

District of Squamish Age Friendly Community Plan



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Acknowledgments

The District of Squamish recognizes that Squamish is in the core unceded territory of Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw. We offer gratitude to the Skwxwú7mesh People who have lived on these lands since time immemorial, and we reassert our commitment to Truth and Reconciliation.

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- Under One Roof
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Introduction

What Is an “Age-Friendly Community”?

In 2007, the World Health Organization (WHO) published a qualitative study which collected the results of focus groups in thirty-three cities around the globe. The focus groups, made up of almost 1500 low- and middle-income seniors, and over 750 caregivers and service providers, were given eight topics for discussion:

- outdoor spaces and buildings
- transportation
- housing
- respect and social inclusion
- social participation
- civic participation and employment
- communication and information
- community support and health

These discussions led to a set of definitions and features of **age-friendly communities**.

“An age-friendly city adapts its structures and services to be accessible to and inclusive of older people with varying needs and capacities.”
WHO (2007, p. 1)

“An age-friendly community is set up to help seniors live safely, enjoy good health and stay involved.”
Public Health Agency of Canada (2025)

In age-friendly cities and communities, public spaces and policies ensure that all seniors

- are valued and protected
- can access necessary services when needed
- can form an active and welcome part of civic and social life.

An age-friendly community works well for older adults, but it also supports children, youth, and people with disabilities. The goals and objectives outlined in this plan should benefit the entire community.

What is a senior? For the purposes of this plan, we have generally considered seniors to be **65 years of age or older**. However, we recognize that supports and challenges change as people age and that older adults are a very diverse group.

How Does a Community Become “Age-Friendly”?

British Columbia’s *Becoming an age-friendly community: Local government guide*¹ outlines the steps that BC communities must take to become designated as age-friendly:

- 1) Establish an Age-Friendly Committee
- 2) Pass a Local Council or District Board Resolution
- 3) Conduct an Age-Friendly Assessment
- 4) Develop and Publish an Action Plan
- 5) Implement the Action Plan
- 6) Monitor Age-Friendly Progress

The District of Squamish is taking these steps. This is an ongoing process that will require review and continued engagement with older adults living and aging in Squamish, as well as collaboration with community partners and other levels of government.

“Age-friendly communities are also tied to the broader concept of asset-based community development, recognizing that seniors have much to offer the community, and their inclusion in community life benefits everyone.”

Stauch (2021)

¹ British Columbia Ministry of Health, Seniors’ Health Living Secretariat (2011). *Becoming an age-friendly community: Local government guide*. https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/people/seniors/about-seniorsbc/afbc/becoming_an_agefriendly_community_local_government_guide.pdf

What is an “Age-Friendly Action Plan”?

The City of Penticton describes an age-friendly action plan in this fashion:

“An age-friendly action plan is based on an assessment of challenges and opportunities for healthy aging in a healthy community. It considers issues and assets identified by residents that affect the day to day lives of older adults, and it assesses and supports the capacity of community partners to take action. Finally, it recommends strategies and activities based on best practices from other jurisdictions and local opportunities for intersectoral partnership.”
Penticton’s Age-Friendly Action Plan

Development of an age-friendly community plan depends on community feedback, followed by governmental assessment of its own capabilities, as well as those of its network of potential partners. Moving from assessment to action, as the City of Penticton emphasizes, must involve “investment ... from public bodies, private businesses, not-for-profit organizations, and citizens themselves. Local government cannot do it alone.”² Action on the objectives outlined here will require cooperation of volunteer and social organizations; developers; and local, provincial, federal and Indigenous governments.

² City of Penticton (2021).

Community Engagement

Community engagement was a crucial part of the development of this Age-Friendly Community Plan. According to the District of Squamish Accessibility Plan, public engagement methods and materials should become more accessible and inclusive, and the District should develop a framework for getting feedback from seniors and people with disabilities. The age-friendly plan is an opportunity to address these goals. Therefore, District staff trialed new and deeper engagement practices in order to incorporate greater accessibility, cultural sensitivity, and truth and reconciliation. This section outlines the ways we connected with the community and the things we learned.

In order to better support engagement, the District contracted two coordinators. The Age-Friendly Coordinator provided general engagement and research support and the Elders Coordinator provided culturally appropriate engagement support for the Sikh and South Asian community. This included meeting with community members and translating and administering surveys. The District also planned to hire an Elders Coordinator to work with Squamish Nation Elders. Unfortunately, we were unable to find a candidate who could work the duration of the project. Instead, staff worked closely with a local Elder³ for cultural advice and met with Squamish Nation Elders in Squamish as a group.

Robust engagement of this sort required a great deal of relationship-building. Due to the ambitious nature of this engagement plan, the District received two extensions to the age-friendly grant, allowing District staff and the coordinators to deepen relationships and build trust with new communities. This involved meeting in community spaces, translating and adapting methods and materials, and sharing food, among other things. In particular, this plan represents some of the first steps towards deepening engagement with the Sikh and South Asian community, and the support of the Elders Coordinator cannot be understated.

Engagement Types

Drawing on learnings from the District of Squamish Accessibility Plan, District staff and the coordinators offered a wide variety of engagement types. This included written options (online, in person, and delivered) as well as conversation style feedback sessions in person. We also advertised contact information should anyone wish to meet individually either in person or online.

Community engagement began in June 2024. To start, District staff and coordinators developed a survey and comment cards in consultation with the Age-Friendly Committee. The survey asked a mix of 22 open and closed demographics and content questions. The comment cards

³ In this plan, we capitalize the word “Elder” to refer to the culturally significant role that Elders play in Indigenous communities.

asked a single open-ended question and a short demographics section to understand participants' age. The comment card question was translated into Punjabi as well. We developed both the survey and the comment card to allow people to choose their level of involvement and time commitment. The survey gathered more detailed demographic information and included ratings for ease of comparison while the comment card was a single, rich question.

