the Town into the twenty-first century. However, the successful implementation of this Vision 2000 plan relies on the co-operation of all factions of the community, especially the organizations that represent them. A sincere commitment is necessary from all areas. Past grievances and failed attempts between groups must be forgotten in order to create the determination and dedication necessary for Sidney to prosper in the years to come.

Most Sidney business owners and operators who were approached addressed the issue of cohesion. Rather than turning to the existing organizations for support and representation on current issues, the Sidney community often creates new interest groups further diluting the support of any one organization. This practice seems to suggest that the citizens of Sidney feel they receive inadequate representation in the necessary forums from the existing community organizations. This accumulation of representative groups has created an internal struggle within Sidney that is not conducive to the cohesive attitude needed for economic growth.

It should be noted that this issue is recognized not only by Sidney business and community members in general, but also by the organizations themselves. Frustration due to the lack of overwhelming support for any one organization has led these groups to work towards the development of a more cohesive spirit. However, the difficulty lies in getting the community with its many and varied interests "singing from the same song book." Yet, by working in concert, all public and private sector players will find that they can make better use of available, pooled resources to the benefit of the community.

3.1.2 Hours of Operation

Another issue that demonstrates the lack of cohesion within the Town of Sidney is the operating hours of businesses in Sidney. This topic was raised without fail in every focus group and interview conducted by the team. Business owners and operators appear to schedule their operating hours more for their own convenience than for that of the shopper. Although many businesses complain about this lack of consistency, in general, there appears to be an unwillingness to alter operating hours. There is a strong suggestion that consistent hours, including extended evening and weekend shopping, might potentially draw a group of shoppers to Sidney who would not otherwise find it convenient to shop in the area. It is difficult to promote the Town as a unique place to shop, when quite often the hours of operation are decided arbitrarily by business owners and operators. Cruisers arriving in Sidney after a lovely afternoon sail in the islands would surely be willing to do more than just "window shop." Furthermore, customers are unwilling to travel from Victoria or other parts of the Saanich Peninsula without the assurance of finding the shops open when they arrive. Retail business is the heart of Sidney, and for the Town to prosper the retail community must come together and promote themselves as a cohesive unit. The merchants must have the support of the community in the creation of policies that let both visitors and residents know that Sidney is "Open for Business!" Although instituting a policy of longer hours may initially be a hardship financially, there are strong indications that business would grow as awareness of these new policies increases.

3.2 Lack of Communication

Successful economic growth in a community depends on the interaction between the public and private sectors. A co-operative effort towards community goals is a necessary condition in development planning. Sidney's Vision 2000 plan is a prime example of a successful community effort in which the private and public sectors concentrated on the creation of a community vision. It is apparent, however, that the residents of Sidney often feel uncertain as to the value of their input regarding various government decisions and planning processes. As such, the type of co-operation seen during the creation of the Vision 2000 plan must be carried over into other aspects of community life.

This unfortunate uncertainty has developed due to insufficient communication with the community, and not due to the good intentions of the Mayor and Council. The Mayor and Council of Sidney have provided strong leadership for the Town, working towards the community goal of continued economic viability. Unfortunately, in attempting to achieve those goals, the Council has not always been able to satisfy the public's need for information. As a result, a perception has developed that those in positions of political power are not listening. The Council needs to be aware of this problem and address it through increased community education in the political processes. The public should be made conscious of each step in the decision making process and the progress of the Council in reaching decisions. Newsletters, newspaper interviews, a regular editorial column, posters, radio spots and special interest meetings are all methods of keeping the community abreast of the Council's current business. Increased communication between the Town Council and the people it represents will improve the community focus on the issues. In particular, continuous education of the community will be vital to the successful implementation of the Vision 2000 plan.

Communication is not, however, the sole responsibility of the Mayor and Council. As mentioned earlier, numerous representative organizations exist within the Sidney community. The failure of these organizations to communicate has acted to perpetuate the "no one is listening" mentality and to promote the lack of cohesion. This situation is, however, improving due to a concentrated effort on the part of several organizations. For example the Saanich Peninsula Chamber of Commerce and Sidney Business Association have exchanged two members to increase communication between the two groups.

The lack of communication between the Council, the representative organizations, and the community at large has resulted in a perception of inaction among business owners and operators. Many believe, despite the efforts of the Council, that nothing is being accomplished. They fail to see the progress being made and, as a result, fail to support the actions of the Council. They often perceive decisions made by the Mayor and Council as unadvised and unsupported and feel that their opinions are being heard too late in the process.

This perception that "no one is listening" has resulted in a lack of energy among business

operators and owners. Feeling that their opinions are not being heard and their efforts are not making a difference, downtown business operators are losing interest in Sidney development projects. The team encountered this attitude on numerous occasions when approaching downtown businesses to participate in the information gathering process. The continued participation and support of development in Sidney by downtown business relies on the ability of the Town Council and representative organizations to communicate the importance of the business community's opinions and to demonstrate progress in accordance with those opinions.

Communication is a key factor for the sustainability of Sidney. A communication network providing links within the Town and with other municipalities would allow for the interaction of people, information and commodities. Sidney cannot exist in isolation and continued economic growth relies on the Town's ability to interact and compete with other urban systems in the shifting economy.

