



# **Regional Issues, Vision, and Goals**

**DRAFT FOR DISCUSSION**

**December 1, 2004**

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# Executive Summary

## ***Introduction***

This report summarizes the results from Stage 1 of the Squamish – Lillooet Regional District regional growth strategy process. The report has two primary purposes:

1. To identify and prioritize growth management issues so that research and planning work in Stage 2 of the Regional Growth Strategy can focus on the key issues;
2. To present a draft regional vision and a set of goals, along with associated objectives and strategies.

## ***Summary of Consultation Activities***

Stage 1 consultation activities included 118 participants in a Regional Ideas Symposium, a total of 56 participants in 4 community engagement workshops; and 20 participants in an Elected Officials Forum. The SLRD also received feedback from the public via an on-line feedback form posted on the SLRD web-site. In addition, the SLRD engaged in formal and informal communication with First Nations about what forms of involvement may work for them.

## ***Prioritization of Issues***

Participants in the Regional Ideas Symposium, community engagement workshops were asked to identify priority issues under the categories of Regional Land Use, Housing, Transportation, Economic Development and other. As shown in the table below, analysis of participant input revealed that one issue emerged as the highest priority, four as high priorities, five as moderate priorities, and three as lower priorities. In addition, the on-line survey revealed a number of issues that were identified as priorities in sub-regional areas.

<b>Priority level</b>	<b>Issue category</b>
Highest	Regional Land Use
High	Alternative Transportation Modes Housing Parks, Green Space and Habitat Regional Economic Development
Moderate	First Nations Issues/Interests Water and Air Quality Protection of Agricultural Land Reserve Alternate Routes to the Sea-to-Sky Highway Backcountry Use and Access
Lower	Governance/Communication Energy Health Care and Other Services
Sub-Regional	Various

These results of public consultation were referred to the Elected Officials Forum for further review and prioritization and the results of that exercise can be found in Section 3.5.

This executive summary includes a summary of input on the top five issues as identified by the public.

### ***Regional Land Use***

Many participants called for the RGS to focus on urban containment or nodes of development around existing urban communities. People cited “Smart Growth” principles and the desire for compact communities with accessible public spaces and services, parks, and cultural and recreation amenities.

Participant input suggested a number of guiding principles for a regional land use strategy:

- Providing a mechanism for coordination of land use planning within the region and with adjacent jurisdictions;
- Acting as a catalyst for better coordination and harmonization on land use issues among government agencies;
- Providing a process in the near future for dealing with long-term land use decisions related to the 2010 Olympics;
- Improving SLRD communities’ understanding of planning issues and the need for a broader rather than a narrow, community-focused vision;
- Providing a basis for management of rural lands;
- Addressing the need for sustainable land use that will protect both the region’s natural environment and cultural heritage.

### ***Alternative Transportation Modes***

Participants are looking to the RGS to articulate a strategy for alternatives to the car – strategies that meet the test of affordability and convenience and include alternatives such as:

- Improved and expanded bus service;
- Possible creation of a Regional Transit Authority under the SLRD;
- Passenger/commuter train service using existing rail lines;
- Additional flight options and possibly airport expansion in Pemberton;
- Water transport such as a high-speed ferry from Vancouver to Squamish;
- Cycling and pedestrian “commuter” and “recreation” trails.

### ***Housing***

Participants conveyed a strong message about the need to plan for and support affordable housing and a range of housing types in the region. They saw the need to plan now to meet the housing needs of increasing numbers of seniors in the region. Participants also saw a greater emphasis on higher-density housing in urban areas as a key element of a regional housing strategy. In general, participants spoke of a housing mix in the region that addresses the needs of families, singles, seniors and low-income earners.

Suggested strategies for increasing the stock of affordable housing included:

- Requiring that developers contribute to non-market housing;

- Looking for low-maintenance designs for such housing;
- Accessing government financing and assistance programs to provide social housing;
- Redirecting a portion of property transfer taxes to create affordable housing;
- Providing incentives to developers to provide mixed housing through rezoning, regulation of density, and Official Community Plans;
- Support for smaller than standard lots, infill or secondary suites and rental suites.

### ***Parks, Green Space and Habitat***

Issues of habitat and parks/green space emerged as a high priority at all consultation events. Participants expressed that the RGS should:

- Address preservation of habitat and ecological functioning;
- Plan for, develop, and protect natural wildlife corridors;
- Acknowledge and address conflicts in values between environmental interests, tourism and industry;
- Define and protect ecologically sensitive areas from activities such as heli-skiing, independent power projects (IPPs) and other development;
- Define areas for parks/green space and consider a regional parks management function.

