

# 2015 – 2020 COQUITLAM TOURISM STRATEGY



Destination  
British Columbia™

Coquitlam

# Destination British Columbia™

Funding provided by Destination British Columbia's Community Tourism Foundations Program.

*A special thank you to the following for their contributions to the tourism strategy process:*

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## BC'S TOURISM INDUSTRY PERFORMANCE

**\$13.9 Billion** *Total Revenue*

**19,254** *Businesses*

**\$3.2 Billion** *Export Revenue*

**132,300** *Jobs*

**\$980 Million** *Tax Revenue*

*BC's Tourism Industry Performance.*

Source: [www.destinationbc.ca](http://www.destinationbc.ca)

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Coquitlam has over 90 km of hiking, cycling and walking trails, including a portion of the Trans Canada Trail.

# Executive Summary

The 2015 – 2020 Coquitlam Tourism Strategy is based on information provided by the Economic Development Division in the Community Tourism Foundations (CTF) Expression of Interest, existing plans and research reports, and input from over 30 stakeholders during a one-day workshop (held on March 4, 2015), in addition to supplemental research and analysis conducted by the facilitator. It presents an overview of the destination, a vision for the destination, opportunities and challenges, and priority activities that could be implemented over the next five years.

The 2015 – 2020 Coquitlam Tourism Strategy was initiated as a follow-up to the Tourism Planning Workshop Report—Coquitlam Blueprint conducted in 2010, which identified Coquitlam as having a rating of 2 out of 10 in terms of tourism development. The CTF workshop in 2015 reported an improved rating of 4 out of 10—reflecting the City of Coquitlam’s investment in the Tourism Program, the hiring of a Tourism Manager and the work completed in this area to date.

## COQUITLAM’S TOURISM VISION

The feedback received from stakeholders during the CTF workshop reflected that Coquitlam has made good strides in achieving its tourism vision. Currently, there is a sense that positive progress has been made during the last year with a City of Coquitlam Tourism Office and dedicated Tourism Manager in place.

## KEY AREAS OF FOCUS

Three key areas of focus were developed using workshop participant feedback, stakeholder input, and consultant and tourism office research:

1. Tourism Management
2. Branding & Marketing
3. Destination & Industry Development



Coquitlam supports over 70 festivals and events on an annual basis, including the BC Highland Games.