3.3 Negative Perceptions & Attitudes

Strong negative perceptions dominate many Sidney residents' view of downtown. As discussed above, the distinct lack of cohesion and communication that exists between the many representative groups and the general public have perpetuated these perceptions. Negative perceptions develop far easier than positive attitudes, especially in situations of rapid change. And despite the fact that these perceptions are just that – perceptions – they are reality to those who hold them and, as such, must be addressed accordingly.

3.3.1 One Way Street

Perhaps the most commonly sited complaint among Sidney residents and business operators concerns the recent changes to traffic flow on Beacon Avenue. The very recent completion of the Town's traffic study should resolve many issues surrounding Beacon Avenue. Currently, however, the opinion among Council is quite positive while opinion among the general public is quite varied.

Early in the implementation of the changes to Beacon Avenue, the general sentiment seemed to be a negative one. Few seemed to support the actions of the Council. As time has passed, however, the perception of the street has begun to change. Many business operators express a belief that the changes have not adversely affected their operations. At the same time, they do indicate having received a large number of complaints from their customers concerning the one way street.

Whether or not the move to one way traffic flow down Beacon Avenue has improved safety and convenience is, at this point, somewhat irrelevant. The negative perception among shoppers and residents is the key issue and overrides the positive effects of the change. Further, this negative perception seems to rest upon the public belief that the decision to make Beacon Avenue one way was made with neither public consultation nor support. This is a perception that must be addressed to ensure future success of Council actions.

3.3.2 Parking

The residents of Sidney have, over the years, become accustomed to the convenience of parking directly in front of the shop they wish to visit. The large percentage of retirement aged residents in Sidney exaggerates this tendency. With the change to one way traffic flow down Beacon Avenue came the creation of wider sidewalks and curb bulbs and the loss of two parking spaces per block. Increased traffic and population have also acted to exacerbate the parking "problem" in downtown Sidney.

Feeding off their displeasure regarding the construction of the one way street, residents have focused on the loss of parking to prove the failure of these changes. In fact, this loss has been minimal and, again, the problem is more perceived than "real". Extensive parking exists off Beacon Avenue, but signage and awareness of this parking is limited. This limited awareness and the storefront parking mentality have resulted in a perception that has created a real problem. Action must be taken to increase the awareness of parking in the downtown area and to change the mentality of Sidney residents.

4.0 ANALYSIS OF THE CURRENT STRATEGY FOR DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION

*"To preserve the friendly, small-scale, seaside town atmosphere in the downtown core."*⁴

Developed by the Vision 2000 sub-committee on downtown revitalization, this statement represents Sidney's vision for the future of its downtown core. As part of the Vision 2000 process and working from this vision statement, the downtown revitalization sub-committee outlined the following objectives:

1. Enhance the natural and visual amenities to create a safe and attractive environment.
2. Enhance and strengthen the commercial vitality of Sidney.
3. Intensify the residential use of downtown Sidney to make it more vibrant, safer and attractive.
4. Improve the perception of parking availability and anticipate future demand.
5. Extend the present beautification project to include the whole of downtown.
6. Encourage more commercial/residential mixed use facilities and business diversification.
7. Encourage improvements to the design and/or fabric of building facades and/or structures.⁵

Taking these objectives and a list of identified strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and concerns into consideration, the sub-committee has recommended a series of somewhat detailed action plans. These recommendations address such issues as parking, downtown beautification, residential intensification within the downtown core, business diversification, and enhanced special events and attractions. (See Appendix 4 for details regarding the Vision 2000 sub-committee recommendations on downtown revitalization.)

Through this process, the Town of Sidney has succeeded in developing a realistic plan for the future of its downtown core. A detailed look at the Town's vision for downtown revitalization demonstrates a clear understanding of the most pressing issues facing the area. The sub-committee has addressed the need for streetscape improvements and economic diversification but, as will be discussed later, this approach omits two of the four essential elements of

⁴ Ibid. Page 17.

downtown development. Working from this plan and the team's analysis of community needs, *MacDonald & Wood* has developed an enhanced list of recommendations to facilitate the implementation of the Town's vision.

5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Implementing any downtown revitalization plan is often a difficult task. The commitment and time required to develop a plan often dulls the enthusiasm for implementation and yet, without implementation, efforts made during the development stage are often wasted. Based upon both primary and secondary research, the consulting team of *MacDonald & Wood* advocates the initiation of a three-phase implementation process. These three phases of representation, planning and action are believed to be essential to the successful implementation of the Town of Sidney's downtown revitalization plans. (See Appendix 5 for a graphical representation of these Implementation Phases.)

5.1 Implementation Phase 1 – Representation

As discussed earlier, one of the most pressing issues facing Sidney is the lack of cohesion within the business community. Without cohesion, the Town will be unable to move forward in a constructive and positive manner. As such, the essential implementation phase of representation must be addressed immediately for the development of downtown Sidney to be successful. The focal point of this phase is the development of collaborative efforts towards downtown revitalization for the Town.

