

POST-OCCUPANCY EVALUATION OF RESIDENT RESTRICTED HOUSING IN WHISTLER

SURVEY 2009



Prepared for the Whistler Housing
Authority

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helping to make **Whistler**
the place you call **home**

September 2009

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I. INTRODUCTION: OVERVIEW AND METHODS

In August 2009, a survey was conducted of Whistler residents who are currently living in units purchased through the WHA. The survey was designed in two parts using surveymonkey.com, a website specializing in software for the purpose of conducting on line surveys. Residents who have purchased homes through the WHA were sent an e-mail containing links to both sections of the survey and were asked to fill them out. The survey was sent to 128 new residents and, in total, 50 surveys were completed for part 1 and 51 were completed for part two. Several surveys needed to be discarded due to the fact that only one of the two parts was completed or because they were missing vital pieces of information (i.e. address).

The total number of completed, usable surveys is 47: 16 from the Nita Lake; 9 from The Lofts; 7 from Bear Ridge; 6 from 19 Mile Creek; 2 each from Gondola Six, Glacier Ridge, Millar's Ridge and the Spruce Grove Townhomes; and 1 from Lakecrest. Of these, 16 were completed by residents of families with young children (for this study, children are considered young if they are 12 years of age or younger). The small number of responses makes evaluation of residents' satisfaction difficult, especially for developments where only 1 or 2 residents completed the survey. However, the residents' responses, along with additional comments have provided occupants' perspectives on living in various resident housing developments and suggestions for future development.

II. PRINCIPLE FINDINGS

After reviewing the results of the survey, several trends have emerged and a few issues were repeated by the respondents. Parking and sound insulation were two issues that numerous respondents highlighted. Specifically, the amount and location of available parking (visitor parking in particular) and the sound insulation between units in at least some of the developments were issues of concern for residents. For the parking issue, the WHA may wish to consider further consultation with residents to determine the best options for the design of parking areas for future developments (i.e. underground parking, garages, etc.).

The family perspective also appears to have had an effect on the results for several questions. Specifically, results for families with young children differed from the overall results for the questions regarding the internal layout of units, parking, external areas of units and the amount of common vs. private space in developments. The needs of residents with and without children tend to be quite different and this should be considered when planning future resident housing developments.

Finally, several respondents raised concerns regarding the resale price cap and its effect on residents' willingness to invest in upgrades (such as energy efficient appliances) for their homes. Energy efficient upgrades appear to be a popular option for residents; however, many claim to be unwilling to invest in their homes if those investments will not be reflected in the resale price for their homes.

III. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

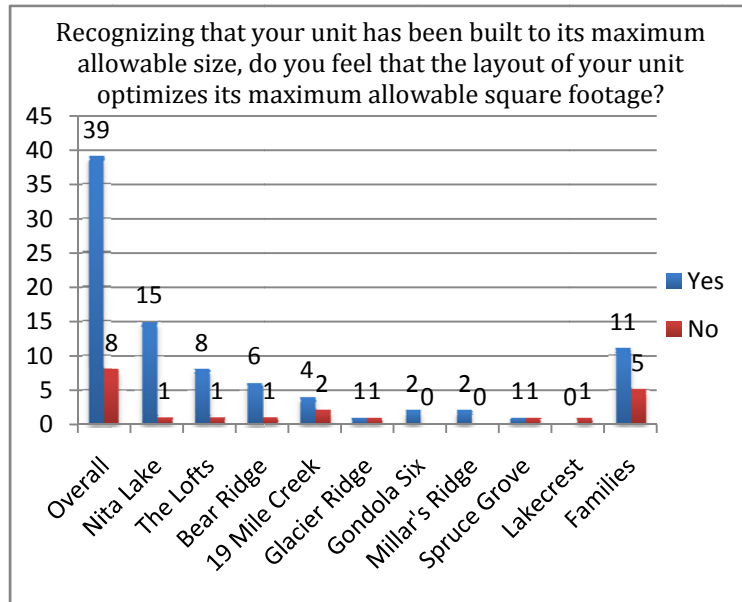
INTERNAL LAYOUT

In order to determine residents' satisfaction with the layout of their units, survey respondents were asked the question:

“Recognizing that your unit has been built to its maximum allowable size, do you feel that the layout of your unit optimizes its maximum allowable square footage?”

Results for this question are shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1



Respondents were also given the opportunity to make additional comments if they felt they had suggestions for improving the layout of their unit. The most commonly cited suggestions were:

- A desire for a second bathroom (19 Mile Creek, The Lofts and Bear Ridge);
- A more efficient layout for the internal stairs (Spruce Grove and Lakecrest),
- Less space consumed by the washer and dryer (Lakecrest and 19 Mile Creek);
- Other concerns regarded the size of kitchens, lack of closet space and too much hall space (Lakecrest, Nita Lake and The Lofts).

Overall, the responses suggest that residents are satisfied with the layouts of their units (39 yes/ 8 no).

One trend worth noting here is the fact that 5 of the 8 respondents who said 'No' to this question are from families with young children. In total, there are only 16 families in the sample living with young children. This could suggest that some developments have not been designed with families in mind and might be worth noting for the future.

STORAGE

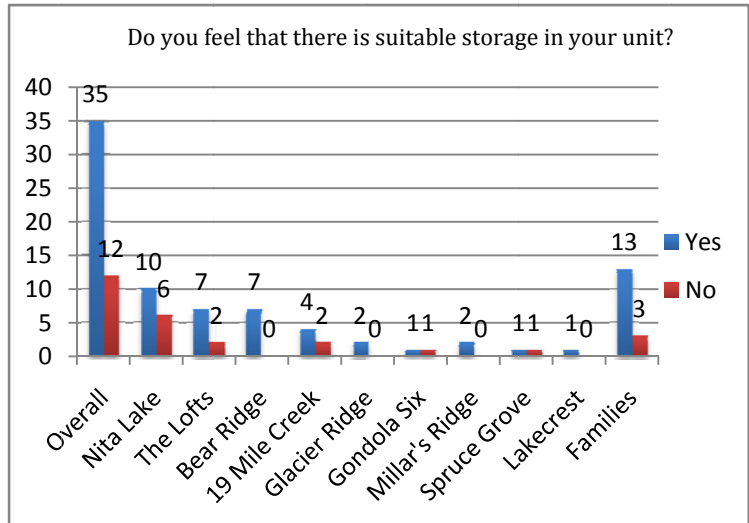
In order to determine residents' satisfaction with the amount of storage in their unit, respondents were asked the question:

"Do you feel that there is suitable storage in your unit?"

Results for this question are shown in Figure 2.

As with the previous question, respondents were given the option to make additional suggestions on how storage in their unit might be improved.

