



Healthy & Learning Community

A healthy community is one where all residents - regardless of age or ability - have a high quality of life and can truly thrive. Plans and policies at the District level affect our individual and community health, which is shaped by social, economic and environmental factors.

Promoting community health and equity is at the heart of this OCP and involves:

- Creating well-planned built environments that support healthy choices and behaviors.
- Ensuring basic needs are met such as nutrition, affordable housing, liveable wages, and public health and safety.
- Providing essential social support to create an inclusive and welcoming community including opportunities for continual learning, creative expression and community engagement.

Current Trends: Health

- **High self-rated health.** Squamish residents report high levels of general health and community belonging and low levels of chronic illnesses. However, self-reported levels of binge drinking are higher.

- **A car-dependent community.** Squamish is highly dependent on private vehicles with 80% of commuters driving to work or school every day.
- **A highly active community.** Despite the high percentage of people who drive to get around, Squamish residents reported high levels of activity (62% get the recommended 150+ minutes of weekly physical activity) and low levels of obesity.
- **Income inequality.** Despite a relatively high median household income (\$72,751), this is not distributed equally across the community. The median income for lone-parent families in Squamish is below provincial and national levels and over one-third of lone-parent families are below the poverty level.
- **Unaffordable shelter costs.** In 2011, 36% of Squamish residents spent more than 30% of their total household income on shelter - 6% higher than the BC average.
- **Emergency shelter stays are increasing,** from 118 in 2011/2012 to 288 in 2013/2014 to 339 in 2014/2015.
- **Early childhood vulnerability.** For children 5 and younger, Squamish continues to show high and increasing overall vulnerability in key physical, social, emotional, cognitive and communications measures.

Current Trends: Education

- **A range of education options.** School District 48 operates 5 elementary schools, 1 middle school and 1 high school. New programs at Stawamus Elementary (2015) place a focus on First Nations culture and heritage with outdoor multi-generational learning.

Several local independent schools provide additional education options including French immersion, Waldorf and Montessori schools, outdoor school, and vocational training.

Quest University and Capilano University provide a range of local post-secondary opportunities.

- **Increasing levels of education.** Almost 55% of the school-aged population has a post-secondary education, up 4.5% from 2006 and slightly above the national average.

What does the current OCP say?

The current OCP has a limited focus on health and well-being as well as education and lifelong learning. Existing policies aim to:

- Work cooperatively with School District 48 to plan for schools, parks and joint-use facilities to accommodate future growth in existing and future neighbourhoods.
- Continue to support post-secondary and community education facilities and encourage shared venues.
- Retain and attract new institutional uses Downtown.
- Work with Vancouver Coastal Health, School District 48, various agencies, non-profits and private service providers to identify and address social needs in Squamish.
- Recognize the importance of parks, natural open spaces, recreation, cultural and artistic events to enhance quality of life and overall well-being.

Challenges & Opportunities

While health and education services are provided by the Province and local health authorities, the District of Squamish and local community organizations play an important role in influencing local health and learning outcomes. The updated OCP will adopt a 'health lens' to address important local issues such as:

- Addressing local unaffordability by prioritizing a range of housing options for all residents, improving provision/access to emergency shelters, assisted living and rental housing.
- Adopting age-friendly policies to account for the unique needs of young children, families and seniors including access to affordable housing and childcare and a focus on early childhood development.
- Strengthening healthy neighbourhood design by improving connectivity and walkability, providing compact and complete communities, and improving access to healthy foods and local amenities and services.
- Exploring the use of a health impact assessment tool in land use and transportation planning, development review and municipal decision making.
- Leveraging partnerships in health and education to expand/co-locate facilities and programs.
- Expand opportunities for youth engagement and involvement in civic activities.

For More Information

- [Squamish Health Profile](#) (2014)
- [Squamish Vital Signs Report](#) (2014)
- [My Health My Community: Squamish Health Profile](#) (2015)

Current Initiatives

Healthy Communities Collaboration: The District has a [collaborative agreement](#) with Vancouver Coastal Health to work on key areas to improve local health.

Children's Charter: Squamish is developing a Children's Charter and incorporating child and family friendly policies in the new OCP.

Safe and Healthy Transportation: Through the Safe Routes to School program (HASTe BC) and [Active Transportation Plan](#) (currently underway), the District is working to improve safety and convenience for pedestrians and cyclists.