

What We Found

A-3 PHYSICAL HISTORY OF THE COMMUNITY

A-3.1 Current Physical Networks

The key physical condition in Gibsons at present seems to center on the geographical division of the town by the very significant slope of School Road, which accentuates the social division of upper and lower Gibsons. In terms of retail stores, the shops located in lower Gibsons are more tourist-focused while the stores in upper Gibsons are more locally-focused. The Landing and Molly's Lane contain cafes and boutiques, whereas the essential day-to-day shopping is located up the hill around the Mall, including the grocery store. People remarked that upper Gibsons was the only place for "one-stop" shopping. However, they did express a wish for something to be done to beautify the Sunshine Coast Highway.

In terms of income-level, some local residents suggested that the wealthiest residents live on the Bluff area and other high points around Gibsons, and that there may be a larger number of lower-income households in lower Gibsons. The weather and seasons play a major role in the physical conditions in Gibsons, especially in the difference in numbers of tourists. Most residents attested to the fact that the city is very quiet and slow in the winter, and much more busy and vibrant in the summer.

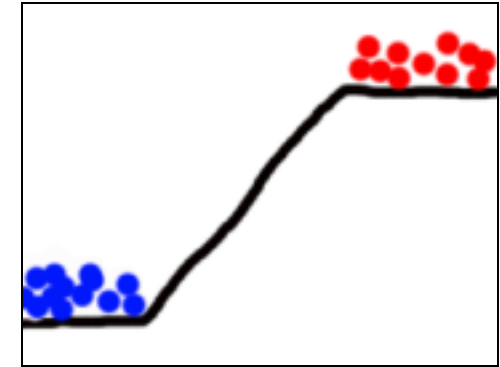
Families appear to be spread rather evenly throughout Gibsons, perhaps in relatively higher percentages in Upper Gibsons than in the more affluent Bluff or Heritage areas, but also less densely simply due to lot sizes. Their activities are also quite widely spread, creating a strong automobile reliance for even the simplest activities such as getting the kids to school. They shop in Upper Gibsons for the convenience - the selection may be poor, but the service is good. They make a big trip into Vancouver maybe once a month to stock up at Costco or to get special items (apparently there is no decent toy store around, making birthday parties a hassle), but they would be happy to make those purchases on the Sunshine Coast if they could. It appears parents don't do too much else, nor do they have any special inclination to - as is similar in most Canadian cities. However parents (and adult in general) appear to desire a few special places: a really nice restaurant, a lounge where one could have a quiet drink with friends. Young adults and parents in the area said that much of their nighttime activities centered around their homes or those of friends, renting videos, attending parties, etc.

There are a small number of single adults within the community. They do not seem to be concentrated in any particular area, nor do they have any sort of group activities centered on any particular location. They have little apparent social or physical presence within Gibsons.

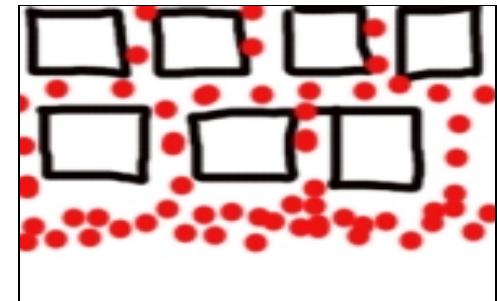
The artists of the Gibsons area seem to be fairly well spread out. However, anecdotal evidence suggests that there may be a larger collection of artists in the Roberts Creek area.

Gibsons' large seniors population appear to be divided into two distinct groups: those who lived in Gibsons all their lives; and those who moved there to retire. The two groups live and socialize in very different and separate ways. Long-time residents of Gibsons are scattered throughout Lower Gibsons and the historic areas where they have lived all their lives. They are known to meet regularly at places like the Yacht Club, the A&W, and likely, at Harmony Hall and the pubs. Those who retired to Gibsons tend to cluster in the adult communities near the golf course. We suspect they socialize mainly within those communities.

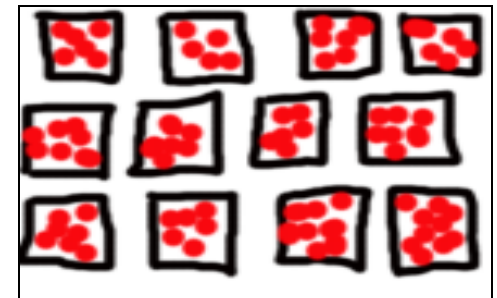
What We See



The division in the town, with tourists being concentrated in lower Gibsons and locals in upper Gibsons, is especially noticeable in shopping amenities.



For local residents, activity in the town itself occurs during the day (above). Activity at night seems to be confined to their own homes or those of friends (below).