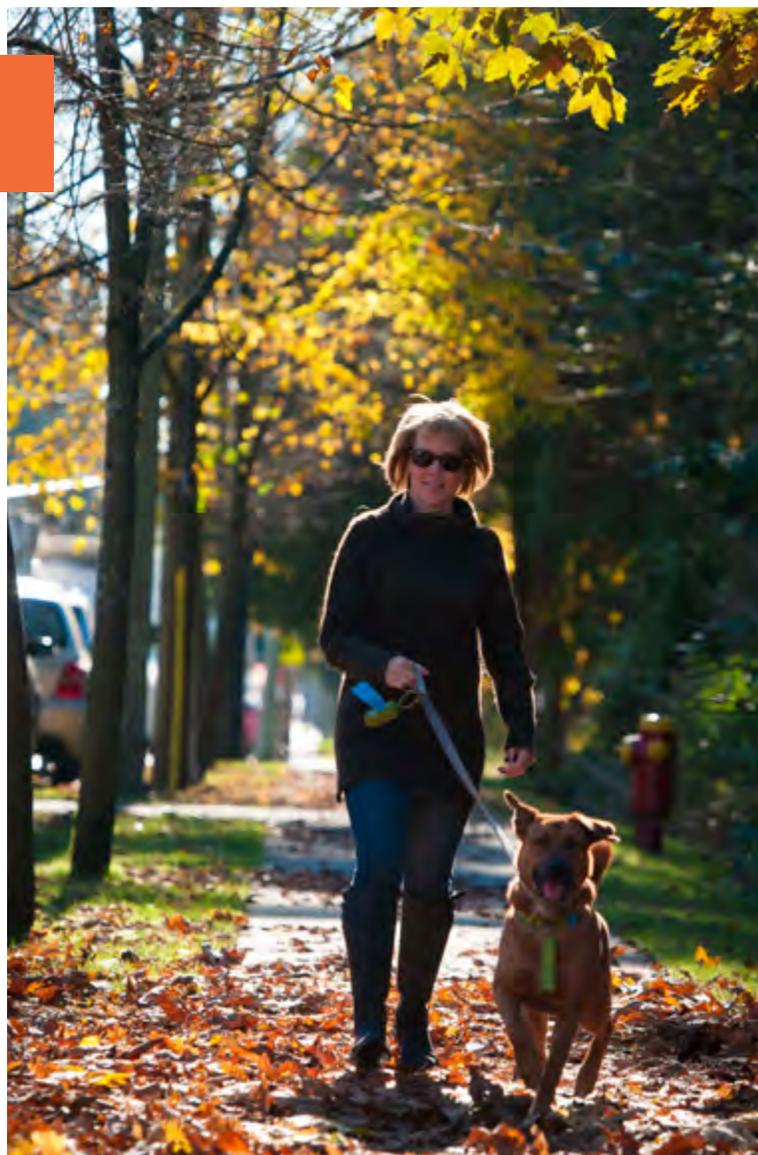
# Introduction

## HISTORY & METHODOLOGY

The City of Coquitlam has a strong history of tourism planning, with a full Community Tourism Foundations (CTF) tourism plan developed in 2002 and a Tourism Planning Workshop Report—Coquitlam Blueprint (Blueprint) update completed in 2010. Since the Blueprint, much has changed in the operating environment and much has been accomplished from the plan. Coquitlam’s Mayor and Council have committed to funding a tourism program for three years, and a dedicated staff member has been hired to manage the program within the Economic Development Division.

As such, the City of Coquitlam contacted Destination BC for assistance in developing a Tourism Strategy update to set in place a long-term commitment to a sustainable, community-based tourism program. To that end, in concert with the City of Coquitlam, Destination BC hosted a one-day CTF workshop that provided stakeholders an opportunity to help shape the future direction of Coquitlam as a Destination Marketing Organization (DMO), focusing on initiatives that can be implemented within a short time period. The workshop—in addition to information provided by the community in the CTF Expression of Interest; existing plans; research reports relevant to the Vancouver, Coast and Mountains region; and supplemental research and analysis conducted by the workshop facilitator—served as the basis for this 2015 – 2020 Coquitlam Tourism Strategy.

The strategy that follows presents a tourism vision for Coquitlam, its opportunities and challenges, and priority activities that could be implemented over the next five years (2015 – 2020). It is intended to serve as a guide for Coquitlam as it proceeds with implementation. This strategy should be reviewed and updated by the stakeholders as necessary to reflect changing tourism objectives, priorities and market conditions. Also, results should be tracked regularly such that an updated strategy, with learning from the current year’s activities, can be even more effective in increasing benefits to the community.



# Situation Analysis

## KEY INSIGHTS

### *Our Market*

Overall, the tourism sector is seeing positive growth globally, in Canada and in BC, with projections for continued positive growth. The increasing interest in seeking out memorable, authentic experiences, growing environmental concern, and the appeal of nature (in an increasingly urban world) are all trends that could increase the appeal of Coquitlam as a travel destination.

Visitors to BC and the Vancouver, Coast and Mountains region (including Coquitlam) are motivated by, and participate in, the types of experiences and activities that Coquitlam has to offer. In particular, nature (e.g., parks) and outdoor activities (e.g., hiking) are key drivers. Coquitlam has many product experiences similar in nature to other comparable destinations (e.g., New Westminster, Burnaby, Surrey and Richmond). The determination of a unique identity for Coquitlam, and the selection of iconic experiences to feature and highlight, will be valuable to create a unique brand and help set Coquitlam apart from other options. That being said, Coquitlam has an opportunity to work with neighbouring communities to strengthen the offering.

The strongest market for Coquitlam is the near-in markets (one to two hours away), with BC residents being the primary short-haul drive market.

### *Our Capacity for Growth*

Coquitlam has momentum built in key markets (e.g., sport tourism, events and entertainment). There is opportunity to continue growing these markets, but product capacity issues are a concern for some key experiences.

Coquitlam accommodators have a strong focus on sport tourism and business clientele, yet are reaching capacity. New growth in the overnight market will require new accommodations.

Transportation infrastructure improvements to Coquitlam are a positive development, and the Evergreen Line completion in 2016 will offer a new opportunity to access the Lower Mainland day trip market.