Figure 2



The most common suggestions provided by residents are:

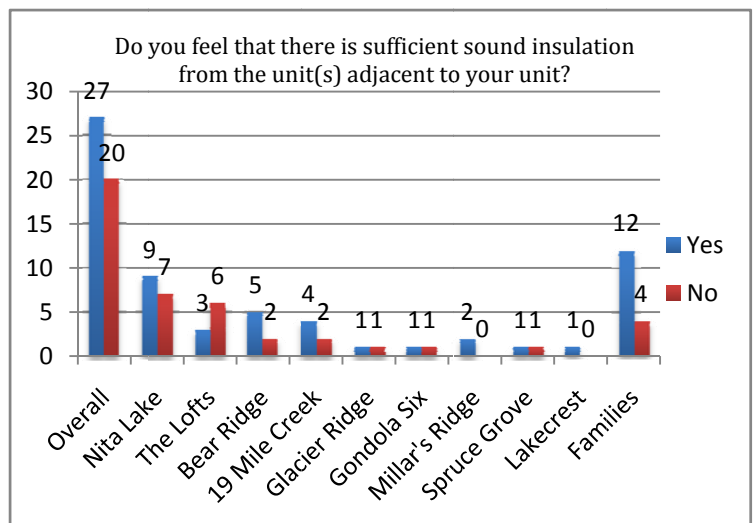
- Units should be built with a garage (Nita Lake);
- Closets are poorly designed (Nita Lake, The Lofts and Gondola Six);
- Need for more outdoor storage; (Nita Lake and The Lofts);
- Crawlspace could be improved (Spruce Grove and 19 Mile Creek);
- Too little kitchen storage and too little total storage (Nita Lake and The Lofts).

Overall, the responses suggest that residents are satisfied with the storage in their units (35 yes/ 12 no). The responses from families with children do not differ from the rest of the sample as they did with the previous question.

NOISE

To address the sound insulation in residents' units, respondents were asked the question:

"Do you feel that there is sufficient sound insulation from the unit(s) adjacent to your unit?"



Those who responded 'No' to this question were asked to specify the rooms or areas in their units where noise from adjacent units is heard. The most common responses (in descending order of response frequency) is that noise is heard:

- From units above or below (The Lofts, Nita Lake, 19 Mile Creek, and Gondola Six);
- In living rooms (19 Mile Creek, Bear Ridge, The Lofts);
- In bedrooms (Nita Lake, Glacier Ridge and 19 Mile Creek),
- In bathrooms (The Lofts and Nita Lake);
- From garage doors (The Lofts and Nita Lake);
- Other responses include the staircase, the den and the kitchen (Spruce Grove, Bear Ridge and The Lofts).

The results for this question suggest that some of the developments included in this survey have issues with sound insulation. In particular, The Lofts and Nita Lake had low satisfaction rates for this question (33% and 56% respectively). In this case, the comments made by respondents help to highlight specific issues regarding the sound insulation of their units. Although no real patterns emerge from the comments made by residents of Nita Lake, more than a few respondents from The Lofts complained of noise from units either above or below. The noise between units at The Lofts may be exacerbated because the units are located in an apartment building. This issue should be considered in future resident housing developments with better attention and use of sound insulation in ceilings and floors.

As for the other developments, Bear Ridge and 19 Mile Creek have satisfaction rates of 71% and 66% respectively. Noise does not appear to be an issue for families with children as the satisfaction rate was actually higher for households with young children than for the overall satisfaction rate (75% compared to 57%).

BRIGHTNESS OF UNITS

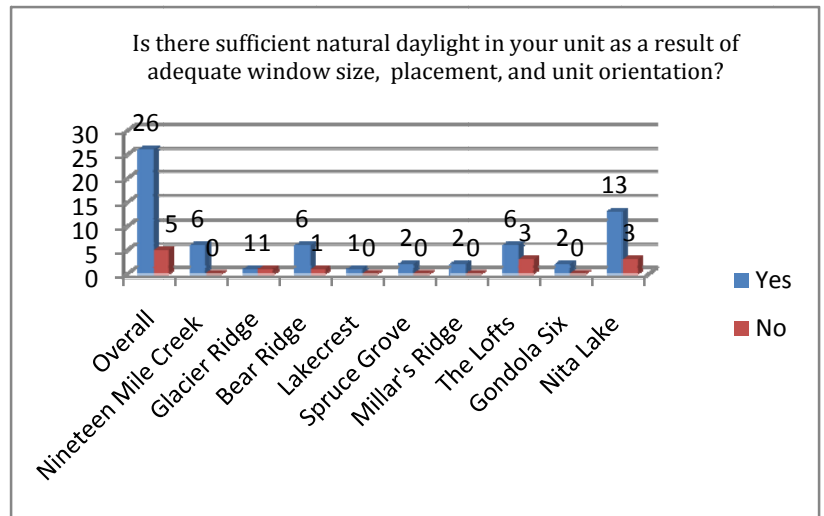
Figure 3

Addressing the issue of brightness in residents' units, residents were asked:

"Is there sufficient natural daylight in your unit as a result of adequate window size, placement, and unit orientation?"

Results for this question are shown in Figure 4.

Respondents were once again given the opportunity to make comments and



specify any issues with the lighting in their unit. Although relatively few comments were made, a few issues were specified. These issues include:

- Not enough windows in general (Nita Lake, The Lofts and Glacier Ridge);
- Lack bathroom windows (Nita Lake and Lakecrest);
- Windows are too small (Nita Lake and The Lofts);
- Too few lights in the unit (Nita Lake);
- One respondent suggested building units with skylights.

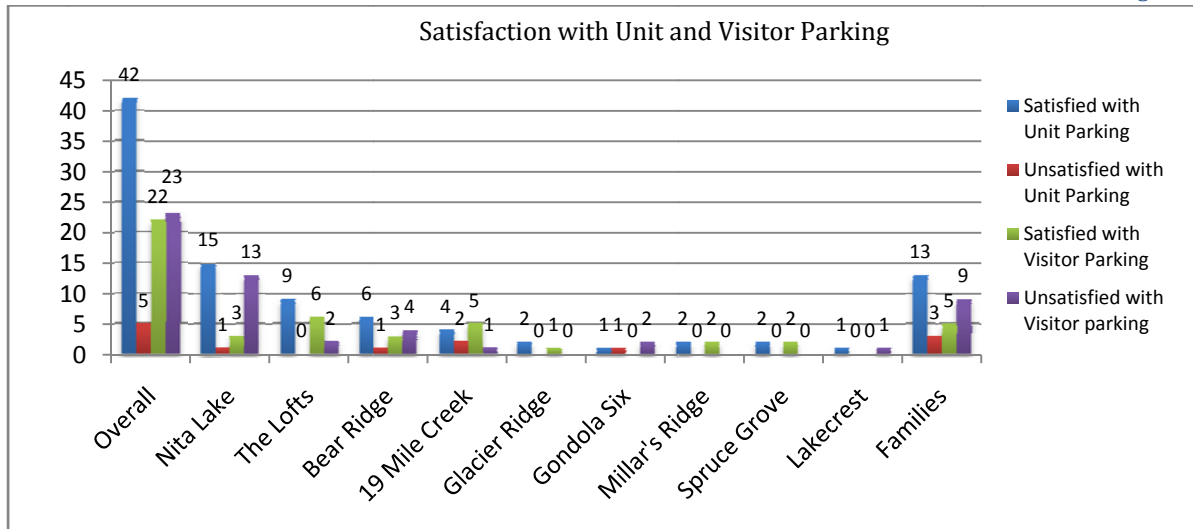
The results for this question are fairly positive and suggest that the brightness of units is not a serious problem in the developments surveyed.