The survey was available on the District's online engagement platform (Let's Talk Squamish!), advertised on posters with links and QR codes, handed out at community events, and brought to community members by Meals on Wheels and Squamish Public Library's Visiting Library Service. One hundred and ten members of the community completed some form of the survey between August 2024 and January 2025.

Comment cards were distributed to the 55+ Activity Centre and WestWinds Squamish Senior Living in late June 2024. The cards were set up at tables in public areas with an accompanying labeled box and left until the end of the year.

In addition, District staff and the coordinators held public events and consultations throughout the summer and into the fall, including:

- a booth at the Farmers Market and at the Seniors Wellness Information Fair
- a barbecue with residents of WestWinds and the Squamish Men's Shed
- coffee drop in with participants at the 55+ Activity Centre

Expanded Engagement

Upon review of the information gathered by end of summer, we learned that there was little diversity reflected in the participants in regards to living situation, language, or ethnicity. The Age-Friendly Committee decided to expand engagement to connect with the Sikh and South Asian community, Squamish Nation Elders, equity-deserving groups (such as the 2SLGBTQIA+ community or those experiencing homelessness), and older adults who may be isolated.

What is a **QR code**? A QR code is a square image made up of pixels that can store information. When you take a photo of it with a smartphone, it will direct you to a specific webpage. This means you don't need to type in a long a web address.

Meals on Wheels is a food delivery service for those who cannot prepare their own meals. The service is provided by Squamish Helping Hands.

The **Visiting Library Service** provides library and community materials monthly to those who are unable to leave their home.

The **Squamish Men's Shed** is an organization promoting volunteerism, social connection, and community building for older men.

2SLGBTQIA+ stands for: 2-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, Intersex, and Asexual plus other identities.

Equity-deserving groups refer to communities whose voices are often not heard.

Staff and the coordinators began a second phase of engagement, using the same tools as the first, including online and printed surveys, comment cards, drop boxes, and informal conversation. A drop box and comment cards were set up at Under One Roof to gather information from community members who may be experiencing homelessness or addiction. Unfortunately, this yielded very few results suggesting that different engagement methods should be used in the future. Surveys were also delivered through the Meals on Wheels and Visiting Library Service programs to more isolated individuals. We also attended a coffee with congregants at the local Anglican Church to expand into new networks. While this visit proved fruitful, unfortunately we could not visit with other faith groups due to the demands of the holiday season.

As previously mentioned, the Elders Coordinator played a pivotal role in connecting with the Sikh and South Asian community. As an existing member of the community, the Coordinator was able to understand the goals of the project and adapt our methods to be culturally appropriate. As a young person, the Coordinator also gained valuable work experience and provided an intergenerational lens on the project. Staff and the Coordinators visited the Gurdwara Sahib multiple times to speak with a group of elders and discuss the Age-Friendly Community Plan project. The Elders Coordinator then collected feedback from the community through the Gurdwara Sahib. This involved conversations, translations, and even adaptations to the survey to make it more accessible and culturally appropriate. We also left a drop box and comment cards at the site and advertised in the local newspaper with an ad in Punjabi.

The **Gurdwara Sahib** is a Sikh Temple located in Squamish.

During this time, we continued to seek guidance from a Squamish Nation Elder and staff to understand how best to engage with the Elders as a group. We decided to join the Elders at a regular gathering at Totem Hall. District staff briefly presented what we had learned so far and then broke into small groups, facilitated by the coordinators and District and Nation staff. Although we did not collect demographic information due to cultural sensitivities, we discussed visions and barriers to an age-friendly Squamish as well as ways to make Squamish more culturally safe. This feedback was used to develop the plan.

Despite extensive efforts to widen engagement, there were some challenges. For example, staff and coordinators planned to reach out to more faith communities in the District, but winter holidays made scheduling challenging. As mentioned, there was little uptake from anonymous comment cards and boxes left at the local shelter (Under One Roof), suggesting a need for improved engagement methods. In addition, we planned to have a coordinator working with Squamish Nation Elders. Despite best efforts, the District was not able to find a candidate available to work for the length of the project. In addition, since the development of this plan, a new community event for 2SLGBTQIA+ seniors has begun which represents an opportunity for further engagement and relationship-building.

When Did We Do It?

ENGAGEMENT TIMELINE

June 2024

- Age-Friendly Coordinator hired
- Online survey launch (Let's Talk Squamish)
- Drop boxes with comment cards set up at Westwinds and The 55 Activity Centre
- Initial meetings with Squamish Nation Elders

July 2024

- Squamish Farmer's Market pop up

August 2024

- Drop in visits to the 55
- Engagement BBQ at Westwinds

September–October 2024

- Sandwich board advertising at Brackendale Fall Fair
- Decision to engage more deeply with Sikh community, Squamish Nation Elders, and equity-deserving groups
- Elders Coordinator hired

November–December 2024

- Seniors Wellness Fair pop up
- Elder Coordinator visits to Gurdwara Sahib
- Drop box with comment cards set up at Under 1 Roof and Gurdwara Sahib
- Better at Home survey deliveries
- Visit to St John's Anglican Church

January 2025

- Elders Coordinator visits to Gurdwara Sahib
- Engagement visit with Squamish Nation Elders at Totem Hall
- Online survey close

How Did We Do It?

ENGAGEMENT METHODS

Online

- Survey (22 questions)

Reach

- In person conversations with over 200 people.
- Over 50 comment cards filled out.
- 110 surveys completed (14 online).