## Our Strategy

A review of the available research reveals a need for more information about visitors to Coquitlam. Research will assist with evolving marketing plans and decision-making.

Coquitlam has a long planning history for economic development and tourism. However, a start-stop-start approach to tourism has meant the destination has not evolved its tourism program and benefits as fully as other communities. As a result, Coquitlam's tourism efforts would be characterized as at the Gearing Up stage in the diagram below, as the tourism program is starting

to build momentum. It is important that this strategy be implemented, that a work plan be updated annually for the strategy, and that consistent resources and support be applied to ensure sustainable tourism benefits.

The digital shift to mobile and social media continues to increase in importance for travel planning and engagement in the destination. It will be critical for Coquitlam to participate fully in the digital space to maximize opportunities to generate awareness and interest.



*The above diagram illustrates the relationship between community engagement and developing a strong tourism destination. Source: Tourism Langley, 2015 Business & Strategic Plan*

## STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES & THREATS

The following analysis outlines some of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for Coquitlam as a destination, as raised at the March 4, 2015 workshop.

### Strengths

- » **PROXIMITY TO VANCOUVER:** Centrally located in Metro Vancouver, Coquitlam is easily accessible via transportation corridors and networks such as Highways 1 and 7, the Barnet Highway and the West Coast Express, and—by fall 2016—via the Evergreen Line SkyTrain extension.
- » **FESTIVALS AND TOURNAMENTS:** Coquitlam hosts several annual regional festivals and sports tournaments, and is an experienced host city that offers the resources to assist in event planning, including the Spirit Grant. The Spirit of Coquitlam Grant Program supports local non-profit and community-based organizations by awarding community grant funds to build community spirit through public art, sport activities and programs, festivals and events, sport hosting and capital projects.
- » **SPORT AND OUTDOOR RECREATION:** The City boasts an extensive network of parks and trails, including an emerging network of mountain bike trails; easy access to forests, rivers and mountains; and destination golf facilities.
- » **ETHNIC DIVERSITY:** Multiculturalism, including vibrant francophone and Korean communities, is especially appealing to international students.
- » **SHOPPING:** Coquitlam is a reputed retail destination, with four distinct shopping neighbourhoods as well as regional draws such as Ikea and Coquitlam Centre.
- » **STRATEGIC FOUNDATIONS:** Coquitlam has a strong economic base, a developing urban core in the City Centre, and an Official Community Plan to advance tourism interests.

### Weaknesses

- » **LACK OF BRANDING AND IDENTITY:** Visitors lack awareness of Coquitlam's key tourism attractions, there is confusion between the Coquitlam and Tri-Cities designations, and the City's Tourism brand identity and online presence are weak.
- » **INCONSISTENT STRATEGY:** Tourism investment, partnerships and programming have been historically inconsistent, resulting in a disengaged, unorganized and underperforming tourism sector.
- » **LIMITED INFRASTRUCTURE:** There are insufficient accommodations and conference space, and no major celebration centre or significant attraction; tourism/wayfinding signage is lacking in some areas; and traffic congestion and poor walkability impede transportation.



