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THE RESORT MUNICIPALITY OF WHISTLER  
OFFICIAL COMMUNITY PLAN

1.0 PURPOSE

This Community Plan is a statement of policy to guide the development of the Resort Municipality of Whistler. It takes into account the municipality's capacities and limitations for development.

This plan is based upon a review of the research work and plan drafts of: the Planning Services Division of the Department of Municipal Affairs, the Select Committees of the Municipal Council, the submissions of the Whistler Development Association, the transcripts of Whistler Council public hearings concerning zoning and ski resort planning, as well as various government and consultants' reports concerning geo-technical analysis, community services, and highway capacity.

The plan, on the basis of this material, lists ten development objectives and sets policies by which the Municipal Council can achieve them. The plan goes on to present short range and long range plan summary statements and a detailed schedule of land use categories with a plan map -- Schedule A. The plan concludes with a note on implementation. A reference map -- Schedule B -- indicating areas of special sensitivity requiring special investigations prior to any development is appended.

This plan is not a final document -- no plan is final. The plan does indicate the best direction of growth for the Municipality based on the information available at this date. The Municipal Council, through a process of review and amendment, will maintain the Community Plan as an up-to-date policy statement reflecting the latest technical information and community needs.

2.0 STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLE AND OVERALL GOAL

The general principle of this plan is that:

Recreation is recognized as the  
Resort Municipality of Whistler's  
prime resource;

and the overall goal is that:

The Community Plan should  
provide for the best use of  
this resource for the most  
people at the least cost.

Costs here include social, environmental and dollar  
costs to both the local community and the province.

3.0 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 To protect and enhance the natural environment of the Resort Municipality of Whistler.
- 3.2 To provide for the year-round recreational needs of residents and visitors.
- 3.3 To provide a stable year-round economy for the valley.
- 3.4 To encourage commercial and residential facilities ancillary to recreational activity up to but not exceeding a level suitable to serve the recreational resource.
- 3.5 To ensure that development in the municipality preserves the view and is in keeping with the natural landscape.
- 3.6 To limit the development of the recreation resource and the provision of ancillary services to a level which will not overload the access highway and rail link.
- 3.7 To provide a transportation system for the efficient movement of people and goods within the municipality and between the municipality and other parts of the province.
- 3.8 To provide for the health and safety of residents and visitors.
- 3.9 To encourage private investment in the development of recreational and ancillary facilities.
- 3.10 To minimize the dollar cost of community services.

4.0 POLICIES TO ACHIEVE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES

4.1 Policies to protect and enhance the natural environment of the Resort Municipality of Whistler.

*use of  
sensitive  
areas  
restricted*

4.1.1 Areas of extreme ecological sensitivity are to be identified. Disruptive or damaging uses should in general be banned from them. In specific cases that require intrusion into such areas in pursuit of the main goal of the plan (i.e.; recreational development), such intrusion should take place only after an impact study has been completed and a remedial plan devised to minimize on-site and off-site damage.

*impact  
studies  
required  
prior to  
development*

4.1.2 The potential impact of proposed development projects on the natural landscape and habitat of the Resort Municipality should be assessed prior to approval or implementation of these projects to determine if any unnecessary or irreparable damage to the physical environment would be caused.

*sewage and  
garbage  
disposal  
facilities  
required*

4.1.3 Pollution of the land, water and atmosphere are to be avoided by the provision of adequate sewage and garbage disposal facilities. Commercial and higher density residential development should be permitted only in sewered areas.

*reforestation  
and  
reclamation  
projects*

4.1.4 Private land owners and public agencies should be encouraged to undertake reforestation and reclamation projects to maintain and improve the visual attractiveness of the landscape.

4.2 Policies to provide for the year-round recreation needs of residents and visitors.

*camping facilities promoted*

4.2.1 The Municipality should promote the establishment of camping facilities at appropriate locations for vehicle campers and trail campers.

*year-round facilities promoted*

4.2.2 The Municipality should actively promote the development of convention, cultural, and educational facilities, attractive to summer uses but designed and located so as to function for winter use.

*waterfront and trail dedications encouraged*

4.2.3 Private owners should be encouraged to dedicate waterfront and trail rights-of-way through various incentive programs such as land tax reductions, user fees, or additional development rights.

4.3 Policies to provide a stable year-round economy for the valley.

*camping facilities promoted*

4.3.1 See 4.2.1 above.

*year-round facilities promoted*

4.3.2 See 4.2.2 above.

*Crown land to be made available for development*

4.3.3 Crown lands that meet the objectives of the community plan should be made available for development on meeting the same conditions and regulatory by-laws as apply to private lands.

