

Squamish 2000 Plan

2003
Update



Draft

Aplin & Martin Consultants Ltd.

Hotson Bakker Architects

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District of Squamish
Comprehensive Downtown Development Strategy

Squamish 2000 Plan - 2003 Update

Downtown Development Strategy

Contents

1.0	Introduction - Squamish 2000 Plan: 2003 Update	1
1.1	Events and Implications since 2000	1
1.1.1	2010 Winter Olympics	1
1.1.2	Sea to Sky University	3
1.1.3	Outdoor Recreation Capital of Canada	4
1.1.4	Sea to Sky Highway Upgrade	4
1.1.5	Residential Real Estate Market	5
1.1.6	Population Growth	6
1.1.7	Highway Commercial Development	7
1.1.8	Downtown Retail Activity	8
1.1.9	BC Rail / Royal Hudson	9
1.1.10	Summary	10
2.0	Actions Taken Since 2000	11
2.1	Adoption in Principle of the Squamish 2000 Plan	11
2.2	Artisan Village Zoning	11
2.3	Parking Standard Reduction	11
2.4	New Gateway / Welcome Boulevard	11
2.5	Construction of New / Upgrade Existing Sea Dykes	11
2.6	Actions Summary	11
3.0	Precinct Design Guidelines	12
3.1	Precinct One - The Gateway	12
3.2	Precinct Two - The Core	12
3.3	Precinct Three - The Channel	13
3.4	Precinct Four - Loggers Lane	13
3.5	Precinct Five - Central Park	13
3.6	Precinct Six - The Artisan Village	13
3.7	Precinct Seven - Downtown West	14
3.8	Other Areas	14
4.0	Action Plan	15
4.1	2003 Action Plan Priorities	15
4.1.1	Downtown Development	15
4.1.2	Downtown Retail Sustainability	16
4.1.3	Downtown Residential	16
4.1.4	Community Wide	16

List of Figures

1	Precinct Plan	2
2	House Prices	5

List of Tables

1	Residential Units Constructed	5
2	Downtown Issues and Precincts Affected	10

1.0 Introduction

Since completion of the **Squamish 2000 Plan** several of the main issues facing both downtown Squamish and the region have changed. The most significant is the decision to award the 2010 Winter Olympics to Vancouver-Whistler. There has also been much activity in the residential real estate market recently and a renewed interest in various types of development in the downtown. The Sea to Sky University is now proceeding. These potentially very beneficial opportunities have occurred during a three-year period when the Royal Hudson rail service was cancelled, the municipal population growth stalled, and considerable retail development has occurred outside of the downtown.

The implications of these various issues are complex. Accordingly, long-term strategies to guide the development of downtown Squamish into a thriving and vibrant town centre that is attractive to both residents and visitors must be reviewed, and if necessary adapted.

The **Squamish 2000 Plan: 2003 Update** provides a current commentary on the factors affecting the downtown and actions taken by the District of Squamish since 2000. The update identifies potential implications on the downtown development strategy and updated Guidelines and Action Items. The **Squamish 2000 Plan** should be consulted for further detailed information on the comprehensive development strategy that is the subject of the **2003 Update**.

1.1 Events & Implications since 2000

Issues affecting the downtown and the District of Squamish as a whole that have emerged since the original **Squamish 2000 Plan** was completed have been identified. The potential implications and opportunities of each on the downtown have been assessed, specifically to the precinct level. Figure 1 presents for reference the Precinct Plan, which is a key element to the **Squamish 2000 Plan**. Accordingly, in later sections appropriate local government policies and actions with regards to the downtown have been identified.

The identified changes since completion of the **Squamish 2000 Plan** and associated implications are:

- β 2010 Winter Olympics;
- β Sea to Sky University;
- β Outdoor Recreation Capital of Canada;
- β Sea to Sky Highway Upgrade;
- β Residential Real Estate Market;
- β Population Growth;
- β Highway Commercial Development;
- β Downtown Retail Activity; and
- β BC Rail / Royal Hudson.

1.1.1 2010 Winter Olympics

On July 2, 2003 the International Olympic Committee selected the Vancouver-Whistler bid to host the 2010 Olympic Winter Games. The Olympics will occur in February 2010 in venues in Whistler, Vancouver, and Burnaby.