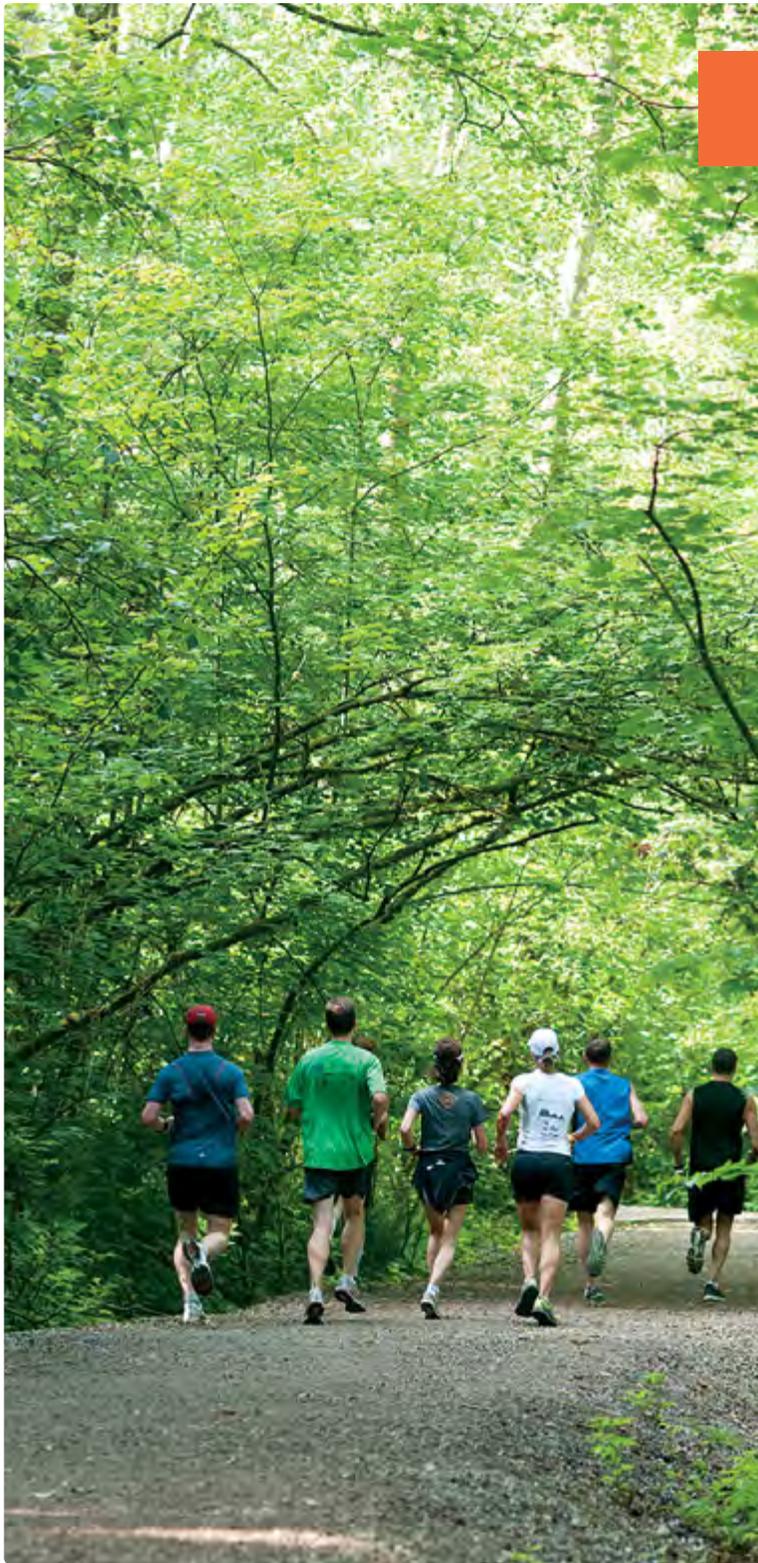
## Opportunities

- » **PARTNERSHIPS:** Neighbouring communities with similar or complementary product offerings are potential partners for developing marketing opportunities.
- » **ACCESSIBILITY:** Transportation development within the Metro Vancouver area, as well as the proximity of the Abbotsford and Vancouver International Airports, and the opening of the Evergreen Line SkyTrain extension by fall 2016, make Coquitlam a more accessible destination.
- » **EXCHANGE RATE:** The currently low Canadian dollar makes US visitors a more viable target.
- » **REGIONAL STRATEGIES:** Coquitlam can leverage Destination BC's marketing programs and Destination Canada's (formerly the Canadian Tourism Commission) Explorer Quotient program.
- » **MOBILE AND SOCIAL MEDIA:** The City can also leverage increasing consumer use of digital and social media channels and consumer-generated content.

## Threats

- » **UNSTABLE FUNDING:** Funding for Coquitlam's tourism program has not been approved past 2016, and without long-term funding the tourism program will cease to exist.
- » **COMPETITION:** Alternative destinations in the Lower Mainland with established tourism programs offer similar tourism products and experiences that divert tourism dollars away from the Coquitlam economy.
- » **DEVELOPMENT:** Coquitlam's easy access to nature is a draw, and ongoing development may put that at risk.
- » **POLITICS:** Tourism as a lower priority within the provincial economy may negatively impact decisions for the entire BC tourism industry, and changes in the political landscape may impact tourism programs and marketing efforts.