PARKING

Parking proved to be an important issue for many of the respondents. Two questions were included in the survey in order to determine the residents’ satisfaction with the current parking situation in their development and to hear suggestions for how any problems might be addressed in future developments. In the first question, respondents were asked:

“Are you satisfied with the amount of parking for your particular unit and with the amount of visitor parking?”

Figure 4



Respondents who answered ‘No’ to this question were asked to identify specific problems with unit and/or visitor in their development. By far, the most common concern is that residents with multiple vehicles and only one parking space for their unit tend to monopolize visitor parking (Nita Lake, Gondola Six, The Lofts and Lakecrest).

Other suggestions include:

- Resident housing developments need more unit and visitor parking (19 Mile Creek and Nita Lake);
- Parking should be designed with an attached storage unit (The Lofts);
- Snow removal has caused issues for parking (19 Mile Creek and Nita Lake).

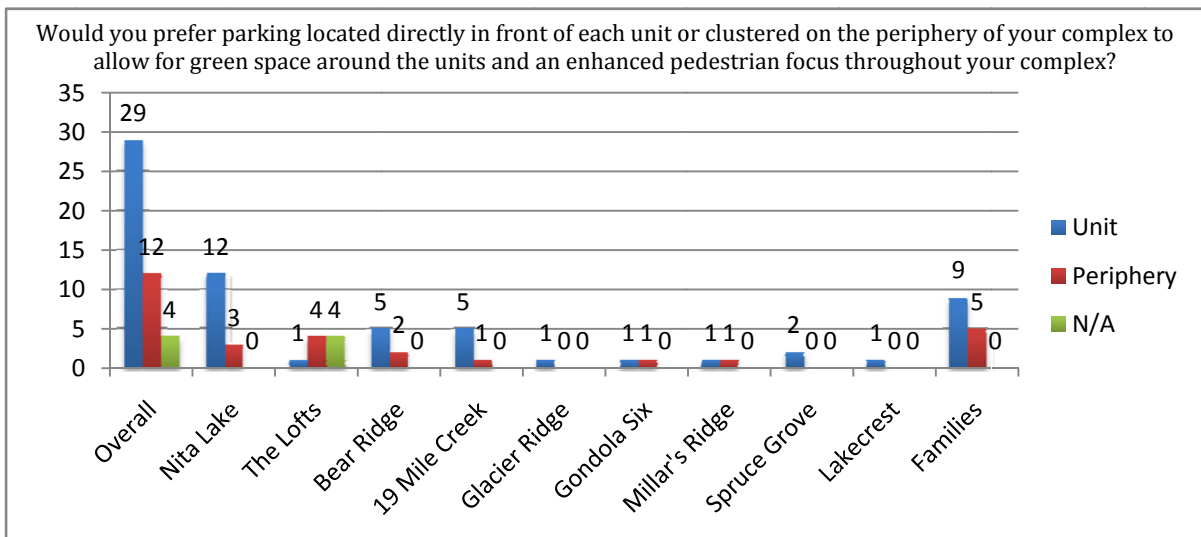
Residents were much more divided on the issue of visitor parking than for unit parking and it is clearly an issue for the Nita Lake and Bear Ridge developments. The main issue appears to be either the lack of enforcement on the number of stalls residents are allowed to occupy or a lack of restriction altogether. The satisfaction rate for this question was still very high (89%). Visitor parking also appears to be an issue for families as the satisfaction rate for families is lower than the overall satisfaction rate (36% compared to 45%).

The second question regarding parking asked residents:

“Would you prefer parking located directly in front of each unit or clustered on the periphery of your complex to allow for green space around the units and an enhanced pedestrian focus throughout your complex?”

Although the intent with this question was to gain insight for the design of future units, there is reason to believe some respondents may have misinterpreted the question and simply responded with whichever type of parking is used for their development. For example, several respondents from The Lofts answered ‘N/A’ due to the fact that their development has underground parking. Of the 45 respondents who answered this question it appears that the majority prefer parking located directly in front of their unit.

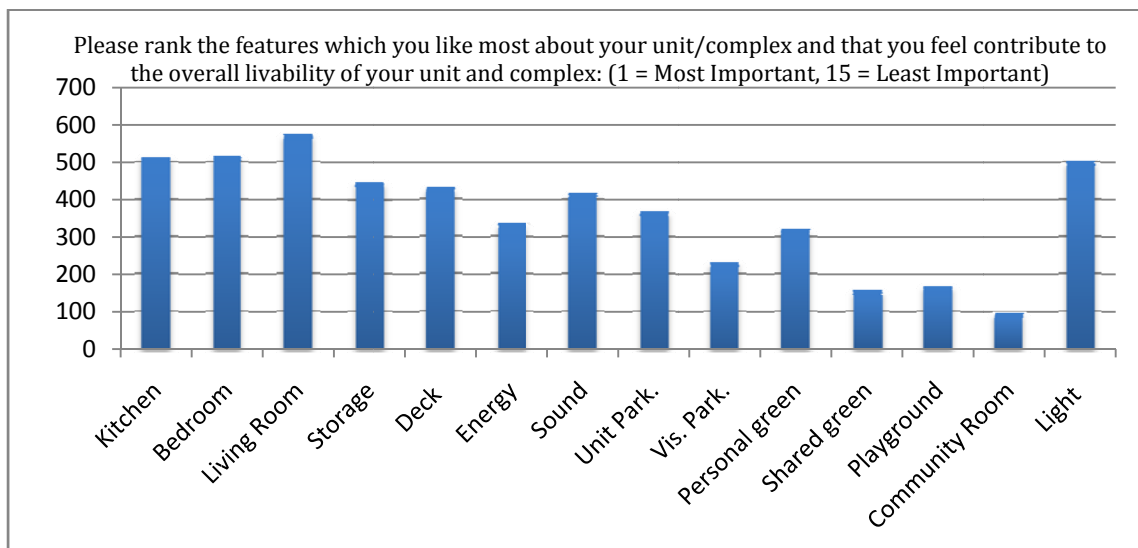
Figure 6



MOST IMPORTANT FEATURES FOR RESIDENTS

Residents were asked to rank various features of their unit and the location of their development based on their importance and how much they contribute to the overall livability of the unit. 14 different features of the residents' units were listed and residents were given the option to write in a feature that was not listed. Residents were asked to rank, from 1st to 15th, how each feature contributes to the overall livability of their unit relative to the other features.

