



District of Squamish  
PO Box 310  
Squamish, BC, V8B 0A3

August 3, 2017

**Re: 2040 Official Community Plan – Growth Management**

Dear Mayor and Council,

The Squamish Chamber of Commerce would like to commend the efforts of staff, officials and community partners in producing the draft 2040 Official Community Plan (OCP). We recognize the complex nature of creating such a plan and applaud the creative strategies used in recent community engagement. We would also like to thank staff for their collaboration in hosting a Chamber feedback session, which was valued by our members and helped the Chamber understand the sentiment of our membership.

As the voice of business, the Squamish Chamber has been reviewing the 2040 Official Community Plan, with a specific interest in economic and business development opportunities. It is our intention to provide feedback on a number of areas. With regard to this letter, we would like to provide specific feedback on one area: Growth Management.

The OCP Growth Management Policy Guide suggested three potential options, as summarized below:

1. Infill Priority (Status Quo)  
Wait to approve development of Future Residential Neighbourhood lands until Squamish population reaches 22,500. Make good use of remaining capacity in existing neighbourhoods, vacant and underutilized lands, and major growth areas.
2. Infill Priority Plus  
Wait to approve development of Future Residential Neighbourhood lands until Squamish population reaches 34,000. Make good use of remaining capacity in existing neighbourhoods, vacant and underutilized lands, and substantially build out major growth areas (Oceanfront, Waterfront Landing, and University Lands).
3. Limited Peripheral Expansion  
Allow for some limited development in a small portion of Future Residential Neighbourhoods next to existing developed neighbourhoods where significant community benefits can be achieved.  
Substantially increase the population threshold and make good use of remaining capacity in existing neighbourhoods, vacant and underutilized lands, and major growth areas before expanding into any other surrounding lands.

The Squamish Chamber has reviewed the above three options and while we understand the principles of densification and the desire to manage growth, we have concerns regarding the impact of the above options on employment lands and wildlife habitat. Squamish needs a thriving economy, one where residents can both live and work. Supply of employment lands is constrained. To a large extent, they are best suited in the valley bottom. Wildlife corridors and green spaces in the valley bottom are also essential to maintain our natural environment and manage wildlife-human contact.

Further, Squamish's unique geology creates restrictions on the type of housing suitable for development in many of the areas identified in the above options. Flood hazard zones are not suitable for ground-level homes, which can be more appealing for the elderly population. There is also a risk of creating an artificial lack of supply of single family homes, which will impact the affordability for residents who desire this type of property. Growth management should incorporate the ability to develop a diverse range of accommodation, including one-level homes and single family homes.

Infrastructure costs are a legitimate concern. However, flood protection is also infrastructure which must be paid for by municipal and provincial taxpayers and ratepayers, including businesses.

The Squamish Chamber would like to suggest a fourth option, which removes the population cap and is not specific to District Lot numbers, existing or future residential neighbourhoods. This recommendation is not intended to undermine growth management but rather ensure the long term sustainability of our community by alleviating pressure on employment lands, protecting wildlife habitat and creating a diverse range of accommodation which meets the needs of all our residents.

The Chamber endorses a strict set of criteria to assess potential developments, including connection to existing infrastructure, community benefits and impact on community assets and ratepayers. The sub area plan process for new subdivision developments provides opportunity for rigorous assessment.

In recent months, the Squamish Chamber has been approached by a number of developers and we are deliberating our own set of evaluation criteria, which will incorporate a number of factors, including the impact on economic development (e.g. Local Supplier Policies) and options for affordable housing.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss our suggested "fourth option" and evaluation criteria with the District's planning department.

Sincerely,



Louise Walker  
Executive Director, Squamish Chamber of Commerce