*resort uses encouraged*

4.3.4 Uses contributory to the functioning of Whistler Municipality as a resort should be encouraged through incentives such as: the reservation of central sites for such uses and attractive land use contracts for such uses.

*improved  
balance  
between  
public and  
private  
accommodation  
sought*

4.3.5 Accommodation for public use (hostels, hotels, short term rental units) should be encouraged to lead to a more equal split between public and private accommodation so as to minimize fluctuations in the use of facilities -- both on a weekend/mid-week basis and a summer/winter basis.

4.4 Policies to encourage commercial and residential facilities ancillary to recreational activity up to but not exceeding a level suitable to serve the recreation resource.

*range of  
accommodation  
types sought*

4.4.1 A range of accommodation types is to be encouraged related to the needs of the residents of and visitors to the Whistler area.

*development  
limited by  
ski facility  
capacities*

4.4.2 Zoning and land use contracts should be restricted so as to provide residential and commercial facilities ancillary to the recreation resource, only up to the capacity of the skiing facilities as developed in the short and long term period, that is to serve 11,500 skiers and associated population in the short term (1976 - 1986) and 18,000 skiers and associated population in the longer term. Associated population is not expected to exceed 25% of the skier population but should be re-estimated as development proceeds.

4.5 Policies to ensure that development in the municipality preserves the view and is in keeping with the natural landscape.

*design of  
development  
to be in  
harmony  
with  
landscape*

4.5.1 The design of buildings, signs, roads, services and other man-made features is to be of high aesthetic quality and to be in harmony with the special character and landscape of the Whistler Mountain Area.

*development  
above  
2400 foot  
contour  
restricted*

4.5.2 No residential or commercial development should, in general, be permitted above the 2400 foot contour except commercial development directly connected with the operation of lift facilities. This general policy could be relaxed to permit development up to the 2600 foot contour if the development is not visible from the valley floor.

*design  
control  
panel to  
be created*

4.5.3 Council should assign the function of advisory design control to the Advisory Planning Commission to review proposed developments in terms of appearance, exterior finishes and visual impact. The recommendations of this committee should be forwarded to council for information prior to approving land use contracts and zoning by-law amendments.

4.6 Policies to limit development of the recreation resource and the provision of ancillary services to a level which will not overload the access highway and rail link.

*development  
limited by  
transportation  
systems*

4.6.1 Zoning and land use contracts should be restricted so as to provide residential and commercial facilities ancillary to the recreation resources only up to the capacity of the transportation systems entering the valley. This capacity should be calculated from time to time on the basis of traffic congestion, changing patterns of travel, and scheduled improvements to the railroad and Highway 99.

4.7 Policies to provide a transportation system for the efficient movement of people and goods within the municipality and between the municipality and other parts of the province.

*development  
to minimize  
winter  
vehicular  
traffic*

4.7.1 Community development should proceed in such a way as to minimize the need for winter vehicular traffic. In conjunction with this, public transportation should be encouraged between major areas of growth.

*safe and  
efficient  
access to  
be developed*

4.7.2 A system of highways, streets and pedestrian ways is to be integrated with the development pattern to provide safe and efficient access to all parts of the community while conserving and enhancing its natural and man-made features.

*Highway 99  
to be  
improved  
within the  
municipality*

4.7.3 Highway 99 will continue as the Provincial Highway route through the municipality serving both as the community's main arterial and main link with other communities to the south and north. Within the municipality the highway should be improved and maintained as an attractive roadway in keeping with the character of a resort. Development should be kept well back from the present highway in anticipation of future development.

4.8 Policies to provide for the health and safety of residents and visitors.

*use of  
land with  
high water  
table  
regulated*

4.8.1 The use of land subject to high water-table and poor surface-drainage conditions should generally be limited to non urban uses such as golf courses or campgrounds, providing all sewage disposal and water supply requirements can be satisfied. In the event that urban development be required on such land in pursuit of the main goal of the plan, the degree of limitation due to the high water-table should be determined and corrective works recommended. If the limitations are too severe to be effectively corrected, the general ban on urban development should apply. (See Schedule B, appended.)

*use of  
land on  
flood  
plains  
regulated*

4.8.2 As a general rule, no building should be allowed on lands subject to flooding as defined by this description:

- (a) within 50 feet of the natural boundary of a lake; or
- (b) within 100 feet of the natural boundary of Green River, Fitzsimmons Creek, and Cheakamus River; or
- (c) within 50 feet of the natural boundary of any other watercourse not mentioned in the preceding clause; or
- (d) on ground surface less than 2 feet above the 200 year flood level where this level can be determined, or if not, less than 10 feet above the natural boundary of a lake, Fitzsimmons Creek, Green River and Cheakamus River and 5 feet above any other water course,

without a review by the Water Investigation Branch to determine the threat level and recommend corrective works. If the Branch finds the limitations too severe to be effectively corrected, the general ban on building should apply. (See Schedule B, appended.)