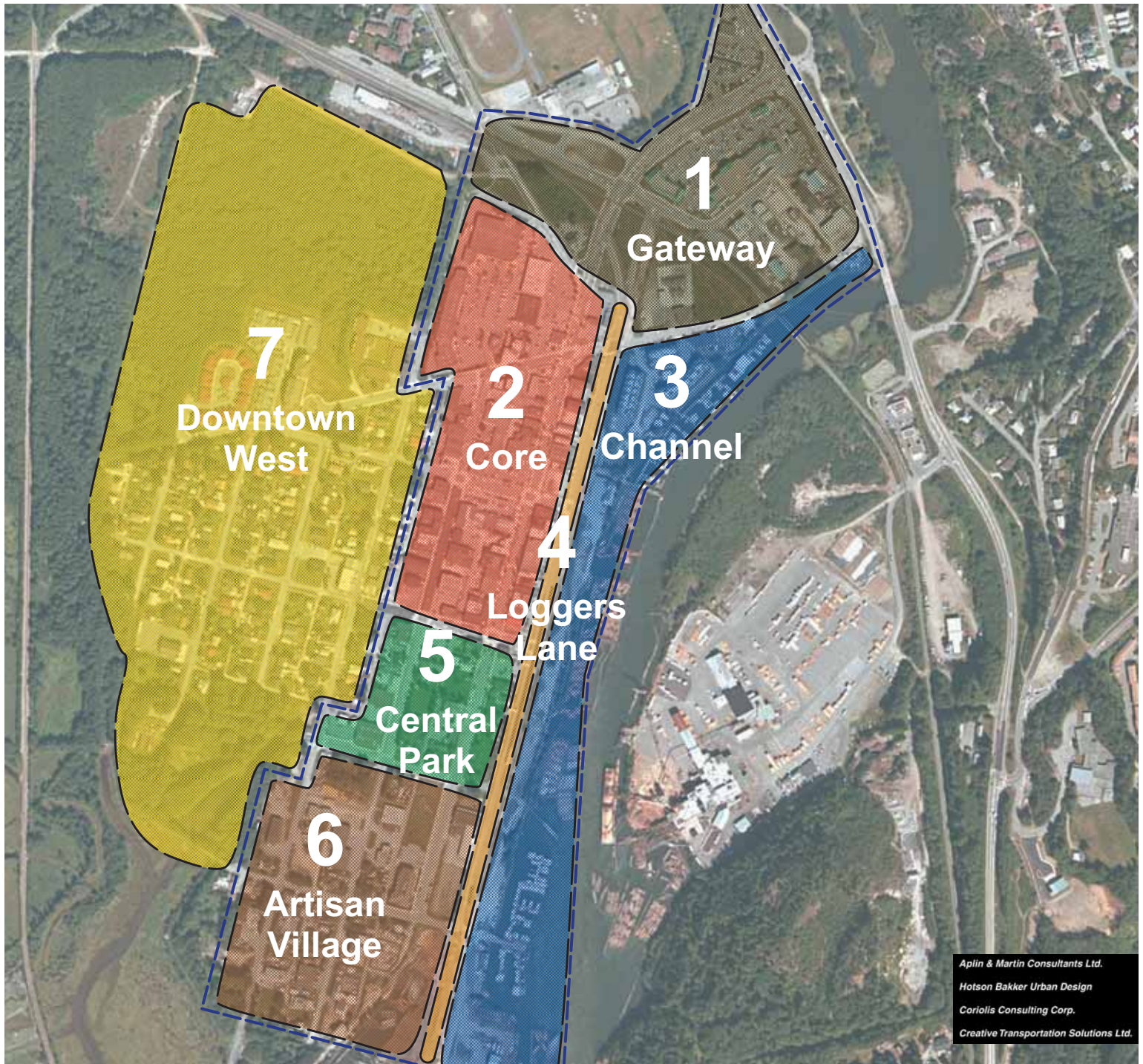
Implications and Opportunities

Given Squamish's location directly between the two host communities on the Sea to Sky Highway, and its promotion as the 'Heart of 2010', the potential short- and long-term benefits of this event to the community could be significant.

The **Squamish 2000 Plan** and **2003 Update** will be key parts of the planning framework to allow the community to take full advantage of this unique opportunity and at the same time successfully respond to the pressures that accompany a major event.

Effects on Squamish will include increased traffic between Vancouver and Whistler both during the Olympic Games as well as generally increased tourism to the Sea to Sky Corridor in the years before and after the Olympics. This will be an excellent opportunity to increase the profile of Squamish, benefit from increased tourism and associated development by attracting more visitors to the community, build enduring legacies, and foster the community's civic pride.

The Olympics is also a focus for promotion of Squamish's 'Outdoor Recreation Capital of Canada' theme, which takes advantage of the community's



Precinct Plan

Figure 1

unique culture, natural setting and attributes. During the Olympics, Squamish can offer accommodation to visitors attending events at Whistler venues, provide training activities for participating athletes, act as an alternative to the expected crowds at Whistler during the Olympics, and offer tourist attractions of its own. It is important that downtown Squamish is the centre of Olympic focus in Squamish.

The Sea to Sky University has signed a letter of intent with the 2010 Olympic Winter Bid Corporation to offer the university campus facilities for use during the Olympics. Details of such arrangements have yet to be finalized, however there is the opportunity to provide accommodations for athletes and others, and possibly act as a media and / or security centre of the Whistler portion of the Olympics.

The Olympics will potentially stimulate demand for a range of housing types in both the downtown and the rest of Squamish. New demand will also increase land values, market values and rents and development costs. This growth could have both positive and negative impacts. There is the need to shape development to value and build on Squamish's unique character. Increased tourism and development of hotels and other services will provide positive implications for nearly the entire community, particularly the downtown precincts with retail and commercial facilities and services. It is important that the momentum for the development offered by the Olympics is actively captivated in downtown Squamish, as opposed to passively awaiting benefits for the community from the Olympics.

Partially because of the prospects of the Olympics and other positive trends for Squamish, momentum has been generated over the past few months in new developments and manifested in varied interest in the downtown, including a possible new hotel and convention centre, residential and mixed-use development, new businesses, and a waterfront walkway. The Olympics will also be an impetus for a passenger ferry terminal in Squamish, as included in the Vancouver-Whistler Olympic Bid. The District of Squamish must be sure to fully capitalize on the potential benefits presented by the 2010 Winter Olympics.

1.1.2 Sea to Sky University

The new Sea to Sky University is to be built in Squamish to meet a targeted opening in 2005. This university is to be located northeast of downtown in the Garibaldi Highlands neighbourhood and will include associated residential development and a commercial component.

Implications and Opportunities

The District believes the Sea to Sky University will have positive impacts on both the downtown and the rest of the community. As it will not be located in the downtown, the social and economic benefits of the university to downtown Squamish will need to be actively promoted and developed.

The proposed ultimate size of the university will include 1,200 students (400 in the first phase), a neighbourhood commercial centre, and various types of housing. The *Socio-Economic Impact of the Proposed Sea to Sky University Project in Squamish* report (2002) by Pierce Lefebvre Consulting, stated that with 400 students the university would create 75 direct full-time equivalent positions. Including direct, indirect, and induced jobs the university will provide for a total of 150 positions. The university with its full 1,200 capacity student body will create 239 direct full time positions and a total of 362 positions when including direct, indirect, and induced jobs.

The new university will also include, as permitted by an Official Community Plan and Zoning Bylaw amendment, up to 1,500 student and faculty housing units and up to 960 market-housing units of various types and densities. The OCP also allows for up to 2,787 m² / 30,000 sq. ft. of 'Neighbourhood Commercial Use' and 'Neighbourhood Pub Use' at the university. The Olympics is expected to accelerate the development of the university and 'university village' to both provide facilities during the Olympic Games and take advantage of the strong residential real estate market.

An increase in the population due to the new university, both students and those employed at the university, will stimulate economic activity and population diversity in the community. This is an opportunity for the town centre to benefit from an increase in the population of its catchment area and development and enlarged and diversified commercial sector. However, at the same time, the new university village will include local commercial development occupying up to 30,000

sq. ft. of commercial space (part of which may be a neighbourhood pub). This may draw some residents away from the downtown to shop at this new retail development. However, as it is intended to be a more locally oriented facility, the impact on downtown may not be that significant.

In the end, the economic benefit of the new university on the downtown will likely outweigh any economic detractions. As such, this will have positive implications for the Core precinct (2), including increased demand, increased building occupancy, and act as an incentive for new commercial development. Also, the residential section of downtown, Downtown West (7), will benefit from new residents moving to the community, in the form of increased demand for new housing. Sea to Sky University may also look to downtown for additional lands for market housing in the future. The social diversity created by the university will also have a positive impact on downtown, as well as positive exposure for Squamish generated as a result of promotion and awareness of the new university.

