



A Growing Town

Decisions on the type, location and pace of growth shape our community and have far reaching environmental, social and financial implications.

While unrestrained growth can lead to sprawl, the idea of Smart Growth aims to guide development in a way that makes efficient use of a limited land base, enhances quality of life, preserves nature, and saves money over time. It recognizes the key connection between land use and quality of life.

The growth of our community also impacts the Squamish Lillooet Region and our growth goals will need to align with the goals of the Regional Growth Strategy (also being updated in 2016).

Current Trends

- **A limited land base.** Squamish's beautiful rivers and mountains have a big impact on growth.

Less than a third of our land base is potentially developable due to floodplains, steep slopes, environmentally sensitive and protected areas and agricultural lands.

This means densifying our existing neighbourhoods is essential to accommodate new growth.

- **Unprecedented growth.** Vancouver's housing market has created a strong demand in Squamish which is driving significant development and growth. We are now expected to exceed previous growth projections that estimated a doubling of the 2006 population to 33,100 by 2031.
- **Development of new areas.** Recent hotspots include residential developments on the fringe as well as multi-unit infill:
 - » The addition of Quest University has introduced new housing above the upper reach of the Mamquam River, much of which is yet to be built.
 - » New subdivisions have increased the supply of single detached homes in upper Valleycliffe and next to Brennan Park.
 - » Townhome, condo development and small lot residential infill continues in and around Downtown.
 - » Development of vacant and underutilized lands in the District's Business Park is accelerating, partially thanks to incentives aimed at encouraging local economic activity and attracting new business.
 - » The Squamish Oceanfront development recently received approval and will revitalize our waterfront and downtown core over the next 20 years.

What does the current OCP say?

The current OCP uses a Smart Growth approach to land management. The 5 core elements include:

- 1. Compact Urban Form:** focus growth in the Downtown, existing neighbourhoods and new areas next to the existing urban area.
- 2. Protected Areas, Ecological Greenways and Waterways:** Protect and connect sensitive natural areas and ecosystems while providing outdoor recreation opportunities where appropriate.
- 3. Greenways, Commuter & Recreational Trails:** Greenways and trails connect all of Squamish and provide an alternative to car travel.
- 4. Downtown First:** The Downtown and surrounding waterfront is the heart of the community and economic, institutional and cultural centre.
- 5. Mixed-use Neighbourhood Nodes:** A series of complete neighbourhoods throughout urban Squamish where people can gather and do daily activities without relying on a car.

The current OCP also identifies areas for future growth that will require detailed Sub-Area Plans. Several large, undeveloped District-owned lots have also been reserved for future growth after our population reaches 22,500.

Challenges

Being a fast growing community is not without challenges. Aging infrastructure presents significant financial challenges for growth while high demand for housing is raising home prices well beyond affordability.

While our growth management policies have been mainly successful at directing growth in the right areas, Squamish continues to see traditional single family homes being developed along the edges of the urban area. While such developments are highly desirable and an important part of Squamish, they are less affordable and less efficient than higher density options like townhouses.

Also, Squamish does not have an urban containment boundary - these are often used to identify outer areas that will only be developed after all urban space is maximized to ensure that future generations have the opportunity to manage growth sustainably.

Our last Growth Management Strategy was completed in 2005 and is due for a fresh evaluation.

Opportunities

The high demand for housing combined with Squamish's natural assets and quality of life presents a very rare opportunity to make our community's vision a reality.

It is an opportunity to build the type of housing we need, create new jobs, activate our waterfront, build trails, playgrounds, parks, and community facilities and amenities while ensuring that new developments are more efficient than ever before.

For More Information

- Squamish [Growth Management Strategy](#) (2005)
- Current [Official Community Plan](#) (2009)
- Smart Growth BC: www.smartgrowth.bc.ca
- Squamish Oceanfront Development Proposal & Sub-Area Plan: www.squamishoceanfront.com

Current Initiatives

Oceanfront Development: The District recently signed a phased development agreement with a development partnership to allow a mixed-use development of the Squamish oceanfront lands in accordance with the Oceanfront Sub-Area Plan:

www.squamishoceanfront.com

