

F.1 EXISTING MUNICIPAL AND AREA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES

MIKE TEED

WHAT WE FOUND:

Recent development in the town of Squamish is guided by the municipality's 1998 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 1998 OCP related to a series of general topics, including economic development goals for industry, commerce, and tourism. While the forestry industry in Squamish remains the primary economic industry and employer in Squamish, the OCP indicates that the future growth shall focus on economic diversification through promotion of and investment in the tourism and technology industries. In addition to the OCP, the economic growth objectives in Squamish are informed by the Squamish Economic Development Strategy (1999), the Squamish 2000 Plan: Downtown Today and Squamish 2000 Plan: Update 2003.

The Squamish Economic Development Strategy of 1999 contains the following Community Goals for Squamish Economic Development which reflect the desired direction for land use.

- Diversification in growing (tourism and high tech) and traditional (forestry) sectors;
- Sustainable Development: defined by attaching limits to production and consumption, as well as promotion of local arts and cultural resources;
- Leadership and Implementation: bring public and private sector to implement this plan;
- Employment: create atmosphere for job creation;
- Sense of Community: preserve small town lifestyle, create more access;
- Quality of Life.

The Squamish Economic Development Strategy also contains a community vision that states "Squamish will be a community of leadership and excellence where new opportunities in economic diversification coincide with an outstanding quality of life and a healthy, stable and secure environment." This community vision is to be supported by strategies that:

- Pursue strong and sustainable economic development with access to quality jobs in all sectors;
- Build a positive and supporting business climate;
- Create a robust downtown and waterfront areas;
- Develop Squamish as a regional service center, taking full advantage of the potential in the Sea to Sky Corridor;
- Encourage sound land use which enhances community image and development;
- Promote a learning community with quality access to educational and training opportunities;
- Foster a strong sense of community based on individual leadership and responsibility.

WHAT WE FOUND:

The Squamish 2000 Plan was created to “help to guide...strategic decision making by both the District of Squamish and other key stakeholders with respect to future growth and development of community’s Downtown.” An update to the 2000 Plan was produced in 2003 to reflect recent changes in the economic climate of Squamish and help Squamish to meet the development demands of its new position as the “Heart of 2010.” The 2003 update also identified the following new trends:

- 2010 Winter Olympics were awarded to Vancouver-Whistler;
- Significant recent increases in sales and prices in the Squamish residential real estate market;
- local population growth that has been slower than anticipated in the last three years;
- new large scale retail development occurring along the highway;
- renewed interest in various types of development in the downtown.

Recently Squamish committed to being a partner community of Smart Growth on the Ground (SGOG).¹ The goal is to apply sustainable development concepts to the community in the face of development pressures. A key component to the SGOG initiative is the design brief. This is a document derived from public input and information from studies, policies and plans that have influence in Squamish which will guide the charrette process, and is scheduled to be released in spring 2005.

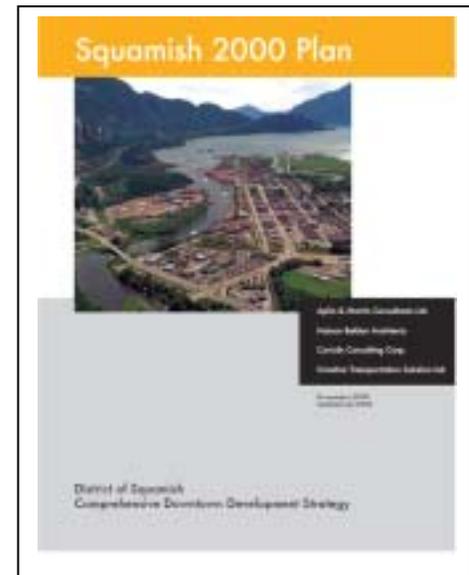
On Sept. 17, 2004, the Ministry of Transportation announced that the province, BC Rail and Nexen signed final agreements with the District of Squamish to transfer 71 acres of land to Squamish to develop its waterfront and downtown core.²

¹ <http://www.sgog.bc.ca/>

² http://www2.news.gov.bc.ca/nrm_news_releases/2004TRAN0064-000727.htm

WHAT WE SEE:

Squamish has faced some major changes over several years since the release of its Official Community Plan (OCP), both in terms of its projected areas of growth and its significance for the recently announced 2010 Olympic Games. Recent initiatives like SGOG and the land transfer of the downtown waterfront to Squamish support the objectives of the OCP and the community goals of the Squamish Economic Development Strategy.