Figure 5



As mentioned, respondents were able to rank features not included in the list. Other features that residents mentioned contributed to the overall livability of their units were:

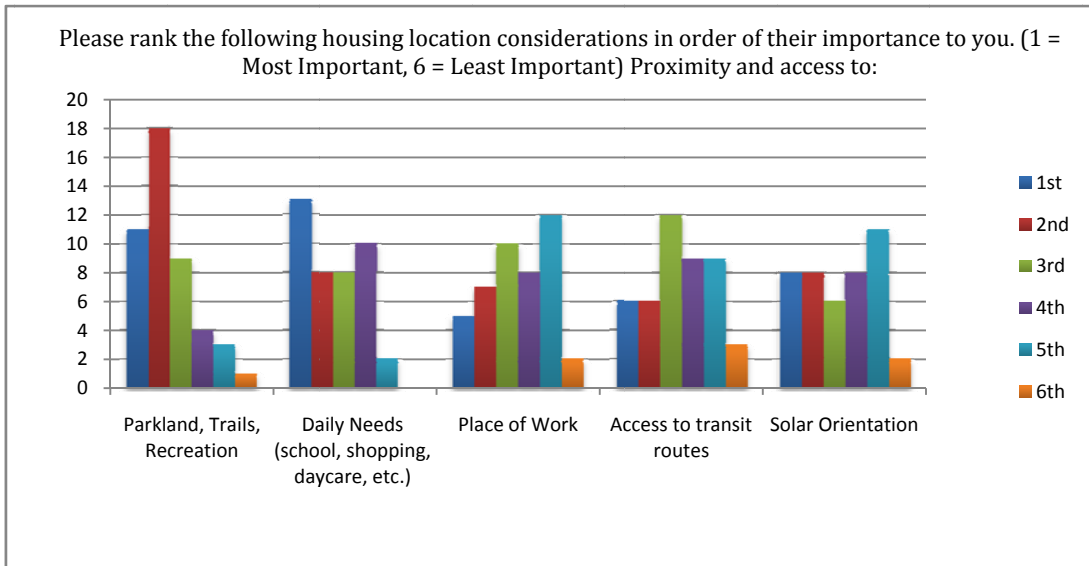
- Location
- Garage
- Being in a quiet neighborhood
- Construction quality
- View
- Size of deck

Residents were also asked to rank aspects of the location of their unit rather than the livability. Residents were able to rank the different location aspects from 1st to 5th with the option to include a 6th location aspect of their choice. The order of features from most to least important are as follows:

- Proximity to Parks
- Proximity to daily needs
- Proximity to transit
- Solar orientation
- Proximity to place of work

- Other aspects that residents added were the fact that their unit is in a quiet area, the deck area, proximity to other Whistler residents, and the fact that the unit is in low density housing.

Figure 8



EXTERNAL SPACE

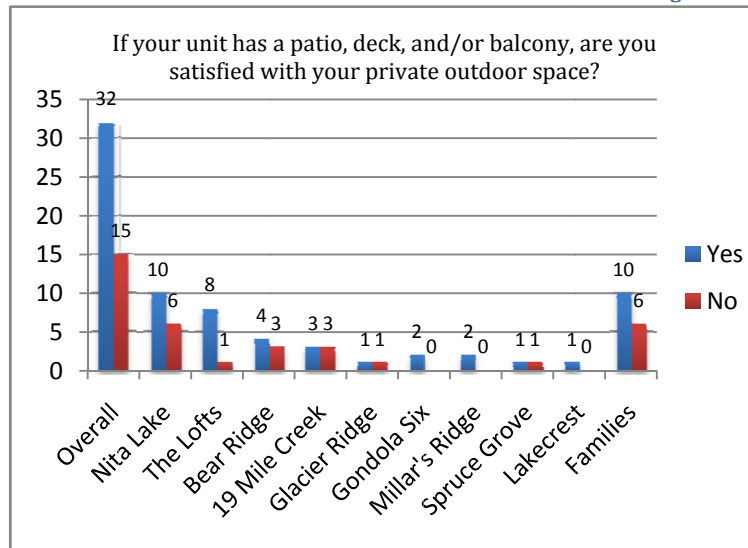
Two questions were asked to gauge the residents' satisfaction with the external space of their units (i.e. patio, yard, garden, etc.) and to hear suggestions for how they might be improved. The first question:

"If your unit has a patio, deck, and/or balcony, are you satisfied with your private outdoor space?"

As with previous questions, respondents were given the opportunity to include comments and suggestions. By far, the largest complaint from respondents is that their deck is too small (Nita Lake, Bear Ridge, Lakecrest and 19 Mile Creek).

Another complaint that was made by several respondents is that their patio/deck space needs more privacy, especially for units on the main floor (19 Mile Creek, Nita Lake and The Lofts). One respondent suggested that a patio with a sliding door entrance away from the

Figure 9



street would be an improvement. Other comments made were that more green space should be added.

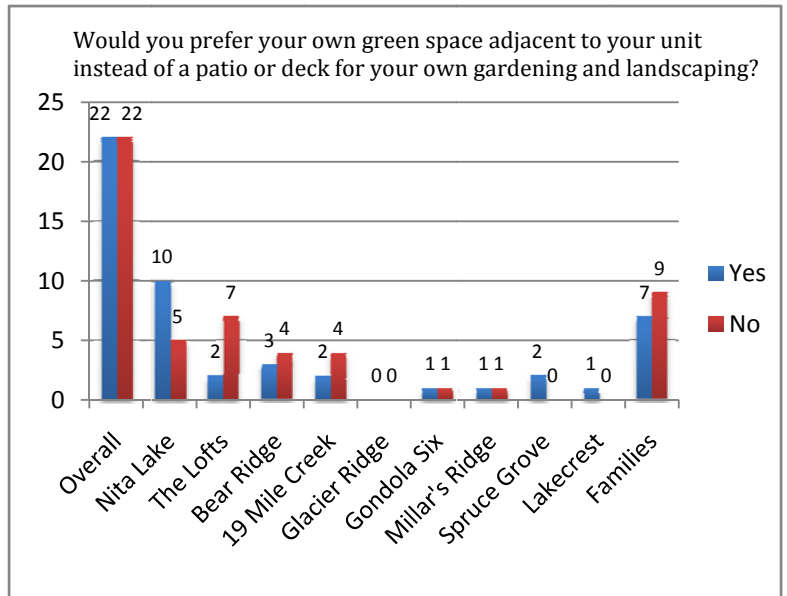
External living space (specifically deck size) in Nita Lake and Bear Ridge appear to be a concern due to their low satisfaction rates (63% and 57% respectively) and the fact that several residents from both developments offered negative comments regarding their decks. Two respondents made the suggestion that an extended living room or sunroom would be preferable to a small deck.

The second question regarding external space asked residents:

Figure 10

“Would you prefer your own green space adjacent to your unit instead of a patio or deck for your own gardening and landscaping?”