The downtown must take appropriate and strong actions to ensure that it is competitive and develops itself as a specialized destination for students and faculty and promotes itself as the heart of the community with a wide range of shops, services, and attractions.

1.1.3 Outdoor Recreation Capital of Canada

The District of Squamish promotes itself as the 'Outdoor Recreation Capital of Canada' in order to capitalize on the opportunities of its unique natural setting and many outdoor amenities. These attractions provide a strong draw for residents to benefit from an associated high quality of life in Squamish, as well as opportunities for development of tourism and recreation.

Implications and Opportunities

The continued promotion of Squamish as the 'Outdoor Recreation Capital of Canada' will further attract both residents and visitors to the many features of the area, including proximity to mountains and sea that allows for such activities as skiing, hiking, camping, mountain biking, boating, canoeing, fishing and adventure tours. The downtown can act as a starting point for those visiting the region for outdoor activities. By ensuring that the downtown has shops and amenities that cater to this market (i.e. tourist centre, outdoor recreational supply stores, tour operators), tourists will be sure to

visit downtown Squamish and reinforce the relevance of its role as both the social and economic heart of the community.

There is currently a proposal for a new ski resort in the area. The proposed Mt. Garibaldi resort in Squamish would aim to attract the Lower Mainland market and international travelers, bringing additional tourists to the area. The location of the mountain resort community north of Squamish could generate additional economic activity in the community and downtown Squamish. The combination of strong promotion of Squamish as the 'Outdoor Recreation Capital of Canada' and the development of further attractions in the region along this theme will attract further visitors and both benefit the general economy and invite further residential and commercial development to the area.

1.1.4 Sea to Sky Highway Upgrade

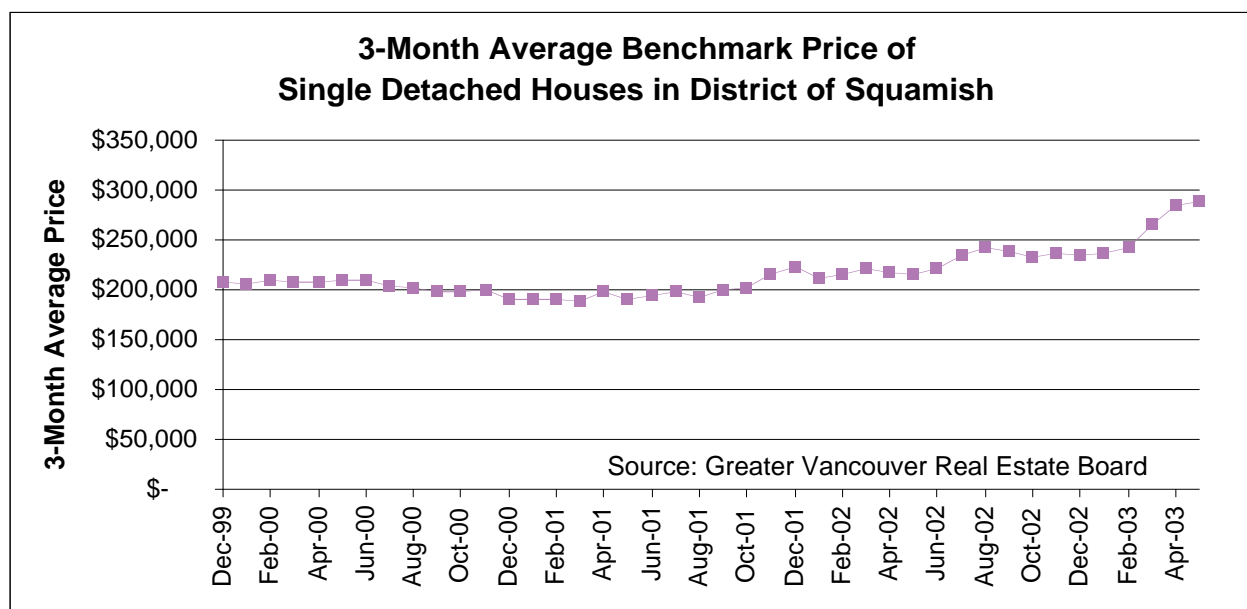
The Provincial Government is funding upgrades to the Sea to Sky Highway between Horseshoe Bay and Whistler. These highway improvements are meant to improve safety and reduce travel times when additional volumes are experienced. Improvements include increasing the number of lanes from two to three and four and new / upgraded intersections along the highway in Squamish.

In Squamish, the highway will be upgraded to two lanes both northbound and southbound with upgraded intersections at Cleveland Avenue, Industrial Way, Mamquam Road and Garibaldi Way. Improvements are to be completed over the next few years in advance of the 2010 Winter Olympics.

Implications and Opportunities

An upgrade in the Sea to Sky Highway will provide for a quicker and safer route to Whistler from Vancouver and increased traffic capacity through the Sea to Sky Corridor. This will provide increased opportunity for more visitors whose destination is Squamish, as well as those passing through on their way to other final destinations. Increased tourism to Squamish will provide for increased economic activity in the downtown and stimulate development. This will affect nearly the entire downtown.

The highway upgrade project also presents opportunities for improved access to downtown, including the possible future new Valleycliffe – Downtown Connector as part of the long-term (25

Figure 2 - House Prices**Table 1 - Residential Units Constructed**

Residential Units Constructed	2003*	2002	2001	2000	1999	1998	1997
Single Family Dwellings	12	20	12	23	9	17	31
Duplex	2	18	4	-	-	8	4
Multi-Unit Dwellings	50	33	20	30	-	7	78
Secondary Suites	5	4	2	11	13	-	-
Mobile Home	-	-	1	1	-	1	1
Total New Residential Units	69	75	39	65	22	33	114

Source: District of Squamish

* Jan to May 2003

years) transportation plan. This Connector would parallel the highway on the north end of the Mamquam Blind Channel (partially on existing industrial lands), cross the channel, turn to the west and connect with existing Pemberton Avenue. This would allow for easier access to the downtown and may alleviate traffic volume from the main intersection on the highway at Cleveland Avenue. Additional opportunities exist to define the entrance to downtown Squamish and improve access for transportation modes other than automobiles.

There is a possibility that with an improved highway to Vancouver, Squamish will increasingly be viewed as a commuter-based community for residents who work in Greater Vancouver. The District may wish to strive toward balancing commuter-based growth by attracting both residents and their jobs to the community to maximize economic and cultural development in the community.

1.1.5 Residential Real Estate Market

Despite the recent slight population decline measured by BC Stats, the residential real estate market in Squamish has more recently experienced significant increases in sales volumes and prices. As shown in Figure 2, according to the Real Estate Board of Greater Vancouver the 3-month average benchmark price for a detached home in Squamish has increased from approximately \$190,000 in early 2001 to approximate \$210,000 in early 2002 to \$288,600 in May 2003. See Table 1.