5.1.1 Public/Private Partnership

A sincere commitment by all segments of the community is needed to implement any economic development project. Public and private sector partnerships must be developed as a means of pooling resources, including expertise and funding, and accomplishing economic development projects in a timely manner. Those who choose to remain outside of this partnership must realize

⁵ Ibid. Page 17.

that doing so is not in their best interest, in downtown's best interest, in the community's best interest, or in their constituents' best interest.

This recommendation speaks directly to the issue of cohesion. If Sidney wishes to succeed and prosper in the future, all members of the community must make a conscious effort to put the activities of the past behind them and move forward. As a dynamic entity, all representative groups must work together to determine the best plan of action for achieving a partnership. Such collaboration is especially necessary within the community of Sidney, which struggles to bring together its numerous representative organizations with their varied interests.

Attempts have been made in the past to develop a single representative organization within the Town of Sidney. To date, these attempts have been unsuccessful. This lack of success is unacceptable. Although it is necessary within Sidney to have dedicated representation for all aspects of the community, such as the downtown core, industrial and commercial development and residential interests, it is also vital for these representative groups to work in collaboration towards the overall progress of the Town. As such, the formation of an "umbrella organization" to bring these groups together and foster the development of collaborative efforts is essential.

The formation of an umbrella organization may begin through the exchange of representative members, as with the recent efforts of the Sidney Business Association and the Saanich Peninsula Chamber of Commerce. Eventually, these exchanges should progress to include regularly scheduled meetings among representatives of all organizations to provide a forum for discussion of their actions and future collaborations.

The importance of an "umbrella organization" must not overshadow the importance of representative groups dedicated to the growth of specific community interests. The downtown core of Sidney acts as a symbol of the community's "economic health, local quality of life, pride, and community history."⁶ The downtown core creates and retains jobs while providing "a good incubator for new small businesses."⁷ A successful downtown core increases the community's

⁶ Why are Main Streets Important? <http://www.mainst.org/about/aboutmain.htm>

⁷ Ibid.

options for goods and services and provides an important civic forum for community members. To be successful, however, the downtown core of any municipality requires co-operation and enthusiasm from both the downtown business community and the municipality. These groups must work together to develop a coalition dedicated to the future viability of the downtown core.

The form that this new Business Community Coalition (BCC) takes is solely dependent upon the desires and needs of the groups involved but, without a doubt, a coalition must be formed. The mandate of this coalition must be clearly defined as downtown revitalization and clear boundaries must be established for the revitalization area. A BCC may simply take the form of a representative organization strategizing to develop an action plan towards which the community can work, as in the Vision 2000 process. In other cases, the coalition can develop into much more – financially supporting itself and the actions it takes through the support of its members. This form of BCC facilitates the pooling of funds for area promotion, marketing and management. It may involve the funding of tree planting, street furniture, improved parking, flower boxes and street banners, promoting the area as a whole rather than as a group of individual shops, restaurants and offices. The BCC may choose to fund special events and ongoing advertising programs and, as a group, is far more effective in its activities than any one representative organization or individual. The BCC acts to improve public awareness, establish a positive image for the area, increase customer traffic and create interest for new business. It provides a self-help tool to those interested in providing the downtown core and business community with a higher level of services and, in turn, stimulates reinvestment and community pride. Similar coalitions in municipalities such as Salmon Arm, Port Alberni, Vancouver, Kelowna and Portland, Oregon have proved successful in enabling these towns to achieve their economic development goals. As part of their initiatives, these communities have drastically increased their abilities to promote themselves and their events. They have improved the physical appearance of their downtown and increased the number of visitors to their target areas.

Developing a self-sufficient BCC requires the overwhelming support of private sector business owners and operators. Once this support is attained, a special levy may be exacted upon all business properties within the proposed boundaries. The form this levy takes can be based upon any one of the following methods:

- assessment, in which each property owner contributes a share proportionate to their share of the total taxable assessed value of their property within the boundary;
- a fixed sum parcel tax which requires all members to contribute an equal share; or
- a fixed sum per linear footage of frontage within the BCC area.

It is important to note that the BCC also has the option of requesting that this levy come from business owners within the proposed boundary as opposed to business property owners.

Successful coalitions, whether financially self-sufficient or reliant upon public funds, require a commitment by all members to work in the interest of the group rather than towards their own self-interest. Members must be willing to make trade-offs to avoid stalling the process and must place greater importance on the common end of the coalition as opposed to the priority of any one association. All members must be willing to listen to one another, avoiding the tendency of any one member to dominate, and must be willing to give credit to the coalition as a whole as opposed to the individual members. Communication with all members of the coalition must be a priority and leadership must come from an individual who possesses a sincere commitment to the cause and the time to devote to it.⁸ As stated earlier, members of the coalition must recognize that choosing not to participate is not in the best interest of themselves, of the community, of downtown, nor of their constituents.

In forming their coalition, BCC members within the Town of Sidney must focus upon their common cause – the future viability of the Town of Sidney. Past grievances and failures must be cast aside as these organizations and individuals join forces. In the process, the downtown business community will discover that it is possible to “achieve far more by integrating their resources and dividing the effort.”⁹

5.1.2 Economic Development Officer

Often times, the leader of any umbrella organization represents the one member association or individual that has the most to gain or lose. In the case of community development, however, the

⁸ Vanover, Margot. “Get Things Done Through Coalitions.” Negotiation: Readings, Exercises and Cases. Irwin/McGrw-Hill, 1999. Page 322.