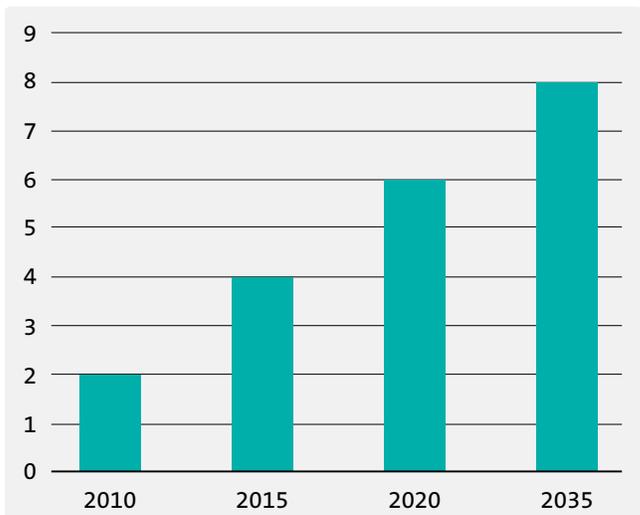
# Strategic Plan

Tourism destination development and marketing involves envisioning, strategically planning, and then marketing a defined area as a desired destination for travellers and day-trippers. It enhances the quality of tourism services, amenities, businesses and practices through effective planning and capacity-building to ensure a tourism destination is well positioned to make future strategic decisions, address issues and capitalize on opportunities.

## COQUITLAM'S TOURISM VISION

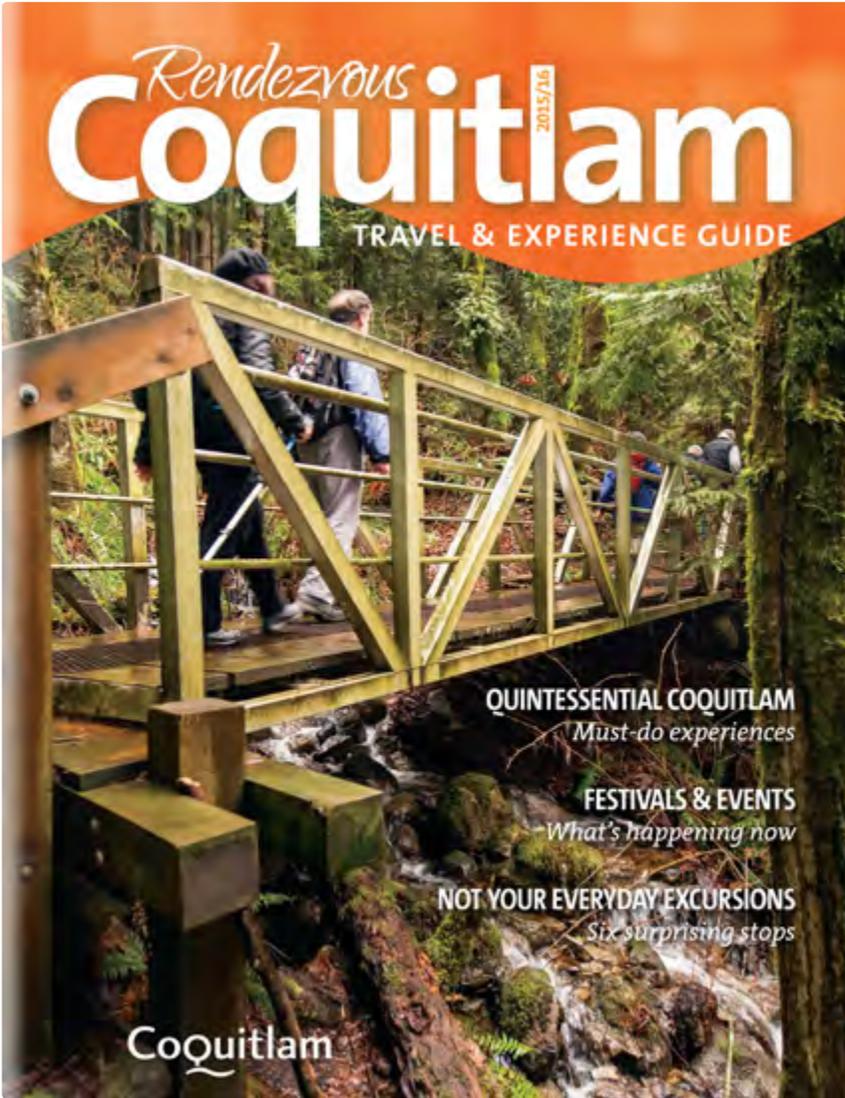
Feedback from stakeholders at the March 2015 workshop was that Coquitlam has made progress in achieving its tourism vision, although it has been delayed due to inconsistent tourism efforts over the past 15 to 20 years. Currently, there is a sense that positive progress has been made during the last year with a City of Coquitlam Tourism Office in place and a dedicated Tourism Manager.