Once again, the high number of ‘Yes’ responses from Nita Lake suggests a concern with the current use of external space in that development.



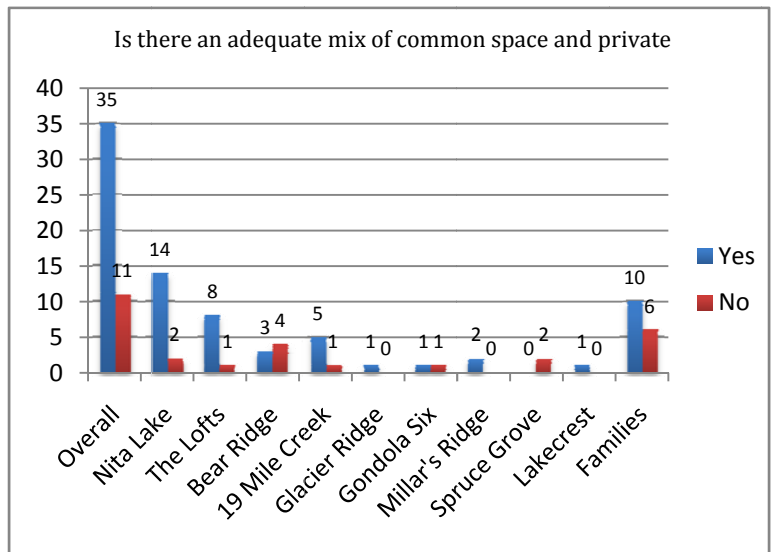
COMMON AREAS

In order to determine residents' satisfaction with the common areas of their developments, two questions were asked.

First, residents were asked:

“Is there an adequate mix of common space and private space in your complex?”

Figure 11



The residents' responses were quite diverse with their suggestions for improving the mix of common and private space in their respective developments. The only comments that were mentioned more than once are that common spaces should be located in a more central area (Nita Lake and Lakecrest) and that units should be built with more private space (Spruce Grove). Other suggestions:

- There should be more space in general (Nita Lake);
- There should be more common space (Bear Ridge);
- Playgrounds should be bigger (Bear Ridge);
- More storage (Gondola Six);
- Larger decks (The Lofts);
- Garage area should have metal storage units (The Lofts);
- Common storage area should be subdivided (The Lofts);
- All the common areas in the development are asphalt and more green space would be preferable (Nita Lake).

The satisfaction rates with common areas are lowest for Bear Ridge, Spruce Grove, Gondola Six and among families with young children (43%, 0%, 50% and 63% respectively).

The second question regarding the common space of developments asked residents to rate, from good to poor, the quality of 4 common area features for each complex:

- Lighting of common areas (i.e. walkways and parking);
- Amount of green space throughout the complex;
- Garbage and recycling shed facilities and placement;
- Playground area.

The responses for this question have been separated by development and the results are shown in Figures 12 to 16.

Figure 12

Looking at the results, there does not seem to be much cause for concern. For the lighting of common areas and the amount of green space, only 5 responses out of 46 for each were for 'Unsatisfactory' or 'Poor'.

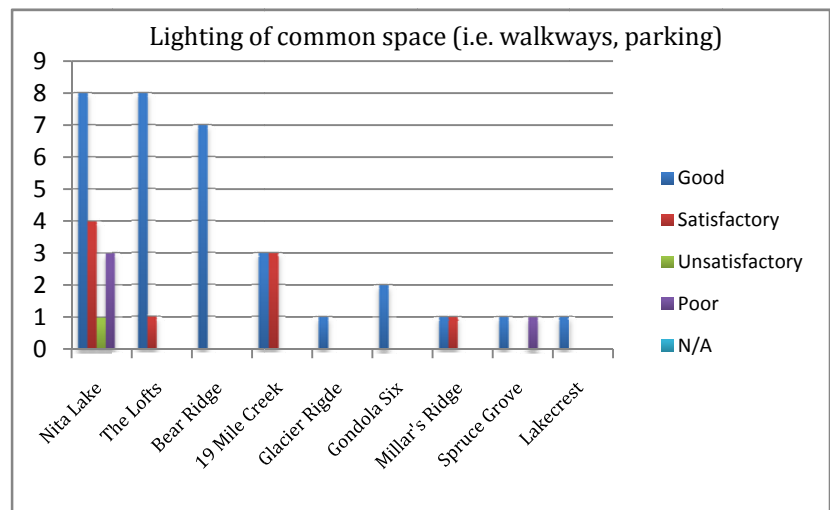


Figure 13

For the garbage and recycling facilities, only one respondent reported that the quality was less than satisfactory (Gondola Six).

The results do suggest that the playground areas could be improved although there may have been some confusion regarding this question. For example, 2 of the 7 'Poor' responses for this question came from respondents from The Lofts where there is no playground area (all the responses from the Lofts should have been 'N/A'). However, 3 of the 'Poor' responses from Bear Ridge were from families with young children, suggesting the playground facilities in that development are not meeting the needs of residents.

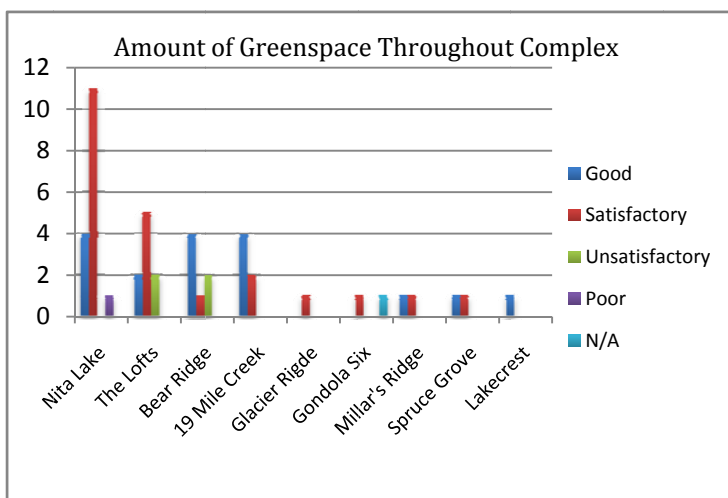
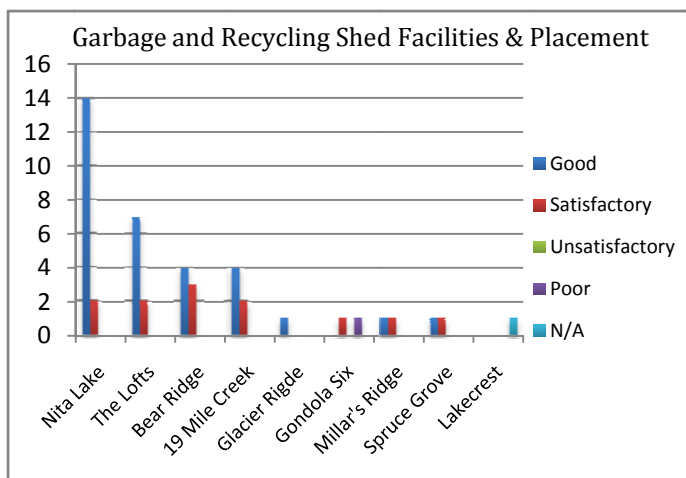
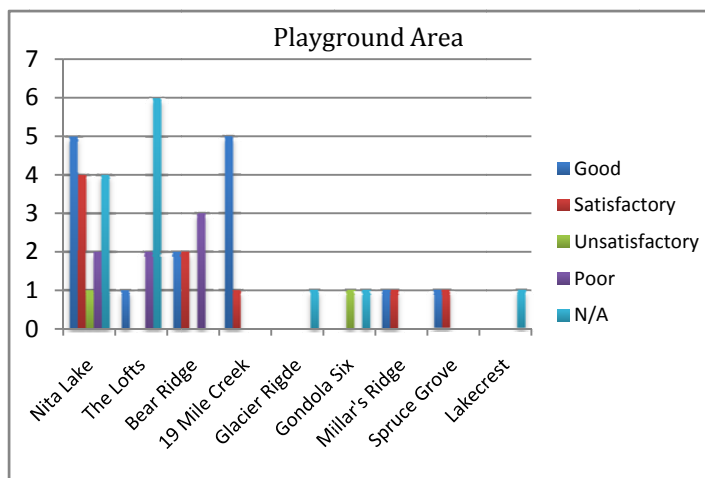