⁹ Ibid. Page 322.

effect upon all individuals is often dramatic. And in the case of Sidney-by-the-Sea, past failures seem to suggest that the leader of any umbrella organization should be as impartial as possible.

The Vision 2000 Corporate Strategy Community Vision supports the development of a "Vision Co-ordinator" to implement the recommendations contained within the plan. This individual, however, must act as more than a watchdog for the implementation of the Vision. This individual must work to promote the Town as a whole, to encourage economic development, to ensure open communication, and to facilitate the development of public/private partnerships. Funded jointly by the Town and the private sector, this individual may be the natural leader of the Town's representative umbrella organization.

5.2 Implementation Phase 2 – Planning

The Sidney community has taken great strides towards developing its Vision 2000 Corporate Strategy Community Vision. Over the past eighteen months, the Town has succeeded in creating concrete goals, objectives, recommendations and action plans intended to ensure the future viability of the community. With this development process complete, the Town now faces the challenge of planning its implementation actions. This implementation phase will provide the philosophies and guidelines that will direct the implementation process.

5.2.1 A Common Goal

Through the Vision 2000 process, the Town of Sidney was able to develop an overall community vision:

In summary, the overall vision of the Town of Sidney is of a balanced, vibrant waterfront community with a revitalized town centre which caters to residents, visitors and businesses through the provision of a broad range of services including: efficient transportation, tourist amenities, and cultural and social activities for all segments of the community, while affording optimal opportunities for industrial and commercial development.¹⁰

This vision, developed jointly by all factions of the community, provides the Town of Sidney

with direction. It is a positive initiative, designed to guide the community as a whole into the future. It addresses all aspects of the community and, as a joint effort, represents all viewpoints.

This vision, although an ideal starting point, is only the beginning. It is a vision developed around the strengths and weaknesses of the Town and prioritizes the goals and objectives of the community. It is the foundation upon which the Vision 2000 Corporate Strategy Community Vision is built but its lengthy and cumbersome format has made it difficult to generate the public enthusiasm necessary to proceed with implementation.

The Town of Sidney requires a vision that can be easily understood and supported by all members of the community. Working from the overall vision developed through the Vision 2000 process, the Town needs to develop a "vision slogan". This slogan should be short and concise, and should embody the needs and desires of the entire community. It should be a simple, catchy phrase upon which to build the pride and hopes of the community. Although simple, it must be clearly defined, providing a concise, understandable road map for the decision-makers of the community.

This slogan may be as simple as "Sydney-by-the-Sea: A Successful, Small Town". When clearly defined, this slogan provides direction to those with decision making power while providing inspiration to all. In this case, success may be defined as efficient transportation, as low unemployment, as a booming tourist season, or as a positive energy throughout the community. The "small town" may require commercial and industrial growth that does not impede upon the quaint and friendly atmosphere of the Town.

Regardless of the vision slogan adopted by Sidney, this slogan must be clearly communicated to the community. It must become the catch phrase that comes to mind whenever community members, representative groups, local government, and neighbouring municipalities think of the Town of Sidney. It must be the vision against which economic development decisions are assessed and must symbolize the spirit of the community.

¹⁰ Town of Sidney. Draft Final Report of the Corporate Strategy Community Vision Committee. October, 1998. Page 12.

5.2.2 Elements of Success

The National Main Street Center was developed in 1980 to assist American communities in revitalizing their downtown cores. Since that time the Main Street program has helped over 1300 communities, both large and small, to improve their economic standing. Since its inception, the Main Street program has resulted in 43,800 new businesses and 161,600 new jobs. Communities who partake in the program typically find that every dollar they spend to support their Main Street program results in thirty-five dollars of new investment.

Over the years, the National Main Street Center has determined that the successful implementation of any downtown development project requires a focus upon four key elements: organization, design, economic restructuring, and promotion.¹¹ Two of these elements, design and economic restructuring, are addressed by the Vision 2000 sub-committee on downtown revitalization. These two elements are further discussed within this report as are organization and promotion.

5.2.2.1 Organization

As mentioned, the need for organization within any downtown revitalization plan is particularly relevant to the Town of Sidney. Implementing such a plan requires consensus and co-operation among the numerous groups and individuals involved in the revitalization process. A strong organization will provide the stability and expertise necessary to build and maintain a long-term effort.

In addressing the issue of organization, the consulting team of *MacDonald & Wood* advocates the creation of an umbrella organization and BCC for the Town of Sidney. Although this process is understood to be a difficult one, it is believed to be the only means of progressing with the Town's plans for economic development. Responsibility for creating these organizations lies solely with the community. Only through the recognition of this responsibility and the realization of the necessity of these organizations will Sidney be able to advance successfully into the new millennium.

5.2.2.2 Design

An aesthetically pleasing downtown environment acts in the best interest of business, the customer, and the community. Such an environment encourages reinvestment of private and public dollars into the downtown sector. Good downtown design, including facades, signage, streetscape, and public spaces, makes the downtown area a quality place in which to shop, work, invest, and live.