Print

(Offered during events or visits, left at locations, or delivered)

- Survey (22 questions)
- Comment card with drop box (1 question in English and Punjabi)

Interactive

- Discussion questions (3 questions)
- individual and group conversations

Adaptations

- Original survey was shortened and translated into Punjabi
- Online survey was later offered in multiple languages through machine translation. These included Punjabi, French, German, Chinese, Tagalog and others.
- Visit with Squamish Nation Elders was a semi-structured in-person conversation instead of a survey

Advertising

- Let's Talk Squamish engagement platform
- Posters in various facilities (Muni Hall, Westwinds, the 55, Gurdwara)
- Advertisements in the Squamish Chief (in English and Punjabi)
- District of Squamish electronic newsletters

Community Context

Sḵw̓xwú7mesh Territory

The District of Squamish is situated on the unceded, traditional territory of the Sḵw̓xwú7mesh Úxwumixw at the end of Átl'ka7sem/Howe Sound. Within the District of Squamish boundaries there are eight Squamish Nation Reserves, many of which represent permanent or seasonal village sites. The history of Sḵw̓xwú7mesh Úxwumixw goes back millennia and Sḵw̓xwú7mesh culture, customs, traditions, and laws are deeply connected to the lands, waters, and beings of this territory and are passed on through generations.

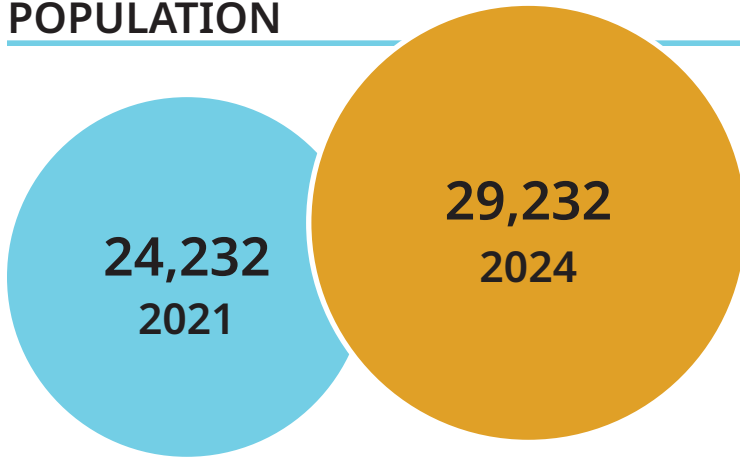
Sḵw̓xwú7mesh Úxwumixw has existed as a political entity since its amalgamation in 1923, although the history of Sḵw̓xwú7mesh people and land go back millennia. Sḵw̓xwú7mesh sníchim (Squamish language) is part of the Coast Salish family of languages and is undergoing revitalization efforts to strengthen the number of speakers. Sḵw̓xwú7mesh people live throughout the territory, including in Squamish and the Squamish Valley.

Sḵw̓xwú7mesh Úxwumixw and the District of Squamish continue to deepen their relationship founded in respect and recognition of Indigenous rights, culture, and heritage. We are grateful to the Squamish Nation Elders of the Squamish Valley for their valuable teachings that have been included in this plan.

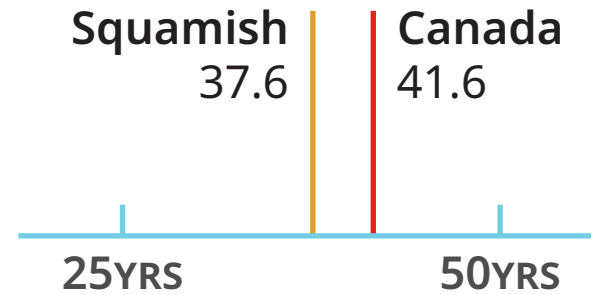
Who Lives in Squamish?

Source: Statistics Canada

POPULATION

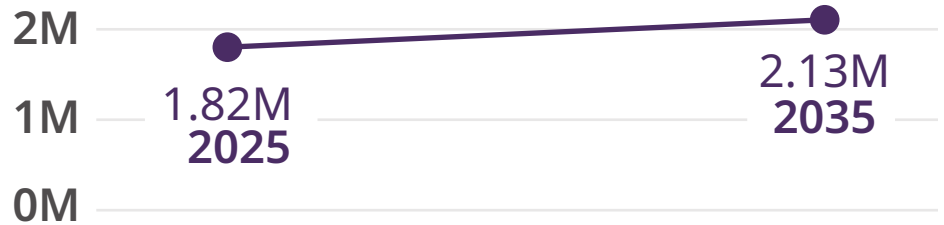


MEDIAN AGE



Building an age-friendly community is a project that will take time.