Figure 14

Figure 15



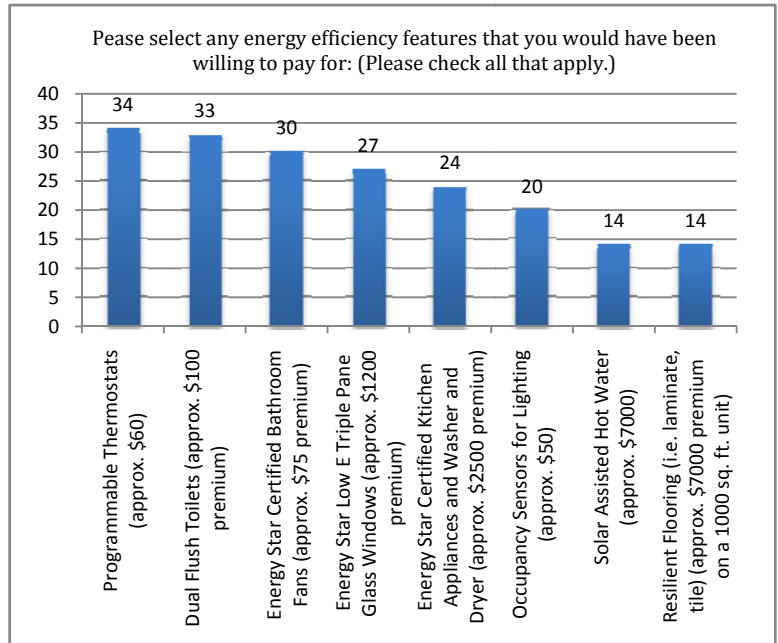
POTENTIAL FOR ENERGY EFFICIENT FEATURES

Respondents were asked if they would be willing to pay extra for energy efficient features if they would add to the initial cost of the unit but would save the resident money over time in the form of lower costs for utilities. Residents were given 8 options and were also asked to make suggestions of their own. The top two energy efficient features that residents indicated they would be willing to pay extra for in their units are programmable thermostats and dual flush toilets. Results for this question are shown in Figure 16.

Figure 16

Other energy efficient features suggested by respondents included:

- better insulation for heat & sound;
- geothermal heating;
- water collection barrels;
- a concrete slab for passive heating;
- heat recovery ventilators,
- ceiling fans;
- garburators;
- better hot water tanks;
- heated flooring.

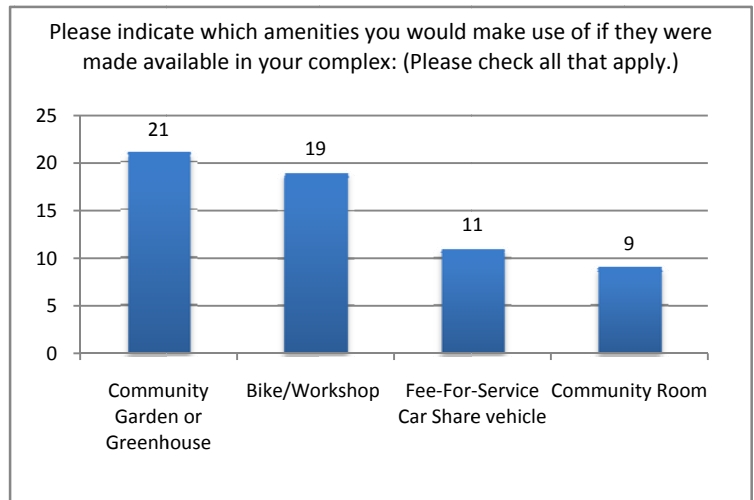


In terms of suggestions for future resident housing developments, the most common concern was whether or not paying for energy efficient upgrades would increase the resale value of the unit. 3 respondents suggested that they would be unwilling to pay for upgrades since they did not plan on staying in their unit long enough for the savings from energy use to offset the new costs. The fact that the most popular options are also the cheapest is perhaps a reflection of residents' unwillingness to pay extra for energy efficient features. 2 respondents also suggested it would be better to give residents options for their individual units when they are being built.

Figure 17

PROJECT AMENITIES

Residents were given a selection of potential amenities and were asked which, if any, they would make use of if they were present in their development. Respondents were also invited to make suggestions for other amenities they would make use of if they were available to them. Results for this question are shown in Figure 17.



Other suggestions for community amenities made by respondents include:

- a gym;
- an outdoor tap (for washing bikes and vehicles, watering plants, etc.);
- a compost facility.