The Vision 2000 sub-committee has addressed the issue of design within its recommendations for downtown revitalization. Issues such as streetscape, lighting and signage are discussed and actions have already been taken to enhance the physical appearance of Sidney's downtown core. Additional design recommendations will be made later in this report.

5.2.2.3 Economic Restructuring

Economic restructuring requires an in-depth analysis of current market forces and the development of long-term plans in an effort to improve an area's competitiveness. Through business retention, expansion and attraction, the downtown community must develop a strong economic base to enable the realization of new opportunities.

Although the Vision 2000 sub-committee on industrial and commercial development provided detailed recommendations regarding business retention, expansion and attraction, the downtown revitalization sub-committee provided only limited recommendations regarding these topics. The sub-committee has recognized the need to enhance commercial activity within the downtown core through the expansion of special events and attractions and the diversification of businesses. Further recommendations regarding economic restructuring will be addressed later in this report.

5.2.2.4 Promotion

Creating excitement within the downtown is essential to the successful implementation of any downtown development project. The creation of a positive image for the downtown business district will draw customers, investors and business operators into the area. Retail sales events,

¹¹ About Main Street? <http://www.mainst.org/about/aboutmain.htm>

promotional campaigns, and special events all function as means of enlivening the downtown core.

Given the overall negative perception held by Greater Victorians, as indicated by the consulting team's Victoria Residents Survey, and the difficulty of drawing other Saanich Peninsula residents to the area, promotion is of particular importance to Sidney's downtown. This issue is not sufficiently addressed within the Town's Corporate Strategy Community Vision and will be discussed later in this report.

5.2.3 Implementation Principles

The Town of Sidney has successfully created a road map for economic development. The Vision 2000 process has allowed the community as a whole to identify the most important issues facing the Town, and to work in partnership towards the continued economic viability of the community. Sidney now faces the challenge of moving ahead with its vision, implementing its recommendations and monitoring its progress into the future. Successful implementation relies upon the Town's ability to develop clear guidelines and concrete principles – a philosophy for growth. The consulting team of *MacDonald & Wood* recommends a focus on a philosophy that makes downtown revitalization:

- ✓ **A Top Priority** – With a faltering downtown, no community can be perceived as a successful one. As such, all members of the community must focus upon downtown development as an essential part of the community's future and an anchor of its success.
- ✓ **A Personal Responsibility** – Downtown success is the personal responsibility of all community members. Downtown business and property owners must assume this responsibility and must work to make downtown inviting. In addition, strong leadership from within the community will foster long-term dedication to development initiatives.
- ✓ **Unique** – Successful competition with surrounding municipalities depends upon a community's ability to differentiate itself. Unique retail, commercial and service offerings will create an atmosphere that is appealing to new businesses, consumers and investors.
- ✓ **A Collaborative Effort** – As discussed in detail above, the implementation of any downtown revitalization plan requires a commitment on the part of both public and private interests.

The support of Sidney residents, although essential to the success of the downtown core, is likely insufficient to ensure future viability. As such, to ensure its viability, Sidney must look beyond its own boundaries, targeting those who live in surrounding areas. Without the “insider” knowledge possessed by Sidney residents, these markets are often unaware of what the Town has to offer and must be specifically targeted by promotional campaigns. Combined with attempts to create a unique shopping experience, targeting these markets will allow Sidney to draw upon a much larger population.

Sidney's location, as discussed earlier, provides the Town with numerous opportunities to draw upon larger markets. The Pat Bay Highway, the Swartz Bay Ferry Terminal, the Anacortes Ferry Terminal, and the Victoria International Airport all provide the Town with access to hundreds of visitors each day. Drawing these visitors into the community's downtown core must be a focus of the area's future framework.

5.3 Implementation Phase 3 – Action

Having established representation and invested in planning, the Town of Sidney must move on to the third phase of implementation – action. This phase allows the Town to move ahead with the strategies it has worked so hard to develop. The consulting team of *MacDonald & Wood* offers the following recommendations intended to enhance the Town's existing plans for downtown revitalization. It must be noted that, to be effective, these recommendations cannot be considered in isolation, but must be combined with the recommendations discussed above regarding representation and planning.

5.3.1 Public Space Improvements

Improving the physical ambience of Sidney's downtown core is, as discussed earlier, an essential part of the area's revitalization. Discussed extensively within the Town's Vision 2000 plan, this necessity is recognized by the community and must be pursued. In addition to the recommendations made by the downtown revitalization sub-committee, the consulting team of *MacDonald & Wood* suggests the following actions:

- ✓ **Streetscape Improvement Plan** – Plans are under way to extend the current beautification

process along Beacon Avenue to the Pat Bay Highway. The consulting team recommends extending this beautification even further to include both Bevan and Sidney Avenues and the side streets that run between them. This process should inject the nautical theme of the Port of Sidney area into the remainder of the downtown including public parking areas, green spaces, and sidewalks.

- ✓ **Lighting** – Along with the community's concern of improved pedestrian lighting, the consulting team suggests promoting the "small town" atmosphere by lowering existing lantern-style lampposts and installing similar lighting fixtures throughout the downtown area.
- ✓ **Co-ordinated Sign System** – The need for reduced signage within the downtown core is apparent and addressed by the Vision 2000 plan. The consulting team also recommends the creation of a co-ordinated sign system, tying together the nautical ambience of the area and suggesting the boundaries of downtown. This system should also act to lead visitors to the Town's attractions and points of interest.