FORECAST 65+ POPULATION IN CANADA

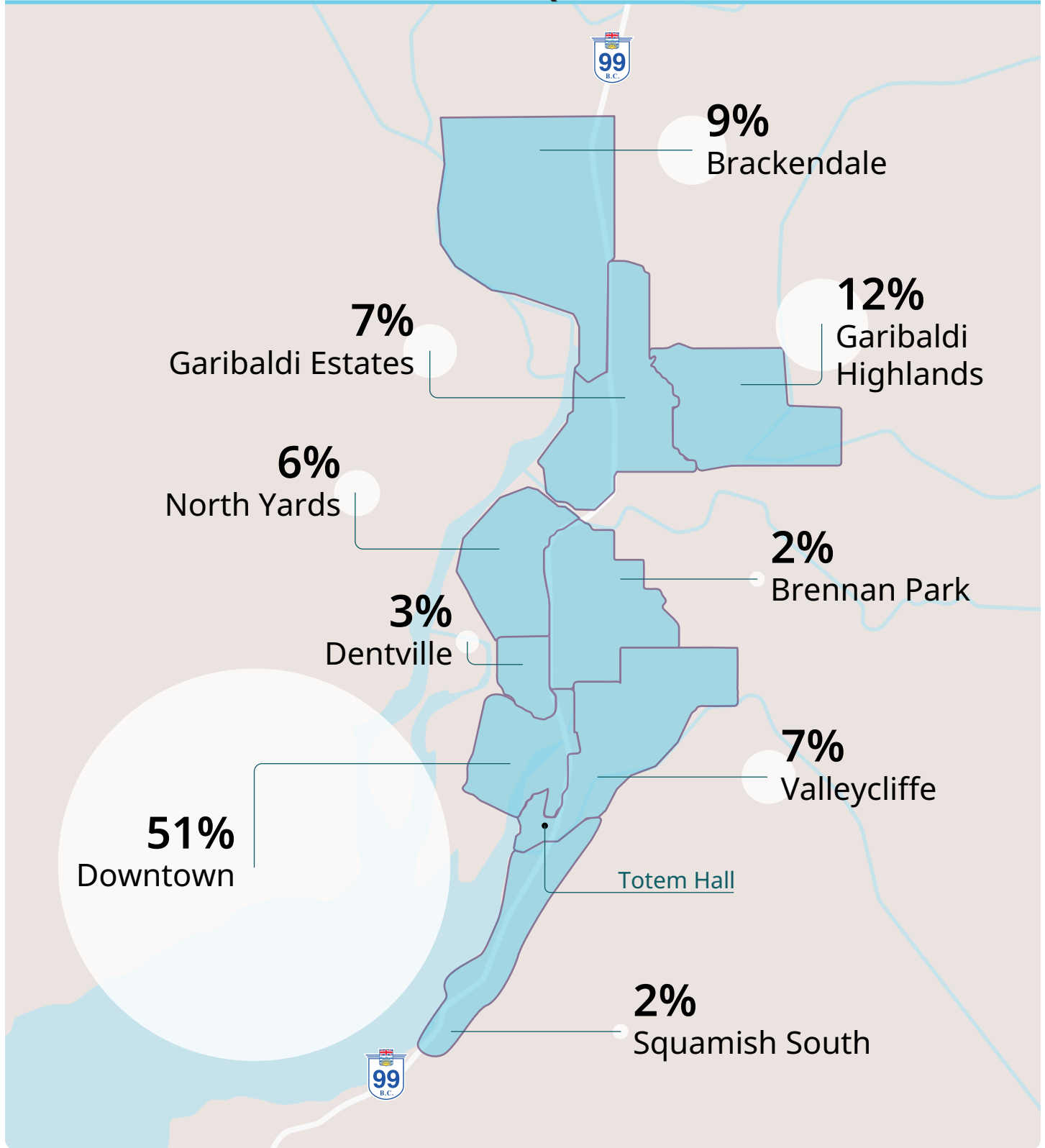


65+ POPULATION IN SQUAMISH



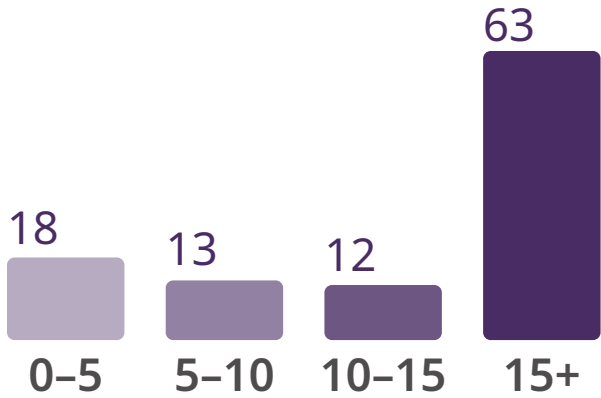
Who Filled Out Our Survey?

WHERE DO RESPONDENTS LIVE IN SQUAMISH?

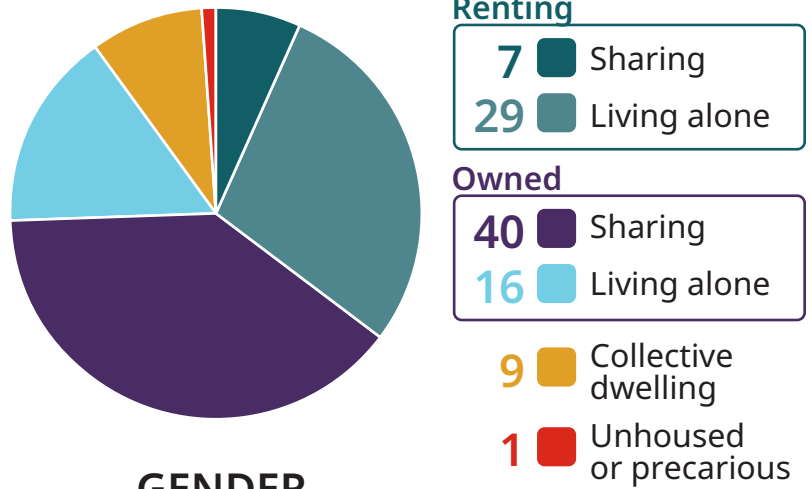


Who Filled Out Our Survey? (cont.)