Information from British Columbia Assessment Authority shows a significant increase in Single Family Residential value assessment. Between the 2002 and 2003 total Single Family Residential assessments in Squamish increased from \$342 million to \$402 million and total Residential Strata assessments increased from \$35 million to \$42 million. These are increases

of 18% and 20% respectively. Since the total number of units assessed by BC Assessment Authority did not increase nearly as dramatically, this suggests that the increase in residential assessment in Squamish is due largely to increased housing prices, as supported by the residential sales prices from the Greater Vancouver Real Estate Board. In addition, land use classes other than residential, including industrial and commercial, have also experienced increases in assessed values.

As noted in Table 1, a review of building permits issued indicates that the number and value of total new development has fluctuated significantly over recent years. These trends generally follow the trends for the entire province of British Columbia over this period. New housing starts and average sale prices data would suggest that the residential real estate market started to improve in 2002. Activity for the first half of 2003 suggests that if it continues for the rest of the year the annual rate of new residential construction could be double that of 2002 and four times that of 2001. An increase in multiple residential developments is particularly noticeable.

Implications and Opportunities

Increased demand for housing of all types in Squamish (both for occupation and as investments) has meant a recent increase in activity and renewed interest in development and investment in Squamish. As new residents move to Squamish and the demand for housing stock increases, new residential development will be needed, including much in the downtown. Along with residential development will be commercial development to service the needs of residents.

The *Squamish Housing Analysis* report completed by Colliers International in April 2003 in support of the Sea to Sky University development, forecasts an undersupply of ground-oriented housing in the community because of a forecasted increase in population, reduced number of habitants per residential unit, and limited amount of developable areas. The report contends that unless new residential units are built, strong demand will further increase prices for both existing and new supplies of residential units. New residential developments, including the Sea to Sky University, will help to alleviate this problem. To ensure an adequate supply of raw land for new residential development, the District should ensure that there are adequate and appropriate lands designated for development.

Increased demand and higher prices should spur new housing development. The new dwelling units will likely be distributed both in the downtown and in the non-downtown areas. With regards to the downtown, most new residential development will likely occur in the Downtown West (7) precinct and to a lesser extent along the Channel (3) and Artisan Village (6) precincts. Such new downtown residential development will provide for more residents living within walking distance of the downtown, thereby increasing the shopping opportunities, activities, and vitality of the area. An expanded local service population in the downtown will lead to increased retail sales in the downtown and help bring about new commercial development and retail stores and generally strengthen the downtown. In addition, an increasing diversity of residents attracted to the Squamish 'downtown village' lifestyle affords an opportunity to develop a variety of housing types in the downtown.

1.1.6 Population Growth

The District of Squamish increased in population from 1986 to 1998 from 10,532 to 15,058. This provided for an average annual growth rate of about 3 percent. However, since then statistics from BC Stats indicates that the population declined to 14,927 by 2002. Despite these recent figures, the Squamish-Lillooet Regional District is growing faster than the provincial average and Squamish as the largest community in the Regional District is expected to experience a significant proportion of the region's growth.

Implications and Opportunities

Despite the recent slowed population growth rates, over the long-term the population is expected to increase to between 25,000 and 28,000 by 2019, or 66 to 68 percent. However, the flat growth over the past couple of years may extend the ultimate horizon beyond 2019 to reach forecasted levels. Conversely, factors such as the successful Olympic bid will likely significantly influence future growth. Growth rates are expected to increase over the medium and long-term as compared to recent experience for a number of reasons that include implications from the recent factors, changes, and events discussed in this update report:

- β Successful 2010 Winter Olympic bid,
- β Squamish's proximity to Vancouver and Whistler;

- β Upgrades to the Sea to Sky Highway;
- β Continued economic success in the Sea to Sky Corridor;
- β Limitations on future development in Whistler and Pemberton; and
- β Development of the Sea to Sky University.

A growing population, both in the District of Squamish and the Squamish-Lillooet Regional District surrounding Squamish, will provide more consumers to shop in downtown Squamish and generally increase opportunities for the downtown as the community's civic, economic, social and cultural heart.

The downtown precincts most affected by changing population are Downtown West (7) because of its housing stock and the Core (2) because of its retail and commercial function for Squamish. The **Squamish 2000 Plan** concluded that approximately 440 residential units were located in the downtown in 1999, and estimated that the number would grow to 1,425 in 2019. This growth would represent an increase of 985 units over twenty years (about 50 per year), more than tripling the number of homes in the downtown.

Most of this residential growth will be accommodated in the Downtown West (7) precinct; however, the Core (2) and Artisan Village (6) precincts can also accommodate some additional residential units. The Channel (3) and Loggers Lane (4) precincts will also be affected because of their close proximity to the downtown Core and the potential offered by the waterfront location on the Mamquam Blind Channel and views to Howe Sound and the surrounding mountains.

Population levels and general health of the economy affect development in these precincts. A growing population in the downtown and stronger economy provide for more spending by consumers and drives commercial growth and increases vitality. An increased downtown residential population is an important part of creating a vibrant downtown that offers varied activities

Regardless of the rate of population growth, every effort should be made by the District to implement as many of the action items identified in this report as possible. A faster growth rate and consequent pressures increases the urgency that proper actions be taken, plans made, and policies developed in anticipation of development and to ensure guidance is provided to the benefit of Squamish.

1.1.7 Highway Commercial Development

Over the past three years since completion of the **Squamish 2000 Plan** interest in retail development in Squamish along the highway outside of the downtown has been significant. Much of the proposed development has been for large format retail stores, which because of their size are not able to be readily located in the downtown. A 'Comprehensive Development Zone' (CD-19) has been created along Highway 99 at Mamquam Road and a 'Highway Commercial Zone' (C-9) created at Industrial Way.

These zones accommodate commercial developments in the form of large retail stores, restaurants and offices, and some apartments. A Canadian Tire retail store was built in 2002 on the Mamquam Road site and a Wal-Mart store is being considered for the Business Park frontage site. Furthermore, the District of Squamish has recently entered a conditional sales agreement with a developer for a factory outlet mall located adjacent to the proposed Wal-Mart site. This proposed retail development is for approximately 9,290 m² / 100,000 sq. ft. of retail space.

