

***GOLD RIVER CENTRAL ATTRACTION HUB TO ENCOURAGE VISITATION***

*Downtown focal point to help establish and diversify Village economy*

COURTENAY, 10 June 2020 – A new project to develop a small, central attraction hub in the Village of Gold River’s business retail area will soon get underway with support from the Island Coastal Economic Trust’s (ICET) Quick Start funding program.

The project includes the building of a locally designed wooden kiosk (with panels highlighting Gold River’s visitor attractions), public seating and gathering areas, a community map and dedicated interpretative panels for the Mowachaht Muchalaht First Nations. The space will be built in an area that is currently a long strip of untended land with small trees and bushes.

“Strong and vibrant downtown cores are essential to the economic and social health of a community,” says ICET Board Chair Josie Osborne. “This Quick Start project is helping Gold River expand its economy and establish itself as an adventure and nature-based tourism hub.”

The project comes on the heels of the Village’s 2018 Economic Development Strategy that prioritized the need to improve the downtown’s physical attractiveness to promote tourism as well as community well-being and pride of place. The project was initiated by the Tourism Working Group under the auspices of the Gold River Economic Development Committee, which consists of seven community members including the Mowachaht Muchalaht First Nations and the Gold River Chamber of Commerce.

“In small communities across Canada, the retail environment is changing,” says Rachel Stratton, Village of Gold River Councillor and Chair of the Economic Development Committee. “Each community must recognize this, and both the retail business owners and the community are looking for new and innovative ways to adapt.”

Recognizing the dynamic nature of the retail landscape and finding ways to evolve is crucial. Innovative place-based approaches can be an asset or a liability in the effort to recruit new residents, businesses and industries, retirees, visitors and others to a community and to keep those already there.

“With the dedication and involvement of so many local people, this project can only have a positive outcome on the morale of the community,” says Veanna Johnston, President of Gold River Chamber of Commerce. “This will encourage further discussions, projects and a renewed sense of pride in our town.”

The new space will also display many large and intricate community chainsaw carvings that are completed annually during Gold River Days.

The project is expected to begin shortly.



Building a diverse and sustainable economy.

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#### **About the Island Coastal Economic Trust**

Created and capitalized by the Province of BC in 2006, the Island Coastal Economic Trust (ICET) mission is to create a more diverse and globally competitive Island and Coastal economy. In partnership with local and regional government, non-profits and indigenous communities, ICET serves nearly half a million residents. Funding and support for economic infrastructure and other economic diversification initiatives is delivered through a unique community centered decision-making process. Since inception, ICET has approved more than \$52 million in funding for over 200 initiatives. These investments have leveraged over \$270 million in new investment into the region creating more than 2500 construction phase jobs and 2650 long term permanent jobs.

To learn more, visit [www.islandcoastaltrust.ca](http://www.islandcoastaltrust.ca)

#### **About the Quick Start funding stream:**

ICET's Quick Start funding stream enables communities with limited staff and financial resources to "kickstart" their new strategies and turn concepts into action with projects that can be completed within a short timeframe. Funding up to \$15,000 may be used for small scale projects or to support the development of materials or plans required to access funding for larger scale initiatives. To learn more, visit: <http://www.islandcoastaltrust.ca/program-overview>

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