

An aerial photograph of the Sechelt region, showing a large body of water in the foreground and a densely forested, hilly area in the background. A white rectangular text box is superimposed over the middle of the image.

Vision Plan for Sechelt

June 2007

Acknowledgements

The preparation of this vision would not have been possible without the commitment and dedication of the Vision Plan Steering Committee, whose members are listed on page 1, and funding support from the District of Sechelt and the Real Estate Foundation of British Columbia. The steering committee met on twelve occasions to oversee the preparation of the vision. Individual members also volunteered at all major consultation events.

The preparation of this vision would also not have been possible without the people who provided information throughout the visioning process, including all who agreed to be interviewed and all who attended consultation events. Your commitment and dedication to making Sechelt a better place to live is truly commendable.

Special thanks to Ann Watson, who provided access to the Helen Dawe Collection in the Sechelt Community Archives. The historic photographs were of great assistance in defining an identity for Sechelt and in providing a context for the Vision Plan.

The steering committee would like to specifically acknowledge the contributions of one of its members, Clifford Smith, who passed away during the visioning process.

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Executive Summary

As one resident stated: *Sechelt is at a crossroads. The development types of the past are no longer applicable today. Developable land is becoming more and more scarce and the forests and open spaces which define the community are being lost forever. We need a new way of thinking. We need to conserve our natural heritage and resources, while enabling us to grow and evolve in response to change.*

In this context, the District of Sechelt undertook a bold initiative—a vision for a new Sechelt. A vision which is based on the collective aspirations and hopes of all residents; one which will guide the municipal planning and design process for the next 20 to 25 years. A vision which will create a community which is inclusive of all residents; which respects and conserves the natural environment; which ensures that growth is balanced, managed and sustainable; and which realizes a high quality of life and strong sense of identity.

To coordinate the vision, District Council appointed a 22-member steering committee. This steering committee, with the support of a professional design team, took up the challenge. Over a twelve-month period, it involved close to 900 residents in the visioning process; learning from their knowledge and experiences. All along, the steering committee emphasized that this “needed to be the community’s vision in order for it to feel a sense of ownership and responsibility.” Based on the feedback, it believes that it accomplished this objective.

The resultant vision, encompassing seven focus areas, starting with the natural environment and concluding with transportation, is very comprehensive. It provides direction with regard to achieving the vision, both within the focus areas themselves and within the draft five-year implementation strategy starting on page 114. The steering committee felt it was important to identify several short-term actions (related to both product and process) to build on the momentum resulting from the visioning process and to support implementation. These actions are listed on the following page.

It should be emphasized that the vision is not a detailed plan and that further refinement is needed to operationalize many of the strategies contained within it, including the community design guidelines for the Downtown Village and residential neighbourhoods. It should also be emphasized that many of the strategies require the participation of the community and other jurisdictions (e.g., the Province, the Sechelt Indian Band and the Sunshine Coast Regional District).

Throughout the visioning process, residents and steering committee members emphasized the importance of implementation. They also emphasized the importance of strong leadership, as the vision will necessitate change, and collective responsibility, in which everyone has a role to play. While detailed cost estimates at to strategy implementation have not been calculated; many of the strategies, such as the development of more compact building types and the use of green infrastructure, will actually save money, as they negate the need for costly infrastructure expansion.

The steering committee believes that a timeframe needs to be established for the vision’s periodic review to ensure that it remains both current and relevant. This review is especially important in today’s world, given ever changing knowledge, science and technology.

With the above in mind, the steering committee invites you to read the vision and to share it with your colleagues, friends and neighbours. It also leaves you with the following quote from a resident: *The community needs to own this document. It is based on our collective input and feedback. It is an opportunity for us to shape our community rather than having others shape it for us.*

Short-Term Actions:

The steering committee identified the following short-term actions which it felt needed to be implemented immediately to build on the momentum resulting from the visioning process and to support vision implementation. These actions relate to both product and process.

The four actions related to product are:

- That existing residential subdivision regulations be replaced with new conservation and urban design regulations (see pages 25 to 30). This change would have a significant impact on the built environment, given that the majority of new development is residential, mainly comprising single-family, detached housing.
- That a revised Master Plan be developed for Block 7 to rearrange parking and circulation to accommodate the Civic Centre Theatre Plaza and that detailed site design plans be developed for it and the Trail Bay Wharf and Marketplace.
- That a Street Improvement District be established in support of the Wharf Road 'Water' Walkway and that incremental improvements be made in support of this connector (see pages 57 to 60).
- That work commence on the development of a comprehensive greenway, pathway and trail network, including land acquisition and consolidation in support of a pedestrian/bicycle pathway between Trail and Davis Bays and a new multi-use trail between the West Sechelt neighbourhood and the Downtown Village.

The three actions related to process are:

- That a community-based Implementation Committee be established. Vision Plan Steering Committee members should be invited to sit on this new body to provide continuity and to share their considerable knowledge gained as a result of their participation in the visioning process.
- That the District of Sechelt designate a staff member to be the Vision Plan Coordinator. This Coordinator would work closely with the Implementation Committee to oversee the implementation of the Vision Plan.
- That a Five-Year Operational Plan be prepared in support of implementing the Vision Plan. This plan would identify specific actions, partners, costs, etc. Given the comprehensive nature of the vision, it is recognized that partnerships - community, government and others - are necessary for its successful implementation.

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