Rezoning from 'Rural 1' (R-1) and 'Commercial 2' (C-2) to 'Comprehensive Development Zone' (CD-19) has been approved for an approximately 5.5 ha (13.6 acres) site at Mamquam Road and Highway 99. This zoning provides for retail, cinema, and restaurant (combined maximum floor area 12,225 m² / 131,575 sq. ft. of which retail consists of approximately 1,207 m² / 13,000 sq. ft.), office space (maximum floor area 685 m² / 7,360 sq. ft.), and apartment development (maximum 55 dwellings) on the site. Part of Phase 1 of this project was partially completed in 2002; this includes a Canadian Tire retail store (2,900 m² / 31,216 sq. ft. retail area) and Legion. Completion of the first phase, with further retail, offices, and a cinema by a new developer is anticipated in the near future. A stand-alone Boston Pizza restaurant has also been approved but is yet to be constructed.

Rezoning to 'Specialized Highway Commercial Zone' (C-9) has been approved for approximately 7.2 hectares (17.7 acres) of District-owned lands in the Business Park on Highway 99 just north of Industrial Way. This zoning allows for such uses as hotels, indoor recreation, restaurants, and retail stores. The minimum gross floor area for a retail store is set at 2,788 m² / 30,000 sq. ft. Minimum lot size is 2 hectares (5 acres) with maximum lot coverage of 50%. A Wal-Mart retail

store has been proposed for this location. No final agreement has yet been reached, however, the Wal-Mart store is anticipated to be approximately 7,432 m² / 80,000 sq. ft. in size.

The Coriolis Consulting Corp. report *Estimate of Potential Multi-Family Residential and Commercial Growth in Downtown Squamish* (2000) indicated that based on the next 20 years the average annual new retail and service floor space development in Squamish will be 1,486 m² / 16,000 sq. ft. to 1,858 m² / 20,000 sq. ft., half of which will be in the downtown. At this rate, the new CD-19 development with a potential ultimate retail floor space (excluding restaurants and cinema) of approximately 4,107 m² / 44,216 sq. ft. represents a 2.5 year supply of total retail space in Squamish (5 years for the non-downtown supply). This development could accommodate about one-quarter of the 20-year supply of retail space outside of downtown within a relatively short time frame.

Similarly, the report estimated average annual new office space of 6,000 to 7,000 sq. ft., half of which would be in the downtown. The new CD-19 development would represent approximately a one-year supply of total new office space.

The C-9 zone factory outlet shopping centre and Wal-Mart could total approximately 16,722 m² / 180,000 sq. ft. of new retail space. Based on the Coriolis Consulting Corp. report this would represent approximately a 9-11 year supply of retail space (18-22 years of non-downtown supply). This is a significant amount of new retail space in a short time.

Implications and Opportunities

The provision of large format retailers outside of the downtown represents significant competition for the downtown. Given experience elsewhere (in other smaller communities) such development would likely draw economic activity from the downtown, particularly the Core precinct (2). Local downtown retailers will face increased competition from Wal-Mart and factory outlet stores. Increased competition of this type from outside of the downtown would reduce the number of shoppers and retailers in the downtown with an associated reduction in the amount of economic and social activity. This will mean a reduction in the demand for downtown retail space, reduced occupancy, and less new commercial development in the downtown. Vibrancy in the downtown would also be negatively impacted.

At the same time increased retail choices in Squamish may persuade fewer local consumers to travel to Vancouver to go shopping and keep more of the local residents' shopping dollars in the community. A factory outlet shopping centre and a Wal-Mart store would likely draw consumers from both the District of Squamish as well as neighbouring areas, namely Whistler. Although this would likely bring in additional economic activity to Squamish, it would not occur in the downtown for the most part.

Potential impacts from highway commercial development should be of concern to the District and the downtown business community. The downtown must find innovative ways to co-exist with these large format retailers that takes advantage of the regional draw of shoppers to Squamish; this could be achieved by offering complementing shops and services rather than trying to compete with large highway commercial developments in providing similar goods and services.

The downtown must be positioned to provide a unique shopping destination and enjoyable social and aesthetic experience. In the face of such highway retail competition, albeit from retailers that may offer different ranges of products, downtown retailers must promote the qualities of the downtown that are attractive to shoppers and ensure that the downtown competes with larger retailers on other factors than just price, such as character, variety, mix of retailers / services, and complementary opportunities in the downtown, such as overall civic experience, a unique social atmosphere, and aesthetic quality.

1.1.8 Downtown Retail Activity

The retail market in the Squamish Downtown Core (2) in the last few years has experienced a certain degree of decline. There has been little new development and many vacant storefronts exist. The lack of an anchor store and weak mix of retail has had a negative impact on the character of the downtown. This has been attributed largely to the generally poor local economy reflecting a broad downturn trend in the resource based economy and impacts experienced by similar communities.

It is anticipated that as the general economy improves, reflecting the development of the Sea to Sky University, upgraded highway, residential growth rate trends, and the 2010 Winter Olympics, there will be increased spending by residents and tourists and demand for new retail space will spur new downtown commercial

development. This will result in momentum to renew interest and growth in the downtown. Specifically, recent interest in development in the downtown includes planning applications for retail and residential buildings that could be the start of further revitalization that will attract new retailers. A wider mix of retail / commercial activity, including filling in currently vacant storefronts and lots and the inclusion of a larger anchor store will greatly benefit the downtown.

Implications and Opportunities

The District must be prepared for a renewed interest in development in the downtown. This includes implementing policies and guidelines that ensure both the appropriate type of development (residential / commercial mix, size and design of buildings, et cetera) occurs and that an appropriate amount of the development in the community occurs in the downtown instead of along the highway.

The downtown community, including retailers, property owners, and the municipality, must take steps to respond to the competitive pressures of the new larger retailers located outside the downtown. Further market research and discussion between the downtown stakeholders will lead to identifying a new role(s) and direction(s) for the downtown in order to attract more shoppers and development and ensure vibrancy. New roles for downtown could include:

- β Providing a wide range of smaller specialty 'niche' retailers and professional services;
- β Developing character features such as landscaping and streetscaping;
- β Organizing events and attractions (collaboration with the District, community agencies and associations, and business operators);
- β Catering to specific markets; and
- β Developing the role as the civic heart of the community, including gathering places, socio-cultural opportunities, et cetera.

Business owners should act with a united purpose and common voice to promote the downtown through a Business Improvement Association. The downtown should be promoted as complementary to highway retail, offering shops and activities not found in large format stores. New large format retail developments along the highway will draw in new consumers to the community; merchants in the downtown must ensure that visitors to Squamish also visit the downtown as part of their trip.