5.3.2 Private Property Improvements

Unlike public property improvements, the Vision 2000 sub-committee on downtown revitalization has not addressed the need for private property improvements. Private property makes up the bulk of the downtown area, and the creation of a unique ambience is dependent upon the co-operation of private property owners. The consulting team recommends the following initiatives:

- ✓ **Encourage Building Improvements** – The Town of Sidney must demonstrate a willingness to assist property owners in their improvement projects. The Town may choose to provide design assistance or may simply work to develop and communicate clear design standards. The Town should implement and promote incentives such as property tax breaks to downtown property owners who improve their premises.
- ✓ **Enforcement of Codes** – Building codes and design standards must be in line with the Town's efforts to create a unique, downtown ambience and must ensure the maintenance of

5.3.4 Parking & Traffic

Traffic patterns and parking issues have been topics of conversation in Sidney for some time. As such the sub-committee for downtown revitalization in the Vision 2000 process addresses these issues in substantial detail. The consulting team offers the following suggestions for further enhancement of the existing recommendations:

- ✓ **Voluntary Reservation** – Sidney's downtown business community must implement a voluntary parking reservation policy. This policy would prioritize the use of parking by customers as opposed to employees, owners or other long-term "parkers". In instituting this policy it is hoped that customers' complaints regarding lack of parking may decline.
- ✓ **Clear Signage** – As discussed earlier, the parking problem within downtown Sidney appears to be a perceived rather than actual problem. Plenty of parking exists in the downtown area off Beacon Avenue, and as such, the consulting team recommends the use of clear, attractive signs directing drivers to these parking areas. This action may be the first step in changing the negative attitudes towards parking off Beacon Avenue.

5.3.6 Marketing

Through the research conducted over the past few months, the consulting team has found marketing to be an essential part of downtown revitalization that has not been addressed by the Town. As an initiative that acts to attract and retain business, to draw target markets, to improve community spirit and to encourage an overall positive image, marketing is vital to the future viability of the Town of Sidney. As such, the consulting team of *MacDonald & Wood* firmly stands behind the following recommendations:

- ✓ **Public Relations** – The success of Sidney's downtown revitalization initiatives relies upon the Town's ability to promote itself, both within and outside of the community. To this end, Sidney must take steps to develop a professional promotional campaign. The importance of this initiative cannot be over-emphasized. Sidney's downtown must sell itself to target markets, making them aware of what it has to offer. Furthermore, a promotional campaign would serve to improve the spirit of the Town. A downtown that is supported by its citizens

is a downtown that is attractive to others.

An integral part of Sidney's promotional campaign is the development of a downtown logo and slogan. The consulting team recommends that this be done in conjunction with the development of the Town's use its "vision slogan", and that this slogan, or a variation of it, be used as the basis for this campaign. Regardless of the choice, this slogan and logo must permeate all of downtown's promotional material. It should be printed onto banners installed along the streets of downtown, included in visitor brochures and promotional flyers, and added to all official Town documentation. It should be printed on t-shirts, on hats, on buttons, and on decals for distribution to all downtown business community members.

- ✓ **Special Events** – The Town of Sidney cannot prosper unless it is able to draw community members and other consumers into the downtown core. As previously mentioned, this ability will come with the creation of a unique ambience and a distinct image for the downtown. This image and ambience must be exemplified through the staging of special events such as Saturday morning markets, weekend outdoor performances, sidewalk sales, afternoon teas, and waterfront activities. Regardless of Sidney's choice, these special events must be unique to the Town, providing visitors with a concrete incentive for their visit.
- ✓ **Internal Communication** – As discussed earlier, lack of communication is one of the key issues facing the Town of Sidney. This fact not only applies to external communication linkages, but also to the channels that exist amongst community members. The successful implementation of any and all of the recommendations made within this report is reliant upon the community's ability to communicate its intentions, its progress and its successes. Without communication, there will be no community support. Without community support, there will be no progress.

6.0 CONCLUSION

Over the past eighteen months, the Town of Sidney has worked hard to develop its Corporate Strategy Community Vision. With this Vision, the Town is poised to move successfully into the

next millennium. As determined by the consulting team of *MacDonald & Wood*, the Town of Sidney's downtown revitalization plan fits nicely with the needs of the business community. However, implementing this plan will require a strong commitment on the part of all downtown business community members and will be a challenge.

The consulting team of *MacDonald & Wood* has endeavoured to present the Town with an enhanced strategy for downtown economic development and recommendations for successful implementation. Through in-depth primary and secondary research, the consulting team was able to perform a thorough analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats facing the Town of Sidney and to determine the issues of utmost importance to the Town. Using this knowledge, the team was then able to develop recommendations regarding the representation, planning and action of implementation.

Although the recommendations made within this report are divided into three distinct phases, each phase is strongly based upon the thorough analysis performed by the consulting team and cannot be taken in isolation. The three essential implementation phases of representation, planning and action may occur simultaneously and each must be pursued with equal importance. In addition, should the Town discover an impediment to implementing any of the recommendations made within each of the three phases, emphasis must be placed upon successful completion of the phase itself as opposed to its individual parts.

