

# Sidney's Welcome Back to Business COVID-19 Recovery Campaign



BRIGHT IDEAS IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

## SYNOPSIS

Sidney is proud to be home to many diverse and dedicated small businesses. Helping businesses recover from the initial phase of the pandemic was the top priority to the Sidney Business Improvement Area Society, beginning with a "Welcome Back to Business" campaign.

## LOCATION

Sidney

## REGION

Vancouver Island and Coast

## POPULATION

12,000

## ECONOMIC BASE

Retail, Tourism, Tech, Manufacturing



## INTRODUCTION

Situated at the shore of the Salish Sea within the traditional territory of the WSÁNEĆ People, Sidney's historic and vibrant downtown district is the heart of the Saanich Peninsula. Locally owned storefronts, coffee shops and eateries offer unique and memorable opportunities year-round.

The "Welcome Back to Business" campaign worked to reignite local spirit and help small businesses re-emerge from the first wave of the pandemic more resilient than before. With print and digital marketing, social media contests and advertisements, community nominations and COVID-19 safety education, the campaign was multi-faceted and designed to provide support to all sectors. The community embraced the campaign and revealed positive returns for small businesses.

## THE CHALLENGE

Many small businesses in Sidney rely on the summer season and depend on international tourism for a large part of their economic prosperity. Sidney is the gateway to Vancouver Island and is known for being a transportation hub. As home to Victoria International Airport, BC Ferries terminal, the Washington State Ferry terminal and over seven marinas, the international travel bans have been devastating for local businesses.

The absence of international tourism caused businesses to pivot toward regional tourism and local shoppers. As part of the "Welcome Back" campaign, the Sidney BIA worked hard to help businesses with this transition.



## THE STRATEGY

"Welcome Back to Business" highlighted Sidney as a safe community to visit, enjoy and support. Throughout the first phase of the campaign, marketing was directed to residents, including communities within the Greater Victoria area and Cowichan Valley. Effective June 24, with the entering of B.C.'s Stage 3 Restart Plan, marketing efforts expanded to include regions in the Greater Vancouver area, Fraser Valley, Okanagan, Kamloops and the entirety of Vancouver Island.

To date, [Sidney's Welcome Back to Business video](#), produced by [Riptide Media](#), has been viewed more than 50,000 times with over 1,000 comments and shares. →



The goal of the video was to put a face and a family behind each of the 23 Sidney businesses profiled, to remind people of the importance of shopping local. Diverse businesses were represented and promoted to help market Sidney to locals as well, as a safe, one-stop-shop for visitors needs.

As a part of the campaign, a [Sidney's Shop Local Sweepstakes](#) was launched, encouraging locals to support local for the chance to win big. The contest was hyper-targeted to the Greater Victoria area and featured a chance to win one of five \$500 shopping sprees in Sidney, and to nominate a small business of their choice to win \$500. To date, with over 1,500 entries, three small businesses in Sidney have received winning nominations and cash prizes of \$500. This campaign has reached over 17,000 people through social media.

To drive business to Sidney's accommodation sector, Staycation in Sidney was launched following the provincial announcement to move into Phase 3 of B.C.'s Restart Plan. This announcement allowed businesses and industries like hotels/resorts and select entertainment to reopen under the guidance of WorkSafeBC. This campaign reached more than 82,300 people by the end of July 2020.



A digital 14-week billboard was also secured along the high traffic area of the highway leading to Sidney encouraging people to visit and shop there. The ad is expected to deliver 28,555 views per day and a total ad view of about 3.2 million impressions over the campaign's term. The Sidney BIA also introduced several online opportunities for education and consulting options for members, including taking business online, social media marketing, and pivoting business models due to COVID-19.



## SUCCESSES

Increased collaboration and relationships between the Sidney BIA and member businesses was a great success. There was an overwhelming sense of unity in the face of adversity which will carry forward in years to come.

The Sidney BIA will continue to meet with members to discuss opportunities to build back a better Sidney. Weekly communications and community highlights are circulated to best distribute relevant information efficiently.

The sense of solidarity emerged from residents who recognized the importance of supporting their neighbours during this time and resumed shopping local when restrictions allowed.

While returning to normal, in-person shopping was a slow start for many residents; by the end of the campaign many businesses reported an increase in overall revenues and foot traffic by their stores. Many Sidney businesses have adapted and become safe locations for local shoppers, marking this campaign an overall success.

## LESSONS LEARNED

- Sidney's Welcome back to Business illustrated that highlighting business owners as the families behind shopping local helped to remind residents of the importance of shopping local and was an affordable promotion.
- Presenting the Shop Local Sweepstakes as a chance for residents AND local businesses to win \$500 proved to be very moving and successful. Nominations of businesses were overwhelmingly heartwarming and inspiring, which were silver linings in such troubling times.
- The importance of focusing on safety first and business development second, especially in promotions and advertisements, was key. Recovery is only possible if both customers and front-end staff feel safe and are safe.

### CONTACT INFORMATION

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For more information, visit [gov.bc.ca/economicdevelopment](https://gov.bc.ca/economicdevelopment)