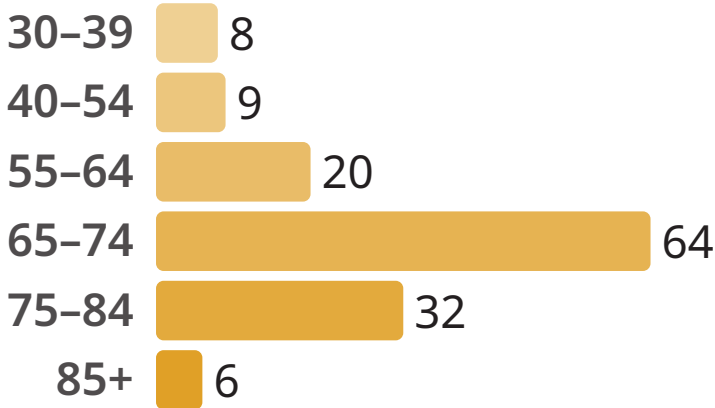
YEARS LIVED IN SQUAMISH



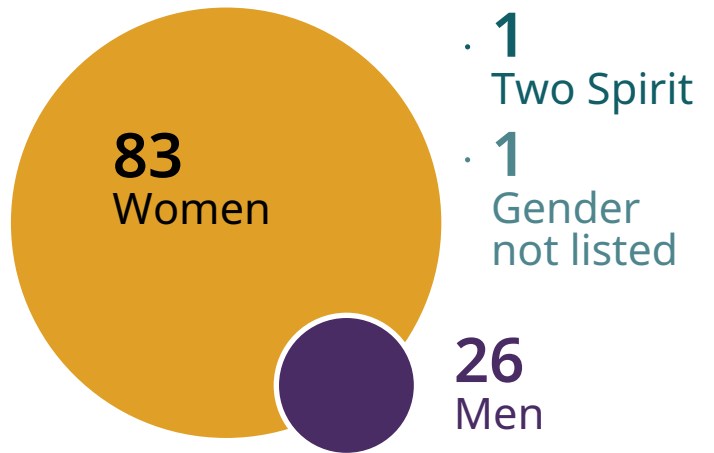
HOUSING SITUATION



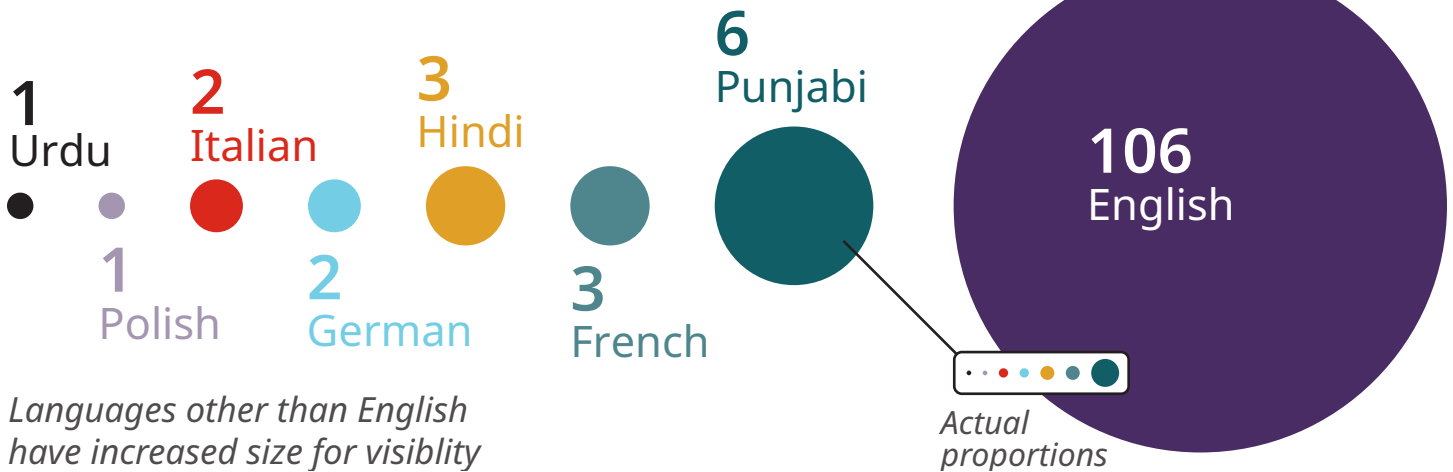
AGE



GENDER



PRIMARY LANGUAGE SPOKEN



What Did People Have to Say?

VISIONS OF AN AGE FRIENDLY SQUAMISH

■ *"People's attitudes do not change depending on the age of the person you are dealing with. Having events for mixed ages."* ■

"Where the specific needs & challenges facing seniors are recognized and dealt with."

"Consideration for all—disabled as well as able-bodied. Some can't walk distances or stand for long periods."

"That all variety of ages young to old are appreciated and cared about"

"Where the seniors are not crowded out in the stores and on the street."

"A community where the needs of its citizens across all ages are taken into consideration when planning its programs and services. An 'age friendly' community would also promote cross generational activities in addition to age specific activities."

■ **"Accessibility for all ages."** ■

"It's really all about the people of all ages in the community connecting, appreciating each other and the beautiful place we live in."

■ *"A place where I can transition from a 53-year-old person, to a junior Elder to an Elder and have access to the resources I need to live a heathy life, connected to the community."* ■

"Where people of all ages treat people of all ages and nationalities with respect and consideration."

"People are able to age in place as much as possible, and then be able to have supports for maximum independence."

"A town I can grow old in and have access to the services I need as well as opportunities for being active, recreating and staying engaged in community life."

■ *"Recognition that aging does present some challenges. Acknowledgment that it takes all ages to have a happy community."* ■

"An age friendly Squamish creates space for Elders to be respected, visible and a welcome part of the community."