*structures  
barred from  
avalanche  
areas*

4.8.3 No buildings or structures should be permitted in areas subject to landslide or avalanche hazards.

*community  
services  
to be  
provided*

4.8.4 An adequate level of all community services and facilities is to be provided at each stage of community development, including police and fire protection, public health facilities, a water supply and distribution facility, sanitary sewerage, roads and pedestrian ways, schools, parks and refuse disposal.

- sanitary  
sewer  
connection  
compulsory* 4.8.5 When sanitary sewer service is extended to an area of development in the community, all existing buildings in the area should be compelled to connect to the sewer system.
- existing  
water  
systems  
to be  
used* 4.8.6 The supply and distribution of water within the Resort Municipality should be provided for by the existing water systems. However, investigations should be carried out to examine the feasibility and desirability of inter-connecting some or all of these existing separate systems to provide an improved level of water service, particularly with respect to firefighting requirements. The possibility of developing in the long term future a single water supply and distribution system based on one central source of water should also be considered.
- areas of  
aesthetic  
and  
recreational  
value  
accessible* 4.8.7 All possible steps should be taken to ensure that areas of special aesthetic and recreational value within the community are accessible for the public's use and enjoyment.
- compatible  
pattern of  
development  
required* 4.8.8 The community should develop in a pattern of compatible uses.
- 4.9 Policies to encourage private investments in the development of recreational and ancillary facilities.
- ample supply  
of develop-  
ment land  
ensured* 4.9.1 The municipality should work to ensure an ample supply of suitable development land to meet the needs at each development stage by encouraging the Crown to introduce suitable Crown lands onto the market, and by expediting land use contracts and/or rezonings for development on public or private lands in accord with the policies of this plan.

*recreational resources to be promoted* 4.9.2 The municipality should cooperate with the province and Chamber of Commerce to promote the winter and summer recreational resources of the valley.

4.10 Policies to minimize the cost of community services.

*sprawl to be avoided* 4.10.1 The community should develop in a pattern so as to avoid the expenditure of public and private capital in premature or scattered development.

*staging of and payments for servicing* 4.10.2 Future community development should proceed in relation to the staged installations of community sewer and water services. Such services should be installed in a development at the cost of the developer.

*compact development encouraged* 4.10.3 Compact development should be encouraged in order to minimize the cost of services such as sewer and snow removal. Such encouragement could take the form of favourable zoning and land use contracts for compact developments in locations in keeping with this plan. Compact development would also be encouraged by the levying -- whenever possible -- of servicing rates on a frontage rather than parcel basis.

5.0 SHORT TERM PERSPECTIVE

In the Short Term (1976 - 1986) the slopes of Whistler and Blackcomb Mountains could be developed to a carrying capacity of 11,500 skiers per day. This capacity would be reflected in a total municipal day population -- including residents and visitors -- of 14,500 persons. It should be noted that this capacity is in excess of the present Highway 99 capacity, but the difference is small enough that improvements on the highway and changes in the travelling habits of skiers will probably remove the significance of the highway as a limiting factor in Whistler growth in the short term.

The overall goal of this plan is to provide for the best use of the municipality's recreational resources for the most people at the least cost. Cost is to be determined in social, environmental and dollar terms. The various studies of Whistler have agreed that the way to do this is to make the valley an attractive week-round, year-round resort. To achieve this end, certain conditions must be met. First, the facilities to attract the resort clientele must be built -- the plan should encourage such development. Second, the facilities must be located in such a pattern that they are convenient and pleasant to use. The experience at other ski resorts has been that convenience comes from the proximity of all facilities close to the ski slopes. This plan therefore favours the development of the Gondola Area -- to the limited capacities of that lift -- and the creation of a new Town Centre within easy walking distance of the Whistler Northside and Blackcomb Mountains.

As of January, 1976, Whistler Resort Municipality had developed about 6,736 beds.\* The day-visitor component of the 14,500 day-population figure given above is estimated to be about 3,800 people, leaving a maximum overnight population of somewhat less than 11,000 people. The calculation of the actual bed requirements of this population is complex. The important consideration is this: existing beds and beds which could be provided in units built on vacant lots in existing subdivisions

\* Based on a calculation allowing two beds per hotel room, four beds per condominium unit and six beds per detached unit.