WHAT WE FOUND:

The OCP refers to a 1994 study that found 63% of retail, service, and office businesses were located in downtown Squamish. At that time, half of all future commercial growth was predicted to take place in downtown Squamish. The primary requirement to achieve half of all commercial development in downtown Squamish is the protection of Hwy 99 from strip commercial development. The OCP also states that any commercial precincts along Hwy 99 are to be separated by treed areas, open space, or residential development. A recent consultation of 130 downtown merchants and property owners indicated that 78% of participants agreed that downtown revitalization in Squamish was either important or very important.¹ This supports the statement in the OCP that reads, “Downtown Squamish is intended to serve as the primary concentration of commercial office, retail, and service uses in Squamish as well as a major location for tourist accommodation, commercial, recreation, institutional, multi-family and mixed-use developments. ...Squamish is to function as the regional service centre... [and] maintain a compact downtown commercial area.”

The District of Squamish website³ boasts some current economic development projects, which include:

- Garibaldi Village Mall, located at Hwy 99 and Mamquam Road is a mixed use development that includes a mix of retail businesses, two restaurants, a cinema, office space, a Canadian Tire and the Legion, opening 2004.
- Wal-Mart, fronting Hwy 99 in the Squamish Business Park, for an 85,000 sq. ft. store, seeking approval.
- Sea to Sky University, located on Squamish District Lot 512 will be a 240 acre private, secular, and not-for-profit campus including housing units, opening Sept. 2006.
- Parallax Factory Outlet fronting Hwy 99 north of the proposed Wal-Mart site, 100,000 sq. ft. of retail on a 10 acre site, including a tourist kiosk to link the mall with leisure opportunities in Squamish, proposed.
- Garibaldi Springs Golf Course, opened summer 2004; two phases of townhouses adjacent to the course, a clubhouse and a hotel are planned.
- Garibaldi at Squamish, a ski resort located 13km north of Squamish covering 4,125 acres, including 176 marked trails, alpine bowls, snowboard park, nordic trails, as well as multiple summer facilities, proposed.

Downtown revitalization efforts to this point include:

- reduction in downtown parking standards.
- creation of an Artisan Village Zone.
- construction of a new gateway / welcome boulevard at Cleveland Ave. and Hwy 99
- recommended Priority Action Items which respond to current issues and opportunities facing the downtown.

³ http://www.squamish.ca/Departments/Economic_Development/Current_Projects/

WHAT WE FOUND:

Major changes to the direction of growth and context of Squamish have occurred over the past few years. The pressures of development have intensified dramatically. Under these circumstances, it becomes increasingly important for the people of Squamish to have a clear vision of how they want their community function economically through 2010 and beyond.

WHAT WE SEE:

Current development coincides with the OCP's objectives of diversifying Squamish's economy to promote tourism and exploit its geographic location. Current development is appearing to diverge from the OCP where strip commercial development along Hwy 99 is proposed, that half of new commercial development is not occurring downtown, and there is no major investment in developing the high-technology industry in Squamish.

While there is evidence of improvements to the character of downtown, current major economic development projects exclude any direct investment in the revitalization of the economic situation of Downtown Squamish. All major economic development projects are occurring several kilometres north of downtown and show no relationship to the struggling downtown commercial precinct.

There has yet to be consensus on how intensifying commercial and tourism facilities outlying from downtown will affect the vitality and sustainability of Squamish's downtown commercial centre.

F.2 EXISTING MUNICIPAL AND AREA ECOLOGICAL PROTECTION OBJECTIVES

Alison Good

At the municipal level ecological protection objectives are achieved through two documents. The first is the 2000 Squamish Official Community Plan (OCP). The second is the Squamish Estuary Management Plan (SEMP). Both documents emphasize that ecological protection should compliment economic development.

The OCP offers more general provisions for environmental development, citing the protection of “fish and wildlife habitat” as a priority, and also includes the provision of “open space and recreation areas” for residents as being of equal value to environmental protection pursuits. It acts primarily to outline the environmentally sensitive areas within the District of Squamish and to refers to other pieces of legislation that are used to manage and regulate ecological protection, such as the provincial Fish Protection Act. Beyond this the OCP offers little in the way of management procedures and ecological objectives.

The SEMP regulates and directs the management and enhancement of ecologically sensitive areas. In keeping with the economic and environmental goals outlined in the OCP, the SEMP was commissioned in 1979 by the federal Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and the provincial Minister of Environment to provide management policy with two major objectives for ecological protection:

- ecological diversity and environmental quality are sustained in an intact ecological unit comprising physical and biological features representative of the original Squamish River estuary; and
- sufficient land and water area is allocated to enable industrial, commercial, recreational, transportation-related and other development to proceed in order to strengthen the economic base of the community⁴.