Goals and Objectives

District staff and the coordinators coded and analyzed community feedback. For our analysis, we followed the World Health Organization's guide on age-friendly cities,⁴ which considers eight areas:

- outdoor spaces and buildings
- transportation
- housing
- respect and social inclusion
- social participation
- civic participation and employment
- communication and information
- community support and health

The District of Squamish adapted the respect and social inclusion category to also include cultural safety. This aligns with the District's commitment to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and to increasing cultural understanding.

Cultural Safety is an environment where Indigenous people are respected, and meaningful relationships are created.

Following the World Health Organization guide, we have grouped the areas under three major headings:

- physical and built environment
- social inclusion and participation
- communication and community services

Following each section are goals and objectives, which together make up the Age-Friendly Community Plan. Goals are visionary and wide-reaching, while objectives are more concrete measures and steps the District of Squamish can take in its work to become an age-friendly community.

⁴ World Health Organization. (2007). *Global age-friendly cities: A guide*. World Health Organization. <https://iris.who.int/handle/10665/43755>.

Physical and Built Environment

The physical and built environment includes spaces within the District of Squamish’s jurisdiction as a municipal government. In Squamish, the natural environment is a fundamental part of outdoor recreation and the wider community identity. Outdoor public spaces include parks, as well as public buildings and facilities such as the 55+ Activity Centre, Brennan Park, and Squamish Public Library. Other aspects of the built environment include the way people navigate space as pedestrians (mobility), public transit riders (transportation), or drivers (traffic safety). Finally, the physical and built environment includes housing, an issue that will require a multi-pronged strategy to fully address.

Mobility refers to the ability for people to move around spaces as they need. This includes walking, rolling, cycling, and other modes.

Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

What We Heard

Respondents enjoy Squamish’s network of trails and parks, especially Sp’akw’us Feather Park. They also expressed praise for the Squamish Public Library and for library services, stating they only wished the Library offered more mid-day programming geared to seniors.

Respondents asked for more park spaces and more shaded seating throughout Squamish. They also requested a number of updates, upgrades, and expansions to Brennan Park Community Centre and its surroundings. Finally, they wished they had fuller access to the resources and spaces of the 55+ Centre, such as the kitchen.

Streetscapes were the area of greatest concern for respondents. They identified the lack of sidewalks in areas like Valleycliffe, or bumpy and uneven sidewalks in Downtown, as significant impediments to their mobility. This was particularly true for those who use mobility devices.

Goals and objectives

GOAL 1: Seniors have welcoming spaces to gather in which recreational, social, and cultural programming is affordable and accessible.

Objectives

1. Review programming and allocation of facility space with an age-friendly lens.
2. Ensure adequate age-friendly programming is offered across District facilities.
3. Address reopening the 55+ Activity Centre kitchen.
4. Review Recreation Access Pass from an age-friendly lens. Refer to District of Squamish Accessibility Plan, Service, Goal 2, Objective 8.

5. Review Seniors pool programming options.
6. Review possibility of a library expansion.
7. Consider library daytime programming for seniors.

GOAL 2: Parks and playgrounds have adequate amenities and are distributed throughout the District of Squamish.

Objectives

1. Include abundant seating opportunities, covered gathering spaces, and intergenerational activities in park and playground accessibility guidelines, as outlined in the District of Squamish Accessibility Plan (Built Environment and Public Spaces, Goal 1, Objective 2).
2. Identify and address gaps in washroom access in parks and playgrounds
3. Include covered spaces in public accessibility layer as outlined in the District of Squamish Accessibility Plan (Transportation, Goal 1, Objective 1a).
4. Consider accessible pathways, seating and washroom access for Pickleball and Tennis court area.
5. Any future updates to the Parks and Recreation Masterplan should include an age-friendly lens to ensure green spaces are distributed throughout town.
6. Review development permit guidelines to ensure there is an age-friendly lens applied to the open space guidelines.

GOAL 3: There is a network of accessible trails suitable for all ages and abilities.

Objectives

1. Include access to trails in inclusive facilities resources. Refer to the DoS Accessibility Plan, Built Environment and Public Spaces, Goal 3, Objective 3.
2. Support local groups to maintain and increase accessibility of trails.
3. Review and advertise trail network with an accessibility lens. Refer to the District of Squamish Accessibility Plan, Transportation, Goal 1, Objective 2.
4. Continue to build All Ages and Abilities cycle routes and trails.
5. Ensure District of Squamish trail networks are connected and clearly marked.

GOAL 4: Sidewalks are accessible to those using mobility devices, and the pedestrian network is complete and connected.

Objectives

1. Ensure all new sidewalks and renovations of existing sidewalks prioritize accessibility. Refer to District of Squamish Accessibility Plan, Transportation, Goal 1, Objective 3a.
2. Review and prioritize missing connections in the sidewalk network.
3. Increase benches and seating areas along streetscapes
4. Review sidewalk snow removal process with an accessibility and age-friendly lens.

5. Review current practices to ensure sidewalk maintenance prioritizes accessibility.

GOAL 5: Squamish streetscapes are well-lit.

Objectives

1. Ensure lighting is updated with new development at intersections downtown and around seniors-focused areas.
2. Review Development Permit Guidelines to ensure lighting of pathways, parks, and public areas is addressed through an age-friendly lens.

GOAL 6: Waste diversion sites are accessible and convenient.

Objective

1. In future planning, consider more convenient waste diversion locations.
2. Review Solid Waste Storage Technical Guidelines with an accessibility lens.

Waste Diversion refers to separating waste into different streams such as organics, recycling, and garbage.