In the October 2010 workshop to develop the Blueprint, stakeholders articulated that Coquitlam was at a very early stage in tourism development (rating it 2 out of 10, where 1 indicates no tourism and 10 indicates tourism to the level that Vancouver currently has). In the March 2015 workshop (4.5 years later), a similar exercise was undertaken with an improvement of results to a level of 4 out of 10. The 21 workshop participants who responded to the survey anticipated tourism development reaching a level of 6 in the next five years, and 8 in the next 20 years.



*Achieving Coquitlam's Tourism Vision: Rating out of 10.*

Source: March 2015 Tourism Planning Workshop



Experience  
**Explore**  
 Enjoy



Coquitlam made considerable progress in 2014/15 through partner outreach, community event profile and the Rendezvous Coquitlam Travel & Experience Guide.



## VISION STATEMENT

**Coquitlam will be a leader in sustainable economic growth through a community-based tourism program. Tourism will enrich the resident and visitor experience in Coquitlam, and expand local jobs, local prosperity.**

Some of the thoughts articulated behind the tourism vision include the following:

- » The tourism vision needs to be achieved through creating unity and ensuring an open-minded approach to tourism development.
- » Coquitlam needs to preserve the qualities that make it a great place to live. Tourism can enhance the quality of life for Coquitlam residents. This means that tourism would support more of the types of businesses that would benefit Coquitlam residents, such as unique restaurants, quaint shops and recreational opportunities.
- » Tourism needs to be a driver for retail and customer service businesses, as these businesses support the fuller community.
- » The tourism vision should build on the foundation that has already been set, and work towards establishing Coquitlam more firmly on the map.
- » The tourism vision should align with City of Coquitlam strategic goals.

## TARGET MARKETS

The primary target markets for Coquitlam's Tourism Program are as follows:

### *Primary*

- » Metro Vancouver day-trippers (including festival and event participants, entertainment seekers and shopping enthusiasts)
- » Sport tournament participants and tourists
- » Outdoor activity participants (e.g., hikers, bikers, birdwatchers)
- » Leisure travellers looking/willing to stay outside Vancouver due to congestion in Vancouver
- » Friends and relatives visiting Coquitlam residents

### *Secondary*

- » International students and their visiting families
- » Corporate business travellers
- » Culinary tourists

## Key Areas of Focus

*Three key focus areas were developed using workshop participant feedback, stakeholder input, and consultant and tourism office research:*

1. Tourism Management
2. Branding & Marketing
3. Destination & Industry Development



# KEY AREA OF FOCUS: Tourism Management



## GOAL 1:

### Tourism Planning & Management

Utilize the capacity of the City of Coquitlam Tourism Office to implement and manage the 2015 – 2020 Coquitlam Tourism Strategy.

#### Actions

##### Secure Funding for the Coquitlam Tourism Program (“A” Priority)

- » Research funding model options for operating the tourism program over the long term. (e.g., yearly approved municipal budget, partnerships, allocation of casino revenues, hotel tax, etc.).
- » Identify projects requiring outside funding and explore alternative funding options (e.g., grants, partnerships, coop marketing, etc.).

##### Program Planning & Management (“A” Priority)

- » Review strategic goals annually and engage tourism stakeholders in prioritizing projects for subsequent years.

##### Monitoring, Evaluation & Research (“A” Priority)

- » Establish a tracking, evaluation and research program that retains statistics, data and information that is related to the goals of the Tourism Strategy and that provides critical information, metrics and benchmarks for future community tourism planning.
- » Work with Destination BC to conduct a “Value of Tourism” Research report for Coquitlam.

##### Stakeholder Relations (“B” Priority)

- » Continue to build a network of tourism stakeholders/ leaders and work with them to implement the tourism strategy and develop the Coquitlam tourism sector.
- » Manage stakeholder relations to engage and inform the tourism industry, stakeholders, residents and the City of Coquitlam of the value of tourism and opportunities to grow the sector.