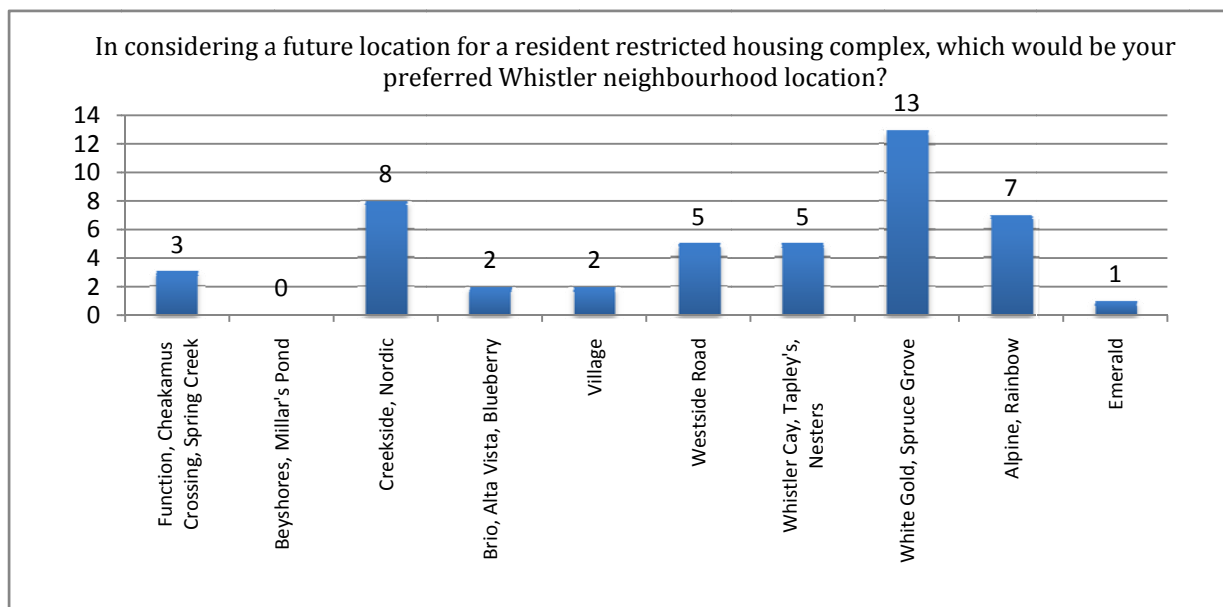
CONSIDERATIONS FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

In order to shed some light on which areas in Whistler are most desirable to live in, residents were asked:

“In considering a future location for a resident restricted housing complex, which would be your preferred Whistler neighborhood location?”

White Gold / Spruce Grove was the most popular location for a future resident housing development.

Figure 18



WHY RESIDENT RESTRICTED HOUSING?

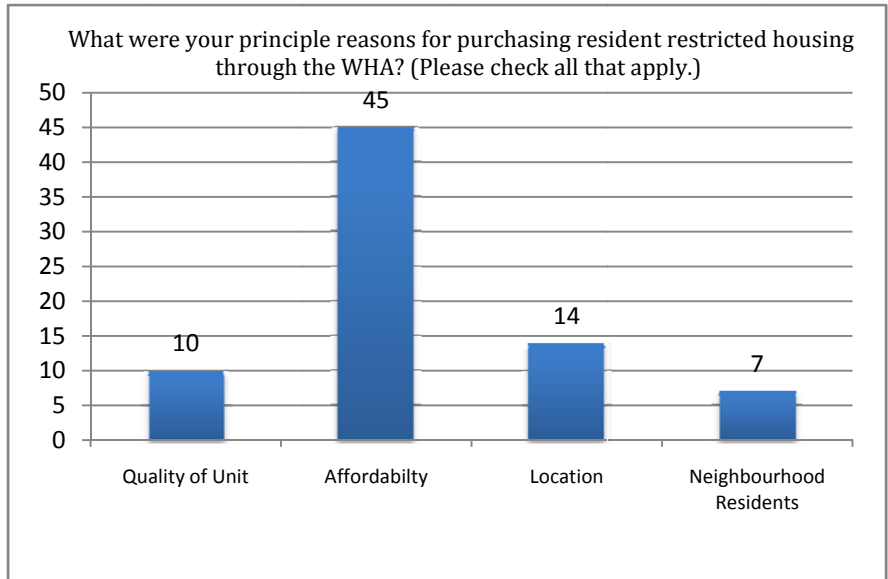
Two questions were posed on the survey to try to determine the respondents' motivation for purchasing resident restricted housing through the WHA rather than on the open market.

Residents were asked:

Figure 19

“What were your principle reasons for purchasing resident restricted housing through the WHA?”

Respondents were given 4 choices and invited to offer any reasons of their own. By far, the most commonly cited reason was for affordability. One respondent also cited ‘Low risk/very low return investment’ as a reason for purchasing through the WHA.

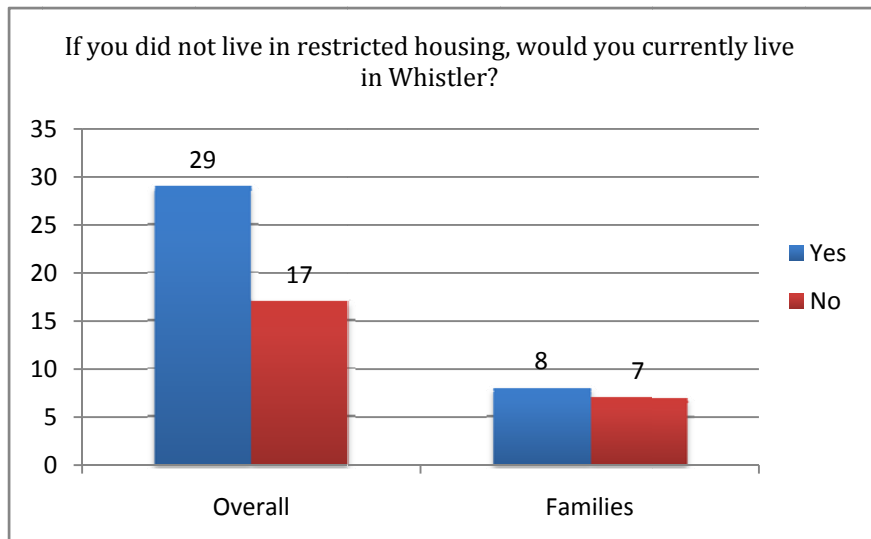


The second question asked to determine respondents’ motivation for purchasing resident restricted housing was:

“If you did not live in restricted housing, would you currently live in Whistler?”

Property prices are extremely high in Whistler and the resident housing program provides long term residents who wish to purchase homes in Whistler with an opportunity to more affordably do so rather than having to perhaps move away to buy property. Being able to stay in Whistler is a major reason why many people purchase homes through the WHA.

Figure 20



The final question asked residents:

“How long do you intend to continue living in Whistler? If you are planning to leave Whistler to reside elsewhere, what are your reasons for leaving Whistler?”

- 33 respondents answered that they planned on being here indefinitely;
- 1 said 15 years;
- 2 said 10 years;
- 6 said 5 years;
- 1 said 1 year;
- 4 said unsure.

High cost of living was most commonly cited as a likely reason respondents may choose to move elsewhere. Other reasons mentioned include the high cost of daycare, the loss of community feeling, that Whistler is becoming ‘too corporate’ and the availability of reasonably well paying jobs.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

At the end of the survey, residents were given the opportunity to make additional comments . 25 respondents took the opportunity to do so. Although the comments were quite diverse, several themes emerged from the suggestions.