What We Found

There are a few certain features of Gibsons that most residents seem to agree are the pride of the community. Everyone we met was enthusiastic about the new Winegarden Park and its link to the recently improved seawalk. People all over Gibsons seemed to be proud of the Lower Gibsons area in general. Everyone we spoke to was extremely pro-tourism, wanting to share the beauty of their town with outsiders, and of course wanting the money that tourists bring.

A-3.2 The Future of Gibsons' Physical Networks

It was repeatedly noted that something should be done to link upper and lower Gibsons. Most people liked the idea of putting in a cable car. Others suggested creating a commercial strip along School Road up the hill, since it may be too noisy for some residents anyway.

People expressed fear that Gibsons would continue to develop outwards, creating a kind of urban sprawl. They were more positive about seeing more development on the waterfront, especially in seeing it become more tourist-oriented. Some ideas included adding to the cafes and shopping (especially a grocery store in lower Gibsons), additional temporary moorage, a hotel (in keeping with the existing aesthetic), camping facilities, creating a dive center and marine park, and making the sea walk continuous all the way around the waterfront. No one we spoke to expressed an interest in re-establishing the dominance of industry in the former working harbor.

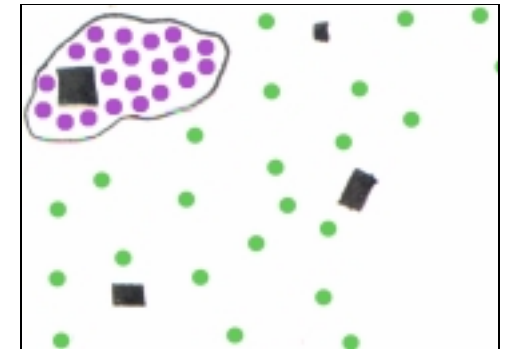
Local residents wished to see a few more options for adult recreations, such as venues for sports games, quiet night-time lounges, and perhaps another movie theater. Alternatively they wished for later running ferries, the last one being the 9:20 from Vancouver) so they could participate in cultural events in the lower mainland. Many of the residents had heard of the cable-car idea for linking upper and lower Gibsons. Although some thought the idea was quiet absurd, many more seemed keen on this idea

Artists currently do not seem to feel a lack of arts centers and venues, but mentioned that the need could be increased in the next two to four years. We noticed that few of the frequently used venues are in Gibsons. The town seems lacking in indoor exhibition space, music venues, and a central Arts Center.

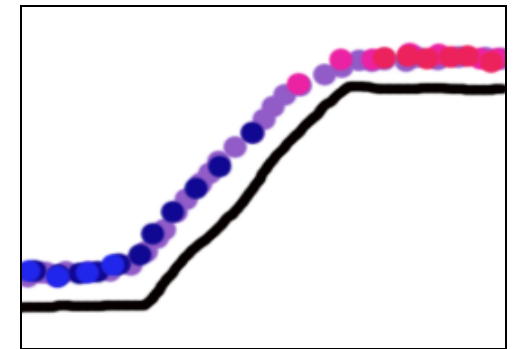
It was also noted in our discussions, that some seniors may move to the mainland once their need for essential medical services is greater. They were quite positive about tourism to the area, but did not wish to see a lot done to increase it. It seemed from our discussions, that the longer a person had lived in Gibsons, the more they welcomed some degree of "progress" and "improvement". Older people mentioned road improvements, civic parks, and cultural centers as possible projects.

Without new money coming into town, the two main incoming groups that demand consideration are retirees and commuter families. Should they be divided starkly into small bedroom communities and retirement communities? It seems that the people of Gibsons would prefer that they mix. We asked a few people where they would put newcomers to Gibsons. Rather than seeing the current town densify, they imagined that people would be more likely to move along the coast to Roberts Creek, or perhaps into the Elphinstone area.

What We See



Long-term Gibsons residents (green) and those who retired to Gibsons (purple) live and socialize in two distinct and separate patterns.



It seems desirable to somehow link upper and lower Gibsons. Perhaps even socially, one could bring the locals down the hill more often and draw the tourists up the hill as well.

What We Found

We found an overwhelming acceptance of and desire for tourists visiting Gibsons. If tourism increases, perhaps a larger artists community may be supported, creating a stronger young/single adult presence and requiring more studio spaces, gallery spaces in the tourist areas of Lower Gibsons, more facilities for single or young adults to meet and talk. If tourism increases, a larger seasonal service group is required as well as a greater opportunity for commercial activities in Lower Gibsons, providing more jobs with low experience or educational requirements, possibly keeping young adults around longer again requiring more facilities for that group.

What We See