### **Visitor Services (“C” Priority)**

- » Support Coquitlam’s two visitor centres through product knowledge training and promotional opportunities (e.g., visitor guide exposure, online exposure) to ensure visitors to Coquitlam are aware of local product offerings.
- » Monitor the results of Destination BC’s review of its current Visitor Servicing model, including new funding and methods of Visitor Servicing (e.g., mobile, Apps).

### **Industry & Professional Development (“C” Priority)**

- » Communicate opportunities for industry professional development including tourism workshops and webinars conducted by Destination BC and others to local tourism businesses.
- » Implement a program to assist front line staff throughout Metro Vancouver with product knowledge of Coquitlam.

### **Key Performance Indicators**

- » Research and prepare a report for Council on Tourism Program funding models
- » Number of stakeholder meetings and event activations (e.g., stakeholder engagement)
- » Destination BC “Value of Tourism” report
- » Hotel Occupancy tracking (e.g., BC Accommodation Survey participation by Coquitlam Hotels)
- » Sport Tourism Economic Impact Analysis Model (STEAM) on key events
- » Customer profile research for Coquitlam (e.g., Destination Canada Explorer Quotient)
- » Website Analytics
- » Product knowledge training
- » Visitor Centre Visits and Inquiries



# KEY AREA OF FOCUS: Branding & Marketing



## GOAL 2:

### Identity & Branding

Undertake a research-based identity and branding process that defines the image and positioning for Coquitlam as a visitor destination.

#### Actions

##### Brand Development (“A” Priority)

- » Conduct research to better understand the target markets’ current perceptions and attitudes towards Coquitlam, both directly and in relation to the Tri-Cities.
- » Develop a tourism brand that is aligned with the City of Coquitlam, provincial and national brand standards.

##### Website Development (“A” Priority)

- » Establish a tourism-specific website that increases awareness and promotes the tourism and recreation opportunities and experiences available in the City of Coquitlam (e.g., packaging, promotions, calendar of events, etc.).

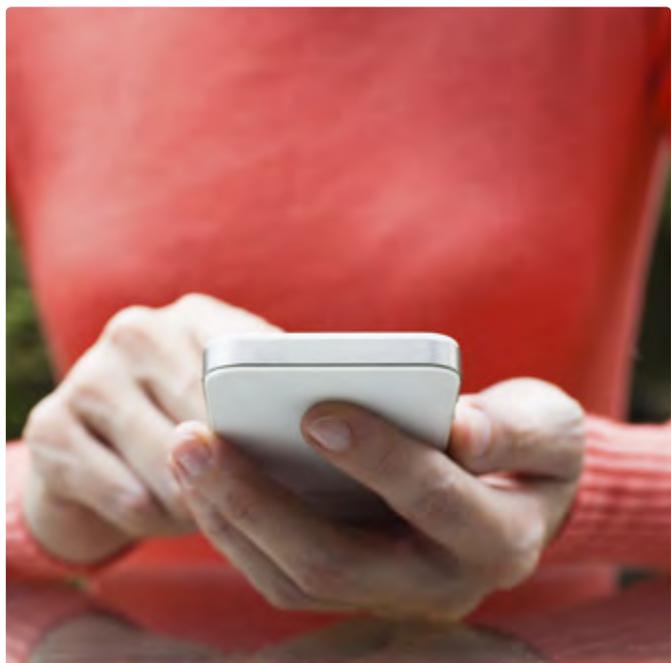


### **Marketing & Communications Program (“B” Priority)**

- » Create a promotional mix of marketing and communications activities that reflect the Coquitlam tourism brand and work to increase awareness, visitation and spend in Coquitlam.
- » Develop a media relations plan in conjunction with the Corporate Communications Division (e.g., story ideas, press releases, etc.) to increase Coquitlam’s marketing reach.
- » Develop a social media presence, in conjunction with the Corporate Communications Division, that is reflective of Coquitlam’s tourism identity and brand and that will increase awareness and visitation to Coquitlam.
- » Build an online presence through search engine optimization (SEO), search engine marketing (SEM).
- » Leverage existing relationships and develop new partnerships to increase Coquitlam’s marketing reach and spend (e.g., Destination BC, Tourism Vancouver, etc.).
- » Work with Destination BC to ensure Coquitlam is maximizing opportunities to be featured at trade shows (e.g., Canada’s West Marketplace, Rendezvous Canada, National Tour Association, etc.) and determine opportunities to leverage tour operator itineraries that travel through Coquitlam.