Attracting a new anchor retail store to the downtown will attract further development and attract more consumers. This could include a relatively large grocery or clothing store that attracts consumers who then shop at neighbouring stores as well. Once a critical mass of retailers exists in the downtown, with a strong economy, adequate numbers of consumers will be attracted to shop and spend in the downtown. Increased residential density will also strengthen downtown vibrancy and help achieve a critical mass of retail development.

1.1.9 BC Rail / Royal Hudson

The Royal Hudson rail line, managed by BC Rail, was recently cancelled and there are no immediate plans, be it by the Provincial Government or a private organization, to reactivate the service. It previously transported travelers from Vancouver to Squamish on day trips, providing a daily infusion of visitors. The train station in Squamish was located in the downtown and helped generate economic activity in the immediate area. Furthermore, there is additional uncertainty about the future of other BC Rail operations and lands in the area and their impact on the community.

Implications

Cancellation of the tourist rail service from Vancouver to downtown Squamish has meant a reduction in the number of pedestrian visitors to the downtown and an associated reduction in the number of purchases by these visitors at local shops and restaurants.

The precincts most directly affected are the Core (2), Loggers Lane (4), the Channel (3), Central Park (5), and the Artisan Village (6). These precincts include shops, restaurants, and attractions for visitors. Possible development for these precincts includes mixed-use (residential and commercial) and increased amenity areas along the Mamquam Blind Channel. A reduction in the number of visitors, be it from the train or from drivers traveling to Squamish or Whistler, potentially means a delay of such developments. It is hoped that this rail service can one day be reactivated to again benefit both the downtown and the community at large.

The potential should be explored for a variety of options to provide passenger rail service to downtown Squamish, including discussions with BC Rail and potential private tourist rail operators. However, if it is not reactivated, it is still important to create and strengthen a pedestrian link between the downtown and the waterfront along Loggers Lane and the Channel precincts. Pedestrians in the downtown Core could be led to the water if attractions, such as visual and amenity features (e.g. walkways, plaza features and public art) and appropriate developments are present.

1.1.10 Summary

The major events that have occurred over the past three years have been identified and their possible implications analyzed. These events will have various implications for individual precincts in the downtown. Table 2 lists the issues identified and the precincts that they most directly affect. As can be seen, all of the issues identified have major implications on the Core (2) precinct, while fewer issues directly affect other precincts. It is also important to consider and monitor downtown development as a whole; strategies and development in specific precincts impact the other precincts and the downtown as a whole. Similarly, it is important to remain mindful of the interdependence between social, economic, cultural, and residential factors in developing a vibrant downtown.

Table 2 - Downtown Issues and Precincts Affected

	Precincts Affected						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Identified Issues	Gateway	Core	Channel	Loggers Lane	Central Park	Artisan Village	Downtown West
2010 Winter Olympic Bid	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Sea to Sky University		X					X
Outdoor Recreation Capital of Canada	X	X			X	X	
Sea to Sky Highway Upgrade	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Residential Real Estate Market		X				X	X
Population Growth		X	X	X		X	X
Highway Commercial Development		X					
Royal Hudson		X	X	X	X	X	

2.0 Actions Taken Since 2000

Since completion of the **Squamish 2000 Plan** the District of Squamish Council and staff have carried out a number of the steps outlined in the Plan (Section 5.0 of the **Squamish 2000 Plan**). These are positive first steps towards promoting and guiding downtown Squamish into a pleasant, comfortable, successful, vibrant area with a mix of commercial and residential development for both residents and tourists.

The actions recommended in the **Squamish 2000 Plan** that have been implemented to date, either fully or in part, include:

2.1 Adoption in Principle of the Squamish 2000 Plan

On December 17, 2002 the District of Squamish Council adopted in principle the **Squamish 2000 Plan** and indicated desire to fulfill many of its recommended Action Items. Additionally, in February 2003 the District commissioned the **2003 Update** to the Plan.

2.2 Artisan Village Zoning

In late 2002 a new zone, 'Artisan Village' (C-10), was created to accommodate the Artisan Village precinct concept. In accordance with the **Squamish 2000 Plan** Administrative Action Plan (Section 5.1), this new zone provides for home occupation, retail, artisans, and other compatible uses in the same building. This zone will assist further artisan village development in the precinct. Additionally, the development of further specialized zones that allow for additional types of development that are appropriate for the character of the downtown should be investigated. Further guidance on development of the Artisan Village precinct is offered in Section 3.6 of the **2003 Update**.

2.3 Parking Standard Reduction

As listed as an Action Item in the **Squamish 2000 Plan** Parking Action Plan (Section 5.3), parking standards for residential and commercial development in the downtown were reduced in late 2000. This was also a priority Action Item in the **Squamish 2002 Plan** (Section 5.9). This change brought Squamish parking standards closer in line with those of other comparable municipalities.

2.4 New Gateway / Welcome Boulevard

In accordance with the **Squamish 2000 Plan** Public Works / Infrastructure Action Plan (Section 5.6), in 2001 a new welcome boulevard was constructed on Cleveland Avenue near Highway 99. This boulevard acts as a scenic entrance to the downtown and draws in traffic from the highway.

2.5 Construction of New / Upgrade Existing Sea Dykes

Recent development in the Artisan Village precinct has provided the opportunity to improve the Sea Dyke in the vicinity of Vancouver Street. This was a key element of the **Squamish 2000 Plan** Public Works / Infrastructure Action Plan (Section 5.6).

2.6 Actions Summary

Although these positive steps demonstrate the District's commitment to providing incentives to downtown development, as outlined in the **Squamish 2000 Plan** Incentives for Downtown Development (Section 5.10), there is much more to be done. The Guidelines and Action Items identified in the **Squamish 2000 Plan** (Sections 4 and 5, respectively) and **2003 Update** (Sections 3 and 4, respectively) must be pursued.

Although there is no specific timeline for accomplishing these actions, early implementation of recommended actions will better position Squamish to successfully take advantage of the significant possibilities identified for downtown Squamish, and at the same time successfully manage pressures associated with growth and development.

3.0 Precinct Design Guidelines

In the **Squamish 2000 Plan**, the Design Guidelines (Section 4) offered guidance within each of the precincts as to appropriate form and character of development. The Precinct Design Guidelines offered in this **2003 Update** highlight the implications of current issues and development discussed in the **2003 Update**. The Guidelines offered in this document (Section 3) supplement those of the **Squamish 2000 Plan**, and should be considered together. Figure 1 should be referred to in the following discussion.

3.1 Precinct One - The Gateway

The Gateway Precinct should create a sense of arrival, convey the importance of the downtown, and be a visually appealing welcome to both residents and visitors to Squamish. In 2001 a new welcome boulevard was constructed on Cleveland Avenue near Highway 99.