1. Need for stronger strata bylaw enforcement, specifically in regards to dogs, landscaping, streetlights, and parking.
 - Suggestion that WHA provide a handbook to educate strata councils on regulations and/or create an “ombudsman-type” role to act as a mediator for neighborhood issues.
2. Improvements for future resident housing developments:
 - more options for unit features and furnishings;
 - find ways to allow sweat equity;
 - design ‘greener’ neighborhoods, with higher energy efficiency standards and features such as compost facilities.
3. Future housing occupants
 - Suggested that allowing residents who currently own market property in Whistler to purchase units in resident restricted developments defeats the purpose of the program and that the WHA should continue to sell exclusively to those who could not otherwise afford to live in Whistler.

4. Finally, several respondents took the opportunity to commend the WHA for the work it does:
 - appreciation expressed on the WHA's attention to details such as green space and garages that significantly contribute to the livability of residences; and
 - appreciation for the work the WHA does in addressing the issue of affordable, quality housing in Whistler.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to capture first-hand perspectives from owners living in resident restricted housing. Through these occupants' perspectives the WHA sought to identify aspects of the housing developments that worked well or those that could be improved upon in the future for new resident housing developments. The survey results highlight several themes that should be considered when planning and designing future resident housing projects. Specifically, providing options for more unit flexibility, energy efficient features, and family specific project attributes. Also, parking is an issue that may require further consultation with future occupants of resident housing to find the acceptable balance.

This study was not intended to be comprehensive over the entire resident restricted ownership inventory, but rather provide a snapshot of perspectives from residents who have occupied their residences in the last 2 years. Each resident housing development builds upon lessons learned from earlier housing projects and the results of this survey will help to provide further insights as the Whistler Housing Authority looks to continually evolve the resident housing program into the future.

Owner's from the following Resident Restricted Housing Projects participated in the Post Occupancy Evaluation Survey:

- Nita Lake
- The Lofts
- Lakecrest
- Millar's Ridge
- Spruce Grove
- 19 Mile Creek
- Bear Ridge
- Gondola Six
- Glacier Ridge

WHA Post Occupancy Evaluation Survey

1. Please fill in the following information:

Address:

Square footage of unit:

Number of Bedrooms:

Number of Occupants:

Age of each of the occupants (separate each age with a comma):

2. Overall Layout of Unit:

Recognizing that your unit has been built to its maximum allowable size, do you feel that the layout of your unit optimizes its maximum allowable square footage? Yes No

If no, how would you recommend changing the layout or reconfiguring the size of individual rooms, while not changing the overall size of the entire unit

3. Storage (ie. storage rooms and cabinets & closets in kitchen, bathroom, bedrooms):

Do you feel that there is suitable storage in your unit? Yes No

If no, how would you recommend improving the storage in your unit (remembering that the total sq. ft. of the unit cannot be increased)?

4. Sound Insulation of Unit:

Do you feel that there is sufficient sound insulation from the unit(s) adjacent to your unit? Yes No

If no, in which rooms of your unit do you hear the most noise from adjacent units?

5. Brightness of Unit:

Is there sufficient natural daylight in your unit as a result of adequate window size, placement, and unit orientation? Yes No

If no, what would you recommend changing?

6. Energy Efficient Features:

Energy efficient household features could be added to your unit that would reduce energy and water consumption and operating expenses of your unit. These features would cost an additional upfront cost but would save you money over time. Please select any features that you would have been willing to pay for: (Please check all that apply.)

- Programmable thermostats (approx. \$60)
- Quiet Dual Flush Toilets (approx. \$100 premium)
- Occupancy Sensors for lighting (approx. \$50)
- Energy Star Low E triple pane glass windows (approx. \$1200 premium)
- Quiet, Energy Star certified bathroom fans (approx. \$75 premium)
- Energy Star certified kitchen appliances and washer & dryer (approx. \$2500 premium)
- Solar assisted hot water (approx. \$7000)

Other recommended features for energy and water conservation and additional cost willing to pay for the features:

7. Parking Space:

Are the following adequate and sufficient?

Parking for your unit: Yes No

Visitor parking within complex: Yes No

If no, what would you recommend changing? (For example, would you rather see more paved area in your complex to provide additional parking).

8. Would you prefer parking located directly in front of each unit or clustered on the periphery of your complex to allow for green space around the units and an enhanced pedestrian focus throughout your complex?

- Parking in front of unit
- Parking on the periphery of complex

Other, please specify:

9. Patio/Deck/Balcony Outdoor Space:

If your unit has a patio, deck, and/or balcony, are you satisfied with your private outdoor space? Yes No

If no, how might your outdoor space be improved?

10. Would you prefer your own green space adjacent to your unit instead of a patio or deck for your own gardening and landscaping?

Yes No

11. Is there an adequate mix of common space and private space in your complex? Yes No

12. Please indicate which amenities you would make use of if they were made available in your complex: (Please check all that apply.)

- Fee-for-service car share vehicle
- Community garden or greenhouse
- Work/Bike Shop
- Community Room
- Other

13. Please rate the following features of your complex:

Use: Good Satisfactory Unsatisfactory Poor Not Applicable

- ____ Lighting of common space (i.e. walkways, parking)
- ____ Amount of green space throughout complex
- ____ Garbage and recycling shed facilities and placement
- ____ Playground area

14. Please rank the features which you like most about your unit/complex and that you feel contribute to the overall livability of your unit and complex: (1 = Most Important, 15 = Least Important)

- ____ Kitchen space
- ____ Bedroom space

- ____ Living room space
- ____ Storage
- ____ Decks/patio/balcony
- ____ Energy efficiency of unit
- ____ Sound insulation of unit
- ____ Unit parking
- ____ Visitor parking
- ____ Personal garden/green space
- ____ Shared greenhouse/garden space for complex
- ____ Children's playground
- ____ Shared community room
- ____ Natural light within unit
- ____ Other

15. In considering a future location for a resident restricted housing complex, which would be your preferred Whistler neighbourhood location?

- Function, Cheakamus Crossing, Spring Creek
- Bayshores, Millar's Pond
- Creekside, Nordic
- Brio, Alta Vista, Blueberry
- Village
- Westside Road
- Whistler Cay, Tapleys, Nesters
- White Gold, Spruce Grove
- Alpine, Rainbow
- Emerald

16. Please rank the following housing location considerations in order of their importance to you. (1 = Most Important, 6 = Least Important)

Proximity and access to:

- ____ Daily needs (school, shopping, daycare, etc)
- ____ Parkland/trails/recreation
- ____ Place of work

- ____ Access to transit routes
- ____ Solar Orientation
- ____ Other

17. What were your principle reasons for purchasing resident restricted housing through the WHA? (Please check all that apply.)

- Quality of Unit
- Affordability
- Location
- Neighbourhood Residents
- Other, please specify.

18. If you did not live in restricted housing, would you currently live in Whistler? Yes No

19. How long do you intend to continue living in Whistler? If you are planning to leave Whistler to reside elsewhere, what are your reasons for leaving Whistler?

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. If you have any additional suggestions or comments for improving the overall liveability of your resident restricted unit and your resident housing complex, please share your thoughts with us.