

WHAT WE FOUND

F-1 EXISTING MUNICIPAL AND AREA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES

Community planning for the Town of Gibsons began in 1985 with the municipality's first Official Community Plan (OCP). An OCP document defines broad objectives regarding the character of land use patterns, and provides direction for future growth and development. Planning objectives of the 1985 OCP related to a series of general topics, including economic development goals for industry, commerce, and tourism. It was recognised that traditional industries, such as forestry and fishing, were in decline and that tourism and the commercial and service commercial industries were becoming increasingly important for the economic development of Gibsons.

The 1985 OCP encouraged light industry, growth in the commercial industry, and further development of tourism in Gibsons. The following policy statements reflect the desired direction for land use outlined in the 1985 OCP.

- The Town of Gibsons should encourage the expansion of the Industrial Zone on Highway 101 to accommodate increasing demand for land for light industrial operations such as manufacturing, warehousing, transportation, public works, and industrial storage.
- The integrity of the Industrial Park must be preserved and the further erosion of this relatively small, confined industrial area by quasi-commercial uses should be discouraged.
- The Town should request the aid of all appropriate provincial agencies to assist in expanding and diversifying the industrial base.
- Future emphasis on commercial development should be focused in the regional commercial centre located in Upper Gibsons, while secondary and more intimate commercial development should be concentrated in the Gibsons Landing area.
- In order to preserve the small town ambience which has drawn people to Gibsons, the proliferation of further mall-type applications should be discouraged as being out of scale and character.
- The Town of Gibsons should encourage the development of tourist related facilities in order to expand its economic base, but not to degree where continued development would create detrimental impacts.

Ongoing revisions and refinements to the first community plan have resulted in the most recent OCP, completed in 1993. While many of the original planning objectives appear in the 1993 plan, the Town has responded to changes in growth patterns and community concerns regarding environmental issues and economic development trends, by establishing a more responsive policy framework.

In terms of economic development, the 1993 plan treats Gibsons Landing and Upper Gibsons as distinct entities, requiring unique policies. Policy directions for Gibsons Landing are intended to help preserve the village atmosphere of the historic centre and focus on promoting a mix of commercial and residential uses within the unique waterfront setting. New policy statements often combine the themes of commerce and tourism when describing the desired future of Gibsons Landing. For example:

- Encourage new speciality restaurants, shops and accommodations along the waterfront, creating an attractive and vibrant commercial area serving the needs of both tourists and the local community.

WHAT WE SEE

vision...



reality...



*In Lower Gibsons, vision and reality are connected as Council supports a diverse working harbour with a variety of shops, services and maritime industry.*

WHAT WE FOUND

In addition to the discussion of Gibsons Landing as a unique centre within the Town, the 1993 OCP contains a section dedicated to the marine environment. Emphasis is placed on preserving a working harbour to support marine businesses and commercial fishing and to encourage further development of the tourist industry in Gibsons.

- Recognise the historic role of the commercial fishing fleet and marine transportation services such as water taxis, barge operations, and marine repair facilities and support the continuation of such uses within the defined "Commercial Harbour".
- Support the use of the Gibsons harbour area for marina moorage for visitors and residents.
- Support rental of powerboats, sailboats, sailboards, canoes, kayaks and other recreational equipment in the Commercial Harbour area.

A significant change in economic development policy directions for the Town of Gibsons relates to the Upper Gibsons area. The 1985 plan supported both industrial and commercial development of the Upper Gibsons area, yet it did not provide a clear vision for the character of future land uses within this growing commercial area. In contrast, the 1993 OCP clearly identifies Upper Gibsons as the primary commercial and service centre, serving both Gibsons and the surrounding market areas. The plan recognises the need to create a commercial centre that is as attractive to tourists and residents as the charming Gibsons Landing waterfront village, and states that the challenge is to create a true town centre within Upper Gibsons. In order to achieve the desired atmosphere of a town centre, the OCP provides policy directions that change the course of industrial and commercial development in the area. The plan proposes a revitalisation program for Upper Gibsons and calls for the redevelopment of the existing light industrial area along Highway 101 into commercial and retail uses.

- Create an Upper Gibsons "town centre" with a mix of commercial and public uses and a greater orientation towards pedestrians.
- Encourage automobile-oriented service commercial uses to relocate to secondary locations.
- Support a transition from heavy industrial use in the current zoned industrial area towards fully enclosed service, light industrial, and large-site retail operations.

Economic trends within the province of British Columbia have been marked by a dramatic decline in traditional resource based industries. Initially, the Town of Gibsons responded by directing its policies in support of economic diversification and toward the continued development of industry, commerce, and tourism. However, the 1993 OCP is focused primarily on creating a commercial and service based economy in Gibsons, with elements of industry embedded within its general policies. Discussions with the Town planning department indicated that areas once considered for future industrial use will likely be developed instead for commercial and residential uses. These policy changes reflect the need for the Town of Gibsons to plan for future population growth. However, it remains unclear how economic diversification beyond a commercial and service based economy within Gibsons will be supported.

WHAT WE SEE

vision...

Service commercial . retail . pedestrian friendly . regional highway . parking lots . street trees . new town centre . light industrial . diversity . local business . globalisation . traffic calming . minimum setbacks . maximum convenience . economies of scale . small is beautiful

reality...



*Despite numerous ideas about the economic role and physical form of Upper Gibsons, the area has developed as a generic suburban retail and service hub. It remains unclear whether Council's economic policies, zoning decisions and design guidelines will result in positive changes for the financial and physical future of Upper Gibsons.*