The upgrade to the Sea to Sky highway will mean widening of the highway through the community and additional intersections. This may include a future new Valleycliffe – Downtown Connector and upgraded Cleveland Avenue intersection. Whatever the details of the final plan, an upgrade to the highway and possible second access point to the downtown should be done in such a way that maintains both an attractive and easy access to the downtown for highway drivers.

Actions that can be taken by the District to further develop the link between the highway and the downtown include increased tree planting along the road and on the boulevard as well as other amenities, such as walkways, benches, and banners. These types of amenities provide for a comfortable setting and a positive character for the community as a whole. Furthermore, the District can promote street fronting retail along the entry way and a possible office / hotel / convention centre between the highway and downtown by zoning lands accordingly and attracting investment by promoting Squamish as an investment and tourism destination. With regards to the highway upgrade, the District should continue to work with the Provincial Ministry of Transportation to ensure that upgrades meet the needs of the community and provide for easy access to the downtown. It is also important that the pedestrian and trail connections to downtown be

explored. Additionally, the District should work with property owners to acquire lands necessary for a possible future Valleycliffe – Downtown Connector to assist in the timely provision of the connector.

3.2 Precinct Two - The Core

The Core of downtown is affected by all of the newly identified major events, trends, and opportunities facing Squamish. As such, it is important that further efforts continue to be taken to make the area appealing to commercial development and attract mixed-use development in the surroundings precincts.

Actions that can be taken by the District to assist the Core include:

- β Facilitate the formation of a Business Improvement Association (BIA);
- β Take strong efforts to promote Squamish as both an investment and a tourism destination;
- β Fully consider the impact of approving any new commercial development outside of the downtown;
- β Facilitate possibly joint ventures with other organizations for the creation of recreational / cultural facilities;
- β Ensure that planning policies support appropriate downtown development, such as appropriate zoning, adequate parking standards, reasonable Development Cost Charges, infrastructure and utilities, and effective processing of development applications; and
- β Promote increased residential density in the downtown.

All of these actions will create a positive development climate and attract appropriate development to the downtown, particularly on currently vacant lots.

The District should promote multi-storey buildings with retail on the ground floor and commercial and residential on the upper floor(s). A downtown design review panel could be created to review developments

and ensure that new buildings are appropriately designed for the area. New developments should strive for a continuous retail frontage and be built to high architectural standards. Developments should include a wide mix of retail and commercial uses, including possibly a hotel, art / cultural centre, and seniors activity centre on the north side of Pemberton Avenue. The District can provide further downtown pedestrian amenities such as landscaping and benches and encourage tenants to install outdoor cafes on street and promote street events throughout the year.

3.3 Precinct Three - The Channel

The Channel, where the east side of downtown meets the water, is an area of great opportunity for mixed-use development. This area could include further amenities and services along the water as well as expanded boat marinas. The District should also introduce new park areas along the water edge, including linear walkways and public spaces. These improvements would provide for more attractions and induce locals and visitors to explore the area on foot.

Actions that can be taken by the District are further consultation with other government agencies (Department of Fisheries and Oceans, BC Ministry of Water, Land, and Air Protection, BC Rail) with regards to allowing and attracting further development along the Channel, including along Loggers Lane. This should include working with landowners towards possible reconfiguration of lot sizes in the Loggers Lane and the Channel precincts. Creating deeper lots would be more attractive for development that is considered appropriate. The District's role in leading and facilitating regulatory approval for development of these lands will render private investment and development of the lands less risky and more attractive.

3.4 Precinct Four - Loggers Lane

Loggers Lane connects downtown with the Channel area. Development on and along Loggers Lane should be set to both face the channel and relate to pedestrians approaching from the Core. New and appropriate development would provide for improved visual amenities and connection to the Channel.

Cancellation of the Royal Hudson rail service and the associated visitors has unfortunately meant a reduction in the number of visitors and activities in the area and reduction in the incentive to develop the area. It is hoped that this rail service can be reactivated in the

future. Nevertheless, if this service is not reactivated, the area can be developed, in conjunction with the Channel precinct, in a way that takes advantage of its location between the downtown Core and the water. Development can include mixed-use buildings that fit with the character and celebrate the history of the area.

Actions that can be taken by the District are to work with the Provincial Government and / or a private sector company to help bring about the return of the Royal Hudson or some other tourist train service through Squamish. This would provide for a return of strong pedestrian tourism to the downtown. Furthermore, in conjunction with lands in the Channel precinct, property ownership patterns should be reconfigured in order to accommodate the various transportation uses in the area and make further development possible.

3.5 Precinct Five - Central Park

The District should continue with steps to make the Central Park precinct pedestrian friendly with plenty of amenities and landscaping. This includes appropriate public and institutional buildings in the precinct. Open space and views to the mountains and water should be maintained.

Actions that can be taken by the District are to continually invest in the development of the park while improving the quantity and quality of site amenities, such as landscaping, pedestrian walkways, benches, water fountains, et cetera. These amenities will further attract pedestrians to the precinct and shop in the neighbouring areas. The District should take any opportunity to acquire appropriate lands in the precinct for preservation or for development in the form of civic / institutional buildings. The District should also ensure that any development in the precinct, or in precincts immediately abutting the park, should be architecturally designed to complement the area and be built to high quality standards.

3.6 Precinct Six - The Artisan Village

Continued efforts should be made to develop the Artisan Village precinct in a way that provides for mixed-use development. 'Artisan Village Zone' (C-10) has been created to allow for such type of development. The area should have a strong arts and craft character and attract locals and visitors to explore the area on foot.

Actions that can be taken by the District are to zone, where appropriate, properties in the precinct to 'Artisan Village Zone' to accommodate further mixed-use development that is consistent with the desired character of the neighbourhood. This should include a variety of commercial / retail uses as well as residential. The District should promote street festivals and outdoor markets and related activities in the area. At the same time, efforts must be made to ensure that retail development in the area does not detract from retail activity in the Core. The Artisan Village should supplement the Core, not overshadow it.

The District should assess the details and implications of mixed-use development. In addition to the C-10 Zone which allows for mixing of uses on a vertical plane, the District should encourage mixing of uses on a horizontal plane. The District should be mindful of the limitations of the Artisan Village precinct's capacity for commercial uses and contemplate some developments in the precinct that are residential only. In some locations, increased density and height of buildings with residential uses may be considered as long as the overall human pedestrian scale of the Artisan Village precinct is maintained.