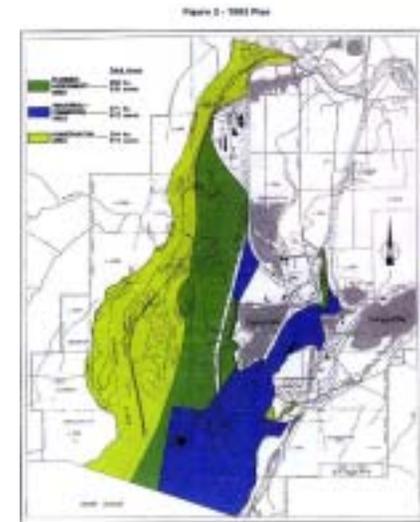
Overseeing proper implementation of the objectives outlined in the SEMP is the Squamish Estuary Coordinating Committee (SECC) comprised of members from various levels of government. These parties are BC Environment, BC Lands, BC Rail, District of Squamish, Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Environment Canada, Ministry of Small Business, Tourism and Culture.

Since implementation of the first SEMP in 1982, the plan has undergone two major revisions to compliment the evolving ecological planning objectives of Squamish. The 1982 SEMP outlined two major land use foci: conservation and industrial/commercial development. At the time, the plan allotted 394 hectares of land for conservation and 271 hectares for development. The remaining 258 hectares was designated for further assessment. The bulk of land for conservation was to the east side of the estuary, leaving in the balance the area immediate to the existing town centre for development and further assessment.

⁴ Squamish Estuary Management Plan 1999

WHAT WE SEE:

The balance of ecological protection and development has evolved to reflect the planning objectives of the Squamish District, community members and the Squamish Nation.



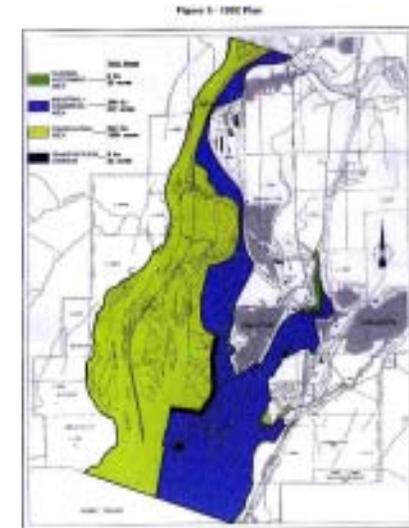
The 1982 Plan

In 1992 the SECC brought to the table a revised SEMP that resolved some of the land designation issues. The area for conservation was increased to 549 hectares, indicating a greater emphasis on ecological protection. However, development area also increased to 378 hectares, and included the provision of the transportation corridor. Balancing ecological protection with economic development remained a prevalent theme and management objectives for the Estuary were left generally unchanged. Though the revised plan offered resolution to land designation issues the 1992 SEMP was not adopted and Estuary management continued in accordance with 1982 plan.

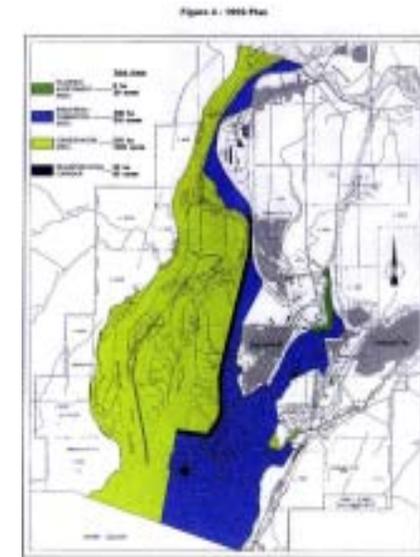
Twenty years after the commissioning of the SEMP, it was again revisited. The 1999 plan is a refined version of the 1992 plan, designating 579 hectares of land for conservation, and reducing the area for development to 350 hectares (a 28 hectare decrease). Furthermore, the 1999 SEMP was the first to engage the Squamish Nation in the revision process. The focus on community concerns of industrial development also played a key role in the development of the ecological protection objectives. The 1999 plan was adopted, and continues to be the primary document for management of environmentally sensitive areas and ecological protection and enhancement projects for the Squamish region.

Goals of the SEMP continue to operate in accordance with environmental objectives of the OCP, specifically focusing conservation efforts on the “maintenance and enhancement of fish and wildlife habitat”. This includes creating of a Wildlife Management Area in conjunction with the Ministry of Environment, Land and Parks and Squamish Nation. Public use of ecological areas is encouraged within the SEMP, providing they do not compromise natural habitat. Such pursuits include education, recreation and municipal infrastructure (waterlines, sewer lines and existing roads). Development within the Estuary area focuses largely on a deepwater port in the Mamquam Blind channel. Such development is “subject to environmental impact avoidance and mitigation” however, “habitat loss need not be compensated” under the 1999 SEMP as “compensation will be carried out on an area-wide basis”.

As Squamish prepares for a population boom in the next 20 years, re-examination of the SEMP will be necessary to protect the ecological integrity of the area. The SEMP is the primary management document for natural areas in Squamish, and as such, offers through revision the opportunity for greater emphasis on ecological development, protection and enhancement.



The 1992 Plan



The 1999 Plan