### ***Regional Economic Development***

Stage I participants ranked a regional approach to economic development as a high priority. They cited several principles and components as being fundamental to a regional strategy:

- A proactive and specific strategy that identifies both potential opportunities & strategies for implementation for all areas of the Region, and most particularly the North;
- Sustainable economic development that does not negatively impact on the region's beauty and character;
- Participation of First Nations in economic development solutions;
- Involvement of individual communities in planning and decision-making regarding the region's future economy.

### ***Vision***

The draft vision of the region in 2025 and beyond is as follows:

**The Squamish-Lillooet Regional District is a spectacularly beautiful, economically vibrant region. The region features a number of distinct, liveable communities that have been developed within a regional context that respects individual community values and diversity. Residents and guests enjoy easy access to outdoor recreation opportunities. Communities work together, respecting the natural environment and celebrating the uniqueness of the history and culture of the region and its residents. Government organizations, of all levels, actively engage**

**residents in the region in their decision-making processes and collaborate and communicate effectively among themselves.**

### ***Goals***

Based on analysis of participant input, the following draft goals emerged.

#### Regional land use (settlement areas) goals:

1. Plan and manage land use based on natural units and systems (i.e., drainages, watersheds and ecosystems).
2. Develop our urban centres within strong containment boundaries.
3. Retain and strengthen the unique identity of each community.
4. Encourage mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented development that fits in with the natural setting.
5. Encourage retention of greenspaces and undeveloped spaces between existing communities.

#### Transportation goals:

1. Expand alternative transportation options.
2. Create an integrated, multi-modal and viable transportation system that is efficient, clean, flexible and affordable.

#### Housing goals:

1. Create a range of housing types for seniors and other population groups and lifestyles.
2. Develop and protect affordable housing that allows people to live, work and play in their own community.

#### Economic development goals:

1. Diversify the regional economy, encouraging local spending and small business.
2. Expand opportunity for a range of employment types and pay levels.
3. Reduce poverty and enhance affordability by encouraging a vibrant economy.

#### Parks and recreation goals:

1. Manage access to public lands and waterways.
2. Manage the variety and accessibility of recreational facilities.

#### Environment/ecosystem goals:

1. Restore and protect ecological functioning across all areas so that future generations can hunt, fish, and gather.
2. Protect water quality and air quality.

#### Social and cultural goals:

1. Maintain and strengthen sense of place, with strong community spirit and a diverse population.

2. Create an exceptional quality of life so that whole extended families choose to live in the region from cradle to grave.
3. Provide adequate health, social, educational, recreational, and commercial services to meet the needs of people of various ages, abilities, income levels, etc.
4. Respect and celebrate ethnic and cultural diversity, including First Nations heritage.

Governance goals:

1. Make decisions in ways that are inclusive, coordinated, and transparent, based on mutual respect and a culture of collaborative management.
2. Strengthen regional governance.
3. Seek just resolution and accommodation of Aboriginal title and rights.

In addition to discussing substantive issues and goals, participants commented on ideas about the Regional Growth Strategy itself. These ideas included broad goals and suggestions on implementation and monitoring.

***Conclusion***

The completion of this report marks the end of Stage I of the SLRD Regional Growth Strategy consultation process. Analysis of stakeholder input on what growth management issues need to be addressed and on the regional vision and goals suggests high levels of agreement on the direction desired by residents, elected officials, and stakeholder organizations. As the next stages proceed, however, there will likely be significant challenges in finding common ground and building the necessary buy-in.

# Acknowledgements

Members of the Regional Growth Strategy consultation team, including staff members and consultants, prepared this report as a collaborative effort:

Leslie Rodgers	Praxis Pacific
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Lisa Griffith	Squamish – Lillooet Regional District
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Leslie Rodgers had primary responsibility for preparing the issues analysis section. James Pratt had primary responsibility for overall compilation of the report and for preparing the vision and goals section. Lisa Griffith had primary responsibility for compiling symposium, community workshop and feedback form results, and for overall review of the report. Steven Olmstead reviewed the report outline and the completed draft.

The team is deeply grateful to the many individuals and organizations that assisted with, and/or participated in, this stage of the consultation. The success of this process has resulted from their generous contributions of time and input.