Transportation, Traffic Safety, and Mobility

What We Heard

Respondents were most concerned about traffic-pedestrian safety. They advocated for traffic calming measures in Squamish, particularly near senior residences and in downtown as a whole. They also requested increased lighting at high-frequency intersections.

Public transportation was also an important issue. Residents cited a lack of buses and bus stops, safety and comfort issues at stops (e.g., lighting, benches), and inconsistent late-night service as concerns they have with public transportation. They commented that HandyDART was excellent when it worked, but that it was difficult to access at times.

Finally, residents had issues with parking in downtown Squamish. They requested that parking be better connected to sidewalks and walkways, that more accessible parking be built downtown, and that the general lack of convenient parking be addressed. Considering the District’s discussion of introducing pay parking to downtown Squamish, several residents asked that seniors be allowed to park for free.

Goals and Objectives

GOAL 1: Transit service is accessible, frequent, reliable, and convenient.

Objectives

1. Advocate for the expansion of regional transit.
2. Ensure bus stops near senior residents and key destinations are accessible.
3. Improve mobility connections to bus stops frequently used by seniors.
4. Continue working with BC Transit to improve HandyDART service.
5. Consider lit and sheltered bus stops in spaces frequented by seniors, such as Hilltop House and the 55+ Activity Centre. Refer to District of Squamish Accessibility Plan, Transportation, Goal 3, Objective 2.
6. Ensure there are transit stops servicing Squamish Nation Reserves.
7. Consider increasing evening transit frequency to align with library and District programming.

GOAL 2: Pedestrian safety is prioritized around seniors residential areas.

Objectives

1. Improve pedestrian safety at crossings. This may include raised crossings, traffic calming, pedestrian controlled signals, and others.

GOAL 3: Parking is accessible and available for those who need it.

Objectives

1. Increase accessible parking stalls downtown.
2. Review any new parking programs with an age-friendly lens.

Housing

What We Heard

Respondents agreed housing supplies in Squamish are lacking in both economic and physical terms: as one respondent phrased it, “affordable for who?”. Several respondents noted that Squamish had become too expensive, and that some were leaving Squamish even though they were earning competitive salaries.

Housing shortages or unavailability were noted across all sectors, but particularly in senior housing, such as senior rental properties like WestWinds, retirement facilities such as Hilltop House, dementia care, and facilities enabling seniors to age in place.

Some respondents expressed interest in different housing models to alleviate pressures on Squamish’s rental market, such as multi-generational below-market housing.

Goals and Objectives

GOAL: Housing is appropriate and affordable for seniors.

Objectives

1. Continue to support affordable rental housing as per the OCP.

GOAL 2: Housing needs are balanced with the speed and pace of growth.

Objective

1. Ensure engagement in ongoing policy work and implementation, as well as activities or initiatives related to housing, is relevant and accessible to older adults.

Social Inclusion and Participation

The ability to live in a place where spaces are easy to navigate and use is only one aspect of age-friendly design. It is also important for people to feel welcome to participate in community, social, and civic life. Feeling unwelcome may be due to a person's age, but also cultural and social differences that prevent a person from expressing themselves fully. Age-friendly planning must therefore include recognition for and respect of intercultural differences. Because Squamish is located on the unceded, traditional territory of Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh Uxwumixw, it is crucial that this plan addresses Indigenous cultural safety and respect. Finally, meaningful social inclusion must offer seniors opportunities to find enrichment in employment and volunteering opportunities; to that effect, enabling seniors' participation in community might involve skills training or meaningful volunteer work.

Social Well-Being and Participation

What We Heard

Respondents advocated for an actively intergenerational community. They noted that an age-friendly community would promote cross-generational connections, include seniors in all activities, and respect seniors' experience. Respondents noted concern for those isolated from the community by medical issues, and they suggested there were gaps in the services and volunteer organizations dedicated to helping isolated individuals. Finally, respondents indicated they wanted to hear about and participate in a greater variety of activities in Squamish.

Goals and Objectives

GOAL: Seniors are included in community events and programs.

Objectives

1. Encourage community events organizers to consider opportunities for intergenerational programming, including volunteer opportunities.
2. Communicate relevant community events to organizations that serve a significant senior population.

Respect, Social Inclusion, and Cultural Safety

What We Heard

Respondents expressed strong beliefs regarding respect, social inclusion, and safety. They signaled a need for respect among community members, and they believe people of all ages and social groups should feel included and have opportunities for participation in community life. Several participants expressed a belief that ageism is a factor in Squamish, contributing to a lack of participation among seniors, or a discounting of seniors' perspectives.

Feedback from Squamish Nation Elders and from members of the Sikh community also spoke to issues of respect, social inclusion, and cultural safety. Sikh elders, for example, reported they felt unwelcome at the 55+ Centre due to differing cultural expectations and language barriers. This extended to concerns about communication issues with emergency responders. Squamish Nation Elders reported concerns about emergency response teams finding properties due to inconsistencies in mapping.

Squamish Nation Elders shared recommendations to increase education, engagement, and cultural awareness. They expressed a need for community-wide education on the history and culture of the Squamish Nation, including for elected officials and District staff. Elders also wished for more engagement with the District of Squamish, including working with local knowledge keepers in addition to Squamish Nation staff and leadership. Finally, Elders wanted to see Squamish Nation history and culture more visibly incorporated in signage, naming conventions, and public art and memorials.

Goals and Objectives

GOAL 1: People of all cultures are able to participate in District programs and feel included in District facilities.

Objectives

1. Deepen engagement with equity-deserving groups to understand cultural safety needs in District events and spaces.
2. Provide information in plain language and in multiple languages where possible.

GOAL 2: District of Squamish staff and Mayor and Council are educated about Squamish Nation culture and history as well as cultural, social, and linguistic differences in Squamish.