(there are some 690 such vacant lots but not all are buildable) will take a large portion of future growth -- over 10,000 beds might be provided this way. The additional beds left for allocation are very limited, and if they are to be used to stimulate the development of better lift-oriented resort facilities, they will have to be directed to the Town Centre and Gondola Areas. Furthermore, a substantial proportion of the beds should be available as rental beds. In this way mid-week "package-plan" skiers will be attracted and present weekend day skiers -- who cannot afford to own or rent a chalet or condominium by the season -- can become overnights. This will not only decrease the severity of highway congestion thereby enabling increased skiers to get to the area, but will increase the stability of local businesses. The present "second home" nature of the majority of Whistler accommodation can only work against the development of a strong local tourist-service industry and against the development of good commercial services for "second home" owners themselves.

Therefore, in the Short Term the plan provides for the favouring of compact development of a resort variety at the Gondola Area and the Town Centre area. Development at both centres should be in keeping with the recreation capacity of the adjacent ski slopes. Sprawl development throughout the valley is not to be encouraged.

6.0 LONG TERM PERSPECTIVE

In the Long Term, development around the Town Centre will continue. The Gondola Area will probably have been built to capacity during the Short Term period. The Town Centre growth will continue to press for a higher proportion of rental accommodation to private accommodation.

At the time of drafting of this plan an ultimate capacity of 18,000 skiers is envisioned for the valley. This would result in a total day-population of some 24,000 persons. This population may shift upward with the development of strong commercial facilities and non-ski recreational potential in the valley.

In the Long Term the capacities of Highway 99 could pose a barrier to growth. On the other hand, changing travel habits by skiers and additional overnight facilities in the municipality could alter the significance of the present low capacity of the Highway. If such changes do not occur, the ski slope capacity would not be met.

7.0 SCHEDULE OF LAND USE CATEGORIES

7.1 General

All lands in the municipality are assigned to land use categories in accord with their development suitabilities and the objectives of this community plan. Descriptions of each category and policies for development within lands of each category are detailed in section 7.3 of this plan. These are the land use categories of the plan:

Current Residential  
Potential Residential  
  
Town Centre  
Gondola Area  
Current Commercial  
Service Commercial  
Industrial  
  
Recreational Reserve  
  
Rural Resource

7.2 The Plan Map -- Schedule A

In Schedule A of the plan the land area of the Resort Municipality of Whistler is divided by reference to these land use categories. Schedule A is the Plan Map for this community plan.

7.3 Detailed Descriptions and Policies for Each Land Use Category

7.3.1 Current Residential

Land that is currently subdivided into small building lots or is otherwise committed for residential development is designated on the Plan Map as a CURRENT RESIDENTIAL area. Infilling within these established areas is to be encouraged provided that individual building sites are physically suitable for housing purposes.

All subdivided but undeveloped lots designated as CURRENT RESIDENTIAL should be developed for detached housing except where lands are subject to the terms of an existing Land Use Contract that has legal effect at the time a building permit is requested or where adjacent lands have been developed for higher-density attached housing.

7.3.2 Potential Residential

Lands not yet subdivided but that appear generally suitable for accommodation purposes are designated as POTENTIAL RESIDENTIAL areas on the Plan Map. Some of these lands may be developed for housing in the future depending on one or more of the following factors:

- (a) the expansion of ski slope capacity beyond the 11,500 skiers per day level provided for by the present Official Community Plan policies;
- (b) the number, sale price and availability for purchase of buildable lots within the CURRENT RESIDENTIAL areas;
- (c) the need for housing to accommodate employees and their families who work in resource industries or the service sector of the local Whistler community;
- (d) the economics of providing sewer and water services;
- (e) the development of specific site suitability for residential development as determined by more detailed on-site examinations;
- (f) changes in accommodation projection and allocation.

7.3.3 Local Commercial Services

In or adjacent to areas designated CURRENT RESIDENTIAL, local commercial services, such as a grocery store or laundromat, may be permitted provided that the commercial service in question is intended to serve primarily the residents of the immediately surrounding area and is of a scale and appearance that is compatible with a residential area.

7.3.4 Town Centre

Centrally located lands within the Resort Municipality are designated on the Plan Map as the TOWN CENTRE. It is intended that the TOWN CENTRE be developed as the focal point of the Municipality, enhancing its overall sense of community. The CENTRE will provide residents and visitors with a full range of accommodation, commercial and entertainment facilities and administrative services.

The design of the TOWN CENTRE should reflect a compact, pedestrian-oriented form and will facilitate the easy movement of skiers between the Blackcomb/Whistler ski slopes and the accommodation/commercial facilities within the CENTRE. At the same time, the TOWN CENTRE should provide for the personal shopping and public services required by local residents of Whistler.