3.7 Precinct Seven - Downtown West

Further infill development and increased residential densities should be allowed for in the Downtown West precinct. Residential development in the Downtown West precinct is preferable, in so far as cultivating downtown vibrancy, to development in other existing neighbourhoods in Squamish. Downtown West residents are closer to the downtown, can walk to the downtown, are more likely to shop in the downtown and contribute to and appreciate downtown amenities. Residential development should be allowed up to four stories with underground parking or three stories above first level ground parking.

Actions that can be taken by the District to accommodate and promote residential development in the precinct are to zone the area to allow for increased densities of development thereby allowing for more people to live downtown. Also the District must properly plan for the future extension of roads northwardly. Development and any associated upgrading / east-west roads should also be considered in the context of a possible second access to downtown via the Valleycliffe – Downtown Connector.

3.8 Other Areas

In order to appropriately guide future development south of the downtown, preparation of a long-term plan / strategy for the BC Rail (Nexen Lands) industrial area would be essential to guide development through a possible eventual shift from industry to residential and commercial development and connect these significant lands to the downtown. Future land use strategies for the Nexen Lands should reflect and extend the vision of the ***Squamish 2000 Plan***.

4.0 Action Plan

The **Squamish 2000 Plan** Action Plan (Section 5.0) defines the overall implementation framework required to achieve the proposed Land Use Plan and Design Concept. It includes key Administrative, Technical and Financial strategies and decisions that must be undertaken over the 20 year planning horizon.

Action Plans covering specific key areas have also been established, including:

- β Administration
- β Land Acquisition
- β Parking
- β Open Spaces
- β Transportation
- β Public Works / Infrastructure
- β Funding / Finance
- β Marketing

Each Action Plan identifies key elements, responsibilities and financial implications associated with implementation.

The Action Plan in the **Squamish 2000 Plan** includes a proposed Priorities Action Plan (Section 5.9), which should be considered by the District for implementation in the short-term. These short-term actions will demonstrate to the community that the District and other key stakeholders and participants are serious about implementing the Plan, thereby ensuring the **Squamish 2000 Plan** and **2003 Update** become the practical blueprint and framework for change in the downtown, as the documents are intended to be.

A fast start to implementation, as guided by the Priority Actions defined in the **Squamish 2000 Plan** (Section 5.9), has been updated with priority actions in light of recent changes and issues affecting downtown development. To this end, the Action Plan proposes a list of recommended actions and strategies that are considered to be keys to creating a positive development climate in downtown Squamish.

4.1 2003 Action Plan Priorities

The **Squamish 2000 Plan** and the **2003 Update** recommend Action Items that range from relatively easy and inexpensive actions to those that are more complex and resource intensive. The District of Squamish should start with a number of actions

that require relatively few resources and can provide immediate important benefits to the downtown to initiate momentum in downtown development. More resource intensive actions can then follow. Recommended Action Items have been grouped into the following four categories:

- β Downtown Development
- β Downtown Retail Sustainability
- β Downtown Residential
- β Community Wide

Within each group of categories are important and beneficial actions that the District can take in the short-term.

4.1.1 Downtown Development

1. Encourage waterfront landowners to proceed with development along Loggers Lane and Channel precincts. Work with other government agencies to address relevant issues to help reduce the risk for developers.
2. Zone sites in the downtown appropriately for various types of development.
3. Facilitate possible joint ventures with other organizations for the creation of recreational / cultural facilities.
4. Create a design review process to ensure development in the downtown is to high standards, possibly including design review panel.
5. Further evaluate the Municipal Capital Infrastructure Plan as it relates to downtown infrastructure (including the Downtown West precinct) to ensure appropriate road / utility upgrades are in place to facilitate expansion of downtown to service identified opportunities, particularly development generated as a consequence of the 2010 Winter Olympics.
6. Evaluate current Development Cost Charges in the downtown to ensure rates are appropriate to the needs to upgrade infrastructure and at the same time encourage rather than discourage development. Specifically, consideration should be given to applying DCCs based on square footage of new residential units, rather than a flat fee per unit.
7. Review parking cash-in-lieu standards to ensure that they are appropriate and comparable to those in other similarly sized municipalities.

8. Consider special downtown levies to provide additional funds for special short-term projects / improvements to benefit the downtown. Funds could be raised either through a direct District involvement, or through a B.I.A. as the coordinating body working on behalf of the downtown property owners and merchants.

4.1.2 Downtown Retail Sustainability

1. Facilitate the creation of a Business Improvement Association (BIA) for the downtown.
2. Promote downtown street festivals. Help organize local business owners and associations to organize special events and street festivals in the downtown. Possibly offer grants.
3. Define and promote an appropriate mix of retail in the downtown. Encourage larger specialty retailer(s) to locate downtown and act as an anchor.
4. Facilitate downtown merchants in expanding and defining the feature role and function of downtown in Squamish in relation to the new Sea to Sky University, the 2010 Winter Olympics, new commuter-based residents, et cetera.
5. Promote downtown Squamish as the social heart of the community by ensuring that residents have many good reasons to visit the area.

4.1.3 Downtown Residential

1. Capitalize on the active residential real estate market by allowing for higher density development in Downtown West and promoting downtown residential development.
2. Review the Artisan Village mixed-use concept to ensure an appropriate mix and sustainable level of artisan commercial development and residential development.

4.1.4 Community Wide

1. Fully capitalize on the 2010 Winter Olympics by ensuring Squamish is properly promoted and organized for the event. This should include such things as a joint marketing strategy for the entire region, involvement in Olympic related activities such as transportation link to Whistler and athletic training grounds, and tourist accommodations and activities for visitors. Downtown Squamish should be the focal point for Squamish's involvement and contribution to the Olympic Games.

2. Market Squamish as an investment and tourist destination. Capitalize on Squamish's title as 'Outdoor Recreation Capital of Canada' by promoting the many outdoor activities available to both Canadian and international tourists. Work with Tourism Squamish.
3. Take strong efforts to promote Squamish as both an investment and a tourism destination.
4. Further develop relations with Canmore, Alberta to learn from their experience as a community situated between Calgary and Banff during the 1988 Winter Olympics. Use the experience of Canmore to help take full advantage of the 2010 Winter Olympics as a community located halfway between the two main venues.
5. Closely review any further commercial development proposals outside of the downtown and their impacts to ensure a balance of new retail in the community that does not compromise the downtown.
6. Re-evaluate the current population forecasts in light of the 2010 Winter Olympics being awarded to Vancouver-Whistler.
7. Work with the Ministry of Transportation to ensure that highway and intersection upgrades and possible new access point to the downtown provides for a convenient and pleasant welcome to the community.
8. Work with BC Rail and / or other parties to restore tourism rail service to Squamish.