The Town of Sidney possesses great potential for an exciting future filled with growth and prosperity. Through the Vision 2000 process, the Town has made great strides towards realizing that potential. The consulting team of *MacDonald & Wood* strongly believes that with the initiation of the implementation phases recommended, the Town of Sidney will successfully achieve its goals.

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Methodology:

- Focus groups and personal interviews involving Sidney business operators and business associations.
- Analysis of information available from the Town of Sidney and other secondary information.

Expected Time Expenditure:

- 72 person hours (2 people x 3 weeks @ 12 hours per person per week)

2. The investigation of industries compatible and complimentary to the Sidney business environment will include:

- An investigation of existing business infrastructure in the Town of Sidney.
- The cost of doing business in Sidney.
- An analysis of gaps in the offerings made by Sidney businesses.
- A matching of Sidney's downtown business environment to key industries.

Methodology:

- Focus groups and personal interviews involving Sidney business operators and business associations.
- Secondary research regarding key industries.

Expected Time Expenditure:

- 72 person hours (2 people x 3 weeks @ 12 hours per person per week)

3. The examination of the downtown revitalization/improvement strategies of similar, viable municipalities will include:

- The strengths and weaknesses, successes and failures of the strategies used by other municipalities.
- The 'fit' of these strategies with the Town of Sidney.

Methodology:

- Secondary research through the Internet, publications and business associations.
- Telephone interviews with representatives of downtown revitalization/improvement committees and organizations within other municipalities.

Expected Time Expenditure:

- 36 person hours (2 people x 1.5 weeks @ 12 hours per person per week)

4. The analysis of ways by which to attract the community and other consumers to the downtown core will include:

- A compilation of relevant community information including current and projected demographics, statistical data and performance measures.
- An investigation of the perception of Sidney as a place to shop and of ways in which to improve this perception.

Methodology:

- Analysis of information available from the Town of Sidney and other secondary information.
- Surveys and focus groups of community members.

Expected Time Expenditure:

- 72 person hours (2 people x 3 weeks @ 12 hours per person per week)

Costs

The client will pay the University of Victoria Faculty of Business the sum of \$2000 for the conduct and analysis of the study and the final report. Payment will be due upon receipt of the invoice at presentation of the report.

These terms are fully accepted by the Town of Sidney and its Economic Development Committee as well as the Sidney Business Association.

Signed this _____ day of _____, 1998

Don Amos, Mayor of Sidney

Edward Connor, President
Sidney Business Association

Marolyn Reiten-Stevens, Liaison
Economic Development Committee

APPENDIX 2 – SUMMARY OF FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Group 1 – 9am

- Tony Berry – Nicholson Manufacturing
- Diana Courtner – Starting Point Internet
- Marie Rosko – Animal House
- Clive Tanner – Tanner's Bookstore
- Sylvia Miller – Triangle

Topic: What are the good things about doing business in Sidney?

- Small town atmosphere/individuality/attentiveness
- Individual service
- Familiar faces
- Less bureaucracy
- Convenient
- Customer loyalty

Topic: What is the cost of doing business in Sidney?

- High rent
- No government assistance in training
- No breaks in taxes, water, hydro for industrial firms
- Some business unwelcome because of type of business

Topic: How can Sidney become unique?

- Keep it small, quaint
- Bank of Montreal building very uninviting
- Many other buildings have lost their charm; Town has become a "hodgepodge"
- Need improved facades; nautical theme
- Establish RV park
- Get rid of the park with the tank in it – not in keeping with cute, quaint perception
- Start changes within small area and then spread out
- Need to draw people in, but must make some changes first, or it will be "the same old town"

Topic: How do you feel about the changes in traffic infrastructure made recently?

- Looks good
- No parking
- Lots of parking behind medical building
- Lack of parking is a perceived problem, not a reality
- With the one-way street, Bevan Avenue is now getting too much car traffic, and not enough foot traffic
- Bevan Avenue needs more retail businesses
- The one-way street is keeping business out of Sidney – about nine businesses have left because of lack of clientele
- Anacortes ferry traffic is being deterred from the downtown

- There is a need for better signs indicating parking
- There is no cohesiveness in the Town, even the SBA can't get the retail community together
- Discussion of BIA as unifying vehicle – originally defeated because the few landlords in Sidney refused to pay the tax; these people make a good living, why would they want to spend and potentially jeopardise their well-being?
- Even when merchants agree on something there is often opposition from some section of the community (e.g. the mini cruise ship issue)
- Sidney needs to build some supporting infrastructure for hi-tech businesses and to make the community an attractive place for people within this sector to reside

Topic: As a community member, what do you feel that Sidney needs?

- The Town needs an entertainment facility – Sanscha Hall needs to be developed to ensure that Sidney maintains its role as the hub of the Saanich Peninsula
- The Town needs to meet the retail needs of the teenage and young adult portion of its population
- More residential living space should be encourage in the downtown core to reduce crime in the area
- Sidney should focus on managing its growth and increasing its capacity
- Sidney would benefit from a Costco store that would draw people out to shop in the area
- A Costco-like store would not draw people into the area as shoppers would simply visit the store and then leave
- Sidney needs specialty stores that you can't find anywhere else

Topic: How do we bring people to Sidney?