Until such a time as the TOWN CENTRE project is commenced, the GONDOLA AREA will be the first development priority. When the TOWN CENTRE project is announced, the TOWN CENTRE will become the first development priority and the GONDOLA AREA will become the second priority.

Until a development proposal is submitted zoning for the area shall provide for existing uses only.

7.3.5 Gondola Area

Lands contiguous to the existing Gondola ski lift at the base of Whistler Mountain and which are substantially developed for residential, visitor accommodation and commercial facilities are designated on the Plan Map as the GONDOLA AREA. It is intended that both existing and future development within the GONDOLA AREA serve primarily the accommodation and commercial services needs of visitors who ski on Whistler Mountain. It is intended that the GONDOLA AREA provide facilities in scale with the local ski lift capacity and accommodation facilities within the area itself.

Existing accommodation and commercial facilities within the GONDOLA AREA may undergo limited expansion, but the timing and scale of such expansion should not be detrimental to the development of services and facilities within the TOWN CENTRE. Similarly, infilling of the GONDOLA AREA with new facilities to serve the short term visitor will be encouraged, provided that such development would not significantly detract from the establishment of the TOWN CENTRE.

7.3.6 Current Commercial

Lands currently developed for visitor accommodation or restaurant purposes other than those within the GONDOLA AREA are designated on the Plan Map as CURRENT COMMERCIAL. These existing commercial facilities can undergo expansion only if they do not detract from the establishment of the TOWN CENTRE and GONDOLA AREA.

Existing commercial facilities designated CURRENT COMMERCIAL should be zoned as conforming uses.

7.3.7 Service Commercial and Industrial

To provide for the anticipated service commercial and light industrial needs of the Resort Municipality, lands are designated on the Plan Map as SERVICE COMMERCIAL and INDUSTRIAL adjacent to the existing railway.

The lands intended for SERVICE COMMERCIAL and INDUSTRIAL development should be designated on the basis that they can be economically serviced with sanitary sewers and will not produce any adverse environmental impact, in addition to reasons of convenient rail and road access and existing commercial-industrial uses.

7.3.8 Recreational Reserve

Lands intended to provide year-round recreation opportunities and scenic enjoyment for visitors and local residents are designated RECREATIONAL RESERVE on the Plan Map. In addition to these RECREATIONAL RESERVE lands, there may be need to set aside other smaller sites to meet the local park and playground requirements of the community as its permanent population grows in size.

7.3.9 Rural Resource

Lands that for reasons of physical limitations, the overall pattern of development proposed in this plan, or the staging of this plan are not to be intensively developed at this time -- and in some cases at no foreseeable time -- are designated RURAL RESOURCE on the Plan Map.

These lands may be used for a limited range of activities including:

- outdoor recreation, such as ski runs and lifts, golf courses, campgrounds and riding stables;

- the extraction of forestry and mineral resources provided that such extraction is carried out in an acceptable aesthetic environmental manner;
- single family housing units on large parcels of land;
- temporary housing related to resource development of management operations, such as forest fire protection;
- agriculture.

However, any building development or alteration of the landscape within RURAL RESOURCE areas should be conditional on the provision of adequate water and sewage disposal services and on the physical environment being left in its natural state to the maximum extent possible.

8.0 IMPLEMENTATION

8.1 Plan Authority

Pursuant to Section 698 of the Municipal Act, the Council cannot enact any provision or undertake any works contrary to or at variance with the objectives, general policies and development area policies of this Official Community Plan.

8.2 Development Regulations

8.2.1 Zoning

The use of land within the Resort Municipality should be regulated by means of a zoning by-law where appropriate, or by land use contracts, which shall provide for the achievement and implementation of the aims and policies of the Official Community Plan.

In general, land use contracts are to be used only when specifically required at which time a Development Area By-law should be considered by Council. However, Development Area By-laws should be considered by Council -- at the time of revising the Zoning By-law -- for the immediate areas of the Town Centre and Gondola Areas.

8.2.2 Subdivision

The division of land within the Resort Municipality should be regulated by means of a subdivision control by-law which would provide for the achievement and implementation of the aims and policies of the Official Community Plan.

8.2.3 Other Regulations

The use of land and buildings within the Resort Municipality should be further regulated through the enactment of a Building By-law, Sign Control By-law, Soil Removal By-law and other appropriate regulatory by-laws, and these regulations should conform to the objectives and policies of the Official Community Plan.

8.3 Plan Review

The Official Community Plan should be reviewed and amended as necessary and reviewed in total once every five years so that it is maintained as an up-to-date policy document for development within the Resort Municipality of Whistler.