### **Key Performance Indicators**

- » Development and launch of a unique Coquitlam Tourism Brand
- » Launch a standalone Coquitlam tourism website
- » Number and value of cooperative marketing projects
- » Track ROI on marketing programs
- » Online analytics (e.g., web, social media, etc.)



# KEY AREA OF FOCUS: Destination & Industry Development



## GOAL 3:

### Product Development

Ensure product development will result in increased community appeal, awareness, interest, visitation, spend and overnight stays, with the end goal of increasing economic impact related to tourism.

#### Actions

##### Arts & Culture (“A” Priority)

- » Continue to provide support through the Tourism Office to potential development and promotional opportunities for arts and culture product in Coquitlam.
- » Work with the Parks, Recreation and Culture Services Department on the implementation of the Arts, Culture and Heritage Strategic Plan as it relates to tourism.

##### Festivals & Events (“A” Priority)

- » Continue to support the growth and expansion of key festivals and events through targeted sales and marketing promotions (e.g., event expansion).
- » Continue to work with the Parks, Recreation and Culture Services Events Office to identify gaps in the event calendar, or where current events are at capacity, and develop a plan to address these (e.g., event attraction).

##### Outdoor Recreation (“A” Priority)

- » Take advantage of Coquitlam’s outdoor recreation portfolio of products to increase visitation, spending and overall economic impact.
- » Develop tourism materials that promote outdoor recreation opportunities such as mountain biking, hiking and bird watching.

##### Sport Tourism (“A” Priority)

- » Identify opportunities to attract new sports events that leverage existing assets and have the ability to drive overnight visitation to Coquitlam hotels.
- » Continue to provide tourism input during the Parks, Recreation and Culture Services Master Plan process as it relates to sport tourism.

### **Tourism Infrastructure Development (“B” Priority)**

- » Continue to work with the Economic Development Office on opportunities to attract hotel properties to Coquitlam.
- » Encourage the development of conference space to attract new corporate business, conferences and events.
- » Continue to identify other opportunities for tourism infrastructure investment.

### **Meetings & Leisure Travel (“C” Priority)**

- » Work with event planners (e.g., corporate, association, incentive, etc.) and tour operators to drive business leads to Coquitlam businesses (e.g., hotels, restaurants, city facilities and entertainment facilities).

### **Tourism Packaging & Itinerary Development (“C” Priority)**

- » Support tourism stakeholders with the creation of packages and itineraries for both day trips and overnight stays, with the goal of increasing visitation, length of stays and yield (dollars spent per person).

### **Key Performance Indicators**

- » Event Retention—number of events (e.g., sport, culture, festivals, etc.) supported
- » Event Attraction—number of new events (e.g., sport, culture, festivals, etc.) brought to Coquitlam
- » Measured economic impact of events (e.g., attendance, room nights, estimated spend, STEAM, etc.)
- » Track the work done with respective user groups on the development and promotion of arts, culture and heritage opportunities (e.g., Evergreen Cultural Centre, Festival Planners Network, etc.) that have the ability to attract visitors to Coquitlam
- » Track the work done with respective user groups on development and promotion of outdoor recreation opportunities (e.g., TORCA, Burke Mountain Naturalists, Trails BC, etc.) that have the ability to attract visitors to Coquitlam





# Implementation

The City of Coquitlam’s investment in tourism has led to the City improving its tourism development rating of 2 out of 10 in 2010, to 4 out of 10 in 2015. With continued investment in the tourism program, it is anticipated the City will be able to reach a level of 6 in the next five years, and 8 in the next 20 years.

The 2015 – 2020 Coquitlam Tourism Strategy provides the core goals needed to enhance Coquitlam’s tourism development rating.

Once the 2015 – 2020 Coquitlam Tourism Strategy has been approved by Council, the Tourism Office will develop an annual work plan to achieve the goals identified in the Strategy.

## 2015 – 2020 COQUITLAM TOURISM STRATEGY





# Coquitlam

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