Objective

1. Provide cultural competency training for District staff, including first responders.
2. Provide local and relevant cultural learning opportunities for District staff and Mayor and Council. Encourage and expect participation.

GOAL 4: Squamish Nation Elders and District of Squamish staff communicate regularly.

Objectives

1. Develop a process to meaningfully include Squamish Nation Elders in engagement on District projects.
2. Advertise and provide opportunities for District staff to connect with Squamish Nation Elders.
3. Review and collaborate on emergency planning and response with Squamish Nation, with a focus on local issues. Refer to District of Squamish Accessibility Plan, Governance and Corporate Culture, Goal 3, Objective 2.

GOAL 5: Squamish Nation culture is visible in Squamish.

Objectives

1. Review commemorative naming policy through a lens of truth and reconciliation.
2. Include Squamish Nation cultural and historical information in District communications when appropriate.

Community Participation and Employment

What We Heard

Respondents indicated that they appreciated District-sponsored recreational programming; however, they felt that programming involving skills-based training (such as computer classes or basic household repair) would be well received. Respondents also indicated that skills-based

programming is an area in which cross-generational contact would be ideal, with youth and seniors providing each other training in respective skills and competencies.

Goals and Objectives

GOAL: Seniors have access to training to build skills.

Objectives

1. Consider seniors programming that focuses on skills and training, such as computer classes.
2. Include community members from equity-deserving groups to provide intergenerational support in seniors programming.
3. Encourage local organizations to include relevant volunteering opportunities to seniors.

Communication and Support Services

Even if a person is part of a community that respects and values them, they will need several things to thrive within that community.

One thing they will need is clear and timely information about their community, along with opportunities to provide feedback about policy and community planning. This facilitates civic and democratic participation.

They will also need an ample network of social and health services that allow them to actively age in place. Because decisions about social and health services are provincial, local governments should advocate for their residents.

Communication and Information

What We Heard

Respondents generally appreciated the variety and frequency of District of Squamish communication initiatives. They appreciated the variety of formats for receiving information and were happy to see District representatives at public events. Multiple information delivery formats is important because of the perception that senior citizens are less likely to use electronic communication and services.

“The people we need to worry about are our seniors who have no idea how to use a QR code.”

Respondent

Some respondents asked for more engagement and feedback opportunities from the District. Many respondents mentioned concerns about the timeliness and transparency of engagement. More opportunities to meet with Mayor, District Council, or District staff would be appreciated.

Goals and Objectives

GOAL 1: Engagement opportunities are varied and accessible.

Objectives

1. Continue expanding public engagement to be accessible beyond online surveys. This may include translations, printed versions, mail-outs, phone options, and a variety of in-person events such as focus groups, among other offerings.
2. Regularly report back on engagement projects.
3. Increase lead time between invitations to consultation and the consultation event whenever possible.

GOAL 2: District communication is timely, clear, and accessible for all.

Objectives

1. Ensure important information is provided in multiple formats, including print.

Community Support and Health Services

What We Heard

While respondents appreciate existing supports, they recognize there are not enough resources in place for an aging population. Respondents highlighted gaps in support services such as:

- access to primary care
- fall prevention programs
- home support
- transportation to medical services outside Squamish

- retirement communities incorporating dementia care
- accessible and low-income housing that would enable seniors to age and remain in place.

Several respondents recognized that these issues will require cooperation to resolve. This will mean working with regional authorities like Vancouver Coastal Health and provincial governments and organizations such as BC Transit.

Goals and Objectives

GOAL 1: Medical care is accessible and appropriate.

Objective

Advocate at regional and provincial levels for increased and improved medical services in Squamish.

GOAL 2: There is accessible regional transportation for medical appointments.

Objective

Continue to work with BC Transit to develop regional transportation infrastructure that allows access to medical services.

GOAL 3: There is adequate supportive housing and care.

Objectives

1. Work with the provincial government to increase extended care options in Squamish. This may include assisted living, long term care facilities, and dementia villages among other solutions.
2. Review accessible and adaptable housing policies in the OCP.
3. Introduce programming to provide evidence-based movement and exercise for fall prevention.

Next Steps

The development of this plan is the first step towards an age-friendly Squamish. Commitment is needed to make the recommendations in this plan become reality. This includes developing a strategy, identifying responsibilities, and assigning staff to coordinate the implementation of the plan. Therefore, we have included a final objective:

1. Develop an implementation strategy to guide the implementation of the District of Squamish Age-Friendly Community Plan.

As the District of Squamish considers next steps for implementation, it is important to recognize how this work aligns with other plans and strategies. We have identified the following plans that closely relate with the Age-Friendly Community Plan and have referred to them throughout this document as appropriate.

Squamish 2040

The Squamish 2040 – Official Community Plan (OCP) was adopted in 2018 and outlines a community vision as well as strategies to help us get there. Among the goals of the OCP, health is articulated as including accessible built environments, housing and support for active living and universal mobility.

District of Squamish Strategic Plan

The District of Squamish Strategic Plan 2023-2026 was adopted in 2023. There are many elements of the plan related to aging and accessibility, including the inclusion of accessibility as a governing principle.

District of Squamish Accessibility Plan

The District of Squamish Accessibility Plan was adopted in 2023 and outlines a variety of actions to increase accessibility of the District's built environments, communications, and services.

District of Squamish Transportation Master Plan

The District of Squamish Transportation Master Plan was adopted in 2025 and outlines actions to address community growth, sustainability and accessibility. It focuses on providing options for community members to get around safely and conveniently using a variety of modes of transportation.

Appendix A: Works Cited and Consulted

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