- Difficult to get merchants to stay open if they are going to cover their costs; perhaps patience is needed to give business time to build; consistency is key
- Need a body to promote the Town and things such as late openings; perhaps in return for staying open late the stores would be provided with free advertising to the Victoria market
- Sidney needs to look outward and make itself a unique place to visit outside of Victoria and the Butchart Gardens
- Banners, Lights, Market Day on the pier, destination shops
- Redevelopment of downtown including streets off to either side of Beacon Avenue

Topic: What complimentary businesses should Sidney try to attract?

- Scuba diving at the artificial reef
- Good quality hotels
- Gourmet restaurants, reasonably priced
- More hi-tech, more suppliers

APPENDIX 3 – VICTORIA RESIDENTS SURVEY**A. Gender**

1. Male
2. Female

B. Age Range

1. Teenager (<19)
2. Young Adult (20-30)
3. Adult (31-60)
4. Senior (60+)

C. In which area do you live?

1. Greater Victoria
Victoria
Oak Bay
Saanich
Esquimalt
Other _____
2. Central Saanich
3. North Saanich
4. Sidney
5. Salt Spring Island
6. South Gulf Islands
7. Other _____

D. In which area do you work?

1. Greater Victoria
Victoria
Oak Bay
Saanich
Esquimalt
Other _____
2. Central Saanich
3. North Saanich
4. Sidney
5. Salt Spring Island
6. South Gulf Islands
7. Other _____

E. Approximately how often do you visit the Town of Sidney?

1. More than once a week.
2. Weekly.
3. More than once a month.
4. Monthly.
5. More than once a year.
6. Yearly.
7. Less than once a year.
8. Never (skip to Question J).

F. When you do visit Sidney, what are the primary reasons for your trip?

(If shopping is listed, skip to Question I.)

G. When you do visit Sidney, do you tend to do any shopping? Yes No

APPENDIX 4 – VISION 2000 RECOMMENDATIONS ON DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION

VISION STATEMENT

"To preserve the friendly, small-scale, seaside town atmosphere in the downtown core."

OBJECTIVES

- Enhance the natural and visual amenities to create a safe and attractive environment
- Enhance and strengthen the commercial vitality of Sidney
- Intensify the residential use of downtown Sidney to make it more vibrant, safer and attractive
- Improve the perception of parking availability and anticipate future demand
- Extend the present beautification project to include the whole of the downtown
- Encourage more commercial/residential mixed use facilities and business diversification
- Encourage improvements to the design and/or fabric of building facades and/or structures

BACKGROUND

Downtown Sidney is defined by the Patricia Bay Highway to the west, the waterfront to the east, and from Sidney Avenue to Bevan Avenue to the north and south. This area serves as the shopping and commercial centre for the northern portion of the Saanich Peninsula. In order to compete with other commercial developments in the area, the downtown area must meet the needs of its citizens, and provide substantial appeal to residents and visitors.

Developers building in the downtown core must be given clear and explicit guidelines to ensure that all developments are compatible with the scale and character of downtown Sidney. The present beautification project on Beacon Avenue has had public support and should be extended to include the rest of the downtown core. Residential and commercial intensification should be encouraged to have more people live in the downtown area, to promote vibrancy and security.

4. Implement angle parking on applicable north/south downtown streets.
5. Encourage the improvement of the visual quality of existing parking lots.
6. Explore opportunities to amalgamate private parking surfaces to improve accessibility and safety.

Responsibility: Council, Planning Department, Private Lot Owners, Vision Coordinator

5.3 *Enhance the streetscape in the downtown core through upgrading and revision of infrastructure and expansion of beautification projects.*

↳ **Action plan**

1. Revising engineering standards to ensure lighting in the downtown caters primarily to the needs of pedestrian traffic.
2. Encourage new developments and substantial renovations to provide weather protection for pedestrians.
3. Reduce the visual clutter downtown by reviewing municipal signage in the downtown core towards the removal of all non-essential signs.
4. Continue the present beautification project to include all of downtown Sidney. Extending coverage of the beautification project to include areas up to the Patricia Bay Highway.
5. Develop a detailed urban design plan for the core area.
6. Encourage development and beautification of Sanscha lands as an anchor at the highway to compliment the Port Sidney anchor at the waterfront.

Responsibility: Council, Engineering Department, Vision Coordinator

5.4 *Encourage residential intensification in the downtown core, particularly above commercial development.*

↳ **Action plan**

1. Enact permissive zoning to encourage residential intensification above commercial development. Residential developments should be inclusive and accessible, catering to a range of age groups and family types.

Responsibility: Council

5.5 *Enhance the vibrancy and quality of commercial activity in downtown Sidney by diversification of businesses and expansion of events and attractions.*

↳ **Action plan**

1. By-law Enforcement Officers should continue to monitor the quantity and suitability of street musicians and street performers. By-laws should be modified by Council accordingly.
2. The Economic Development Committee should examine methods of encouraging the diversification of downtown businesses to better serve the needs of the local population.

APPENDIX 5 – IMPLEMENTATION PHASES

