

Report and Proposal to the Town of Sidney Signage and Provision of Visitor Services November, 2011

Introduction

The Saanich Chamber of Commerce is pleased to submit this report and proposal to the Town of Sidney. We look forward to working with the Town to enhance and encourage tourists to visit and shop.

This report is presented at the request of the Town of Sidney

Current Situation

Since opening the Visitor Centre (VC) at 2281 Beacon Ave, in April 2010, over 15,000 people have been served. This figure does not include visitors served at the Sidney International Ferry Terminal.

Statistics from the Washington State Ferry Corporation show the astonishing figure of over 29,000 vehicles between January and September landing in Sidney from Anacortes. People coming from the Anacortes ferry have trouble finding the Visitor Centre on Beacon due to lack of signage and its' location at the north entrance of Beacon Ave.

The VC on Highway #17 recorded 18,280 parties during the same period.

There is clearly an opportunity to enhance visitations to Sidney from the Visitor Centres on the Highway, Beacon Avenue and from the International Ferry Terminal.

Entrance to Sidney from the International Ferry Terminal

The Chamber strongly supports the notion of improving signage at the entrance to the Sidney International Ferry Terminal.

Good signage meets the following criteria:

- Easy to see
- Easy to read
- Consistency in message
- Consistency in aesthetics
- Location

The current signage leading from the International Ferry Terminal directing visitors to Sidney do not at this stage meet any of the criteria. We suggest there are several opportunities for improvement.

The signage on Ocean Avenue is varied and confusing. There are a number of styles and sizes so visitors may have trouble seeing the necessary information. Subject to the restrictions imposed by BC Tourism for signage, the Chamber supports having the signage made consistent. People exiting the ferry terminal parking lot must stop so there is an opportunity to have large format advertising and way-finding signage across from the entrance.

Adjacent to the entrance is a gravel lot that would be very suitable for a sheltered kiosk with glass windows and advertising maps. One kiosk could serve several functions; sheltering foot passengers arriving or departing on the ferry, advertising local attractions, providing maps to help visitors find the Visitor Centre and other community services, as well as providing a place for taxis, tour buses or a trolley to pick up passengers, and even providing lockers for travelers to store luggage during their visit to Sidney.

There should also be a large sign at the exit of the Terminal providing visitors directions to Sidney via Ocean Ave and 1st Ave.

Signage for the Visitor Centre

The Chamber provides visitor services to the standards required by the Province of BC Tourism Network including signage.

There is currently no official Province of BC VC way-finding signage on the streets of Sidney.

Visitors have complained that they had difficulty finding the VC.

In an attempt to increase visibility for the building by placing signage on or near the building, the VC Manager has had numerous discussions with Town of Sidney staff concerning signage at 2281 Beacon, with the following results;

- sandwich board signage is not allowed because of a sign bylaw,
- temporary signage on a stake is not allowed because of concerns over damage to the irrigation system in the park,
- nothing further can be attached to the building due to the heritage designation, the brick façade and the cedar shingle roof, and
- the proposed flag pole for the garden was not approved due to cost.

A signage proposal has been reviewed by the Town of Sidney Engineering Department and the Province of BC. The previous proposal was approved in principal by the Province of BC. The Town of Sidney Engineering Department required the following: an unlimited Encroachment and Maintenance Agreement signed by the Chamber, an anti-graffiti coating on all signs at the cost of \$2.00/square foot, (approx. \$250.00 + tax) and approval of the proposal by Town Council.

Visitor Services within the boundaries of the Town of Sidney

Visitor Services can be provided anywhere as long as the following basic requirements are met:

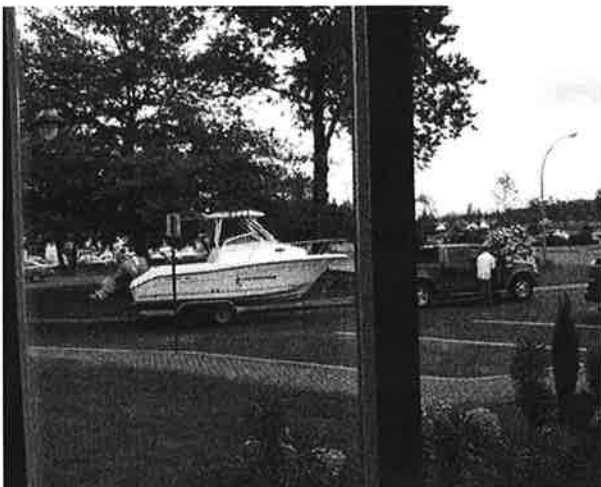
- ▶ Parking for visitors,
- ▶ Display areas for brochures and maps,
- ▶ Computer and phone services,
- ▶ Good visibility from the street,
- ▶ Useful, and easy to see, directional signage.

The current VC located at 2281 Beacon Ave. is in a good location for access from Highway #17 and from Beacon and Bevan Avenues, however three of the basic needs, visibility, signage and parking are not met, making this location problematic for efficiently serving visitors.

Parking at 2281 Beacon Ave.

If the Visitor Centre remains at the 2281 Beacon Ave. location, the Visitor Centre requires short-term parking for several vehicles at a time and especially for large recreational vehicles. The location at 2281 Beacon Ave has only 5 angle parking spaces for vehicles under 20 feet and shares parking with Bevan Park. This creates a difficult situation for visitors when many show up at a time or when a large vehicle arrives. Attached are photos showing examples of this problem. The Executive Director at the Mary Winspear Centre has agreed to allow short term parking in the MWC lot, however does not want permanent signage indicating this because he does not want to give the impression the lot is a public lot.

Temporary signage that Visitor Centre staff put up each day could be created to show visitors, especially those driving large vehicles, where to park.



RECOMMENDATIONS

SIGNAGE

1. Remove all current signage from both Ocean Ave. and 1st Ave and replace with consistently aesthetic, easy to read signs that direct visitors from the International Ferry Terminal to Sidney.
2. Within the Town of Sidney provide directional signs to the Visitor Centre on the major streets of Beacon Ave., Bevan Ave., and Sidney Ave.
3. Within the Town of Sidney place store location signs on intersecting streets.

VISITOR CENTRE LOCATION

While the current location at 2281 Beacon Ave. meets some of the needs of Visitor Services, another location would be more efficient. The waterfront is the focal point of the Town. People end up at the waterfront from Beacon Avenue, 1st and 2nd Streets, from the waterfront walkway, and from the Port of Sidney marina. A Visitor Centre at the east end of Beacon Ave. would better serve people coming into Sidney. Currently, there are several vacant spaces in the mall at the end of Seaport Place. Seaport Place meets the needs of the Visitor Centre.

The Chamber is proposing that;

- the office of the Chamber move to the 2281 Beacon Ave. location and the Visitor Centre relocate to a vacant storefront location nearer the waterfront,
- the Town continue the rent-free status of 2281 Beacon Ave. and the Chamber will pay the cost of renting a space for the VC,
- Seaport Place would also be more central for local residents and could provide space for a community corner for local volunteer and not for profit organizations to advertise for volunteers and events. This is a community building opportunity for the Chamber to fill a need in the town.

BEACON AVENUE

The Saanich Chamber of Commerce recommends to the Town of Sidney that it re-configure Beacon Ave. to a two-way street. This will enhance traffic flow through the Town and allow visitors from the International Ferry Terminal to enter and exit the town with a minimum of difficulty.