# Part I: Introduction

## I.1 Purpose of this Report

This report summarizes the results from Stage 1 of the Squamish – Lillooet Regional District Regional Growth Strategy consultation process.

The report has two primary purposes:

1. To identify and prioritize growth management issues so that research and planning work in Stage 2 of the Regional Growth Strategy can focus on the key issues;
2. To present a draft regional vision and a set of goals, along with associated objectives and strategies.

## I.2 Background and Rationale

The Squamish-Lillooet Regional District (SLRD) initiated a Regional Growth Strategy process as a means to determine a common strategic vision and set of economic, social, and environmental goals for the region. In accordance with the *Local Government Act*, this process must fully involve the member municipalities – which ultimately must come to consensus on the resulting strategy – while also including opportunities for input from residents, provincial agencies, First Nations, and others.

The SLRD Board has prioritized the Regional Growth Strategy work, recognizing that the region now faces a historically unique combination of challenges and opportunities. These include the following:

- Massive growth pressure, especially in Squamish, Whistler, and Pemberton;
- Significant infrastructure and real estate development associated with the 2010 Olympics, including major upgrading of the Sea to Sky Highway;
- First Nations with traditional territory in the region taking leadership in land and resource management;
- The Province and its agencies promoting development of Crown lands;
- Declining employment and economic transition in the northern part of the region.

## I.3 Overview of the Consultation Process

The Regional Growth Strategy consultation is proceeding in four stages.

### ***Stage 1* focused on identifying growth management priorities, goals and objectives.**

The consultation in this stage included a Regional Ideas Symposium, a series of public engagement workshops, an Elected Officials Forum, an Intergovernmental Advisory Committee meeting, and various communications activities. The results of Stage 1 are presented in this report.

### ***Stage 2* will focus on reviewing the results of Stage 1.**

The primary consultation activity in this stage will be collection of feedback through feedback forms, which will focus on verifying the findings of the “Regional Issues, Vision and Goals” report.

***Stage 3 will focus on reviewing and commenting on growth management options.***

Consultation in this stage will include extensive communications activities, a second series of public meetings, an online survey, an Elected Officials Forum, and an Intergovernmental Advisory Committee meeting. The results will be used in selecting and developing preferred options.

***Stage 4 will involve a final public review of the draft Regional Growth Strategy.***

Consultation activities will include a final series of public engagement workshops, an Elected Officials Forum, an Intergovernmental Advisory Committee meeting and a well-publicized formal public hearing.

**Consultation Principles**

The Regional Growth Strategy consultation is designed to uphold the following eight principles:

1. **Inclusiveness** through offering multiple methods of participation;
2. **Innovation**, using new technology and creative consultation, analysis and communication methods;
3. **Clarity** of the consultation process, with clearly expressed goals and objectives;
4. **Flexibility** in the design of the process, to incorporate ongoing feedback on preferred or alternative methods of consultation;
5. **Honesty** about the constraints that the process has to operate within;
6. **Respect** for all participants;
7. **Integrity**, with commitment to take input and feedback into consideration; and,
8. **Timeliness**, with substantial early involvement and rapid analysis of results at each stage.

## 1.4 Analysis Method

The consultant team systematically reviewed and analyzed all input received. All comments were categorized into topic areas and clustered to bring together similar comments. To prioritize issues, the team gave three points to an issue each time it was selected as one of the top six priorities by a small group at the Regional Ideas Symposium, and an additional point each time it was raised outside the top six or at a community meeting. This resulted in four clear groupings: highest, high, moderate and lower priority. In addition, the team reviewed comments on feedback forms submitted at community meetings and via the SLRD website to confirm that the issues identified there were included.

The consultant sorted input on vision and goals by topic (e.g. regional land use, housing, transportation, etc.) and by type (e.g., vision, goal, objective, or strategy). Initial analysis of Regional Ideas Symposium input revealed nine topic categories. The consultant sorted vision and goals input from the community workshops and feedback forms in the same manner, and clustered similar comments. The next step was to develop draft goal statements for each topic area, attempting to reflect the main themes and to incorporate actual wording of consultation participants.

Using the following definitions, the consultant then drafted objectives and strategies for each category (again, incorporating the actual wording of participants as appropriate).

### Definitions

**Vision:** an overall description of our desired future.

**Goals:** elements of our vision.

**Objectives:** specific intended initiatives and activities that move us toward our goals.

**Strategies:** ways and methods of moving toward our vision, goals, and objectives.

**Targets:** desired levels of achievement within particular time frames.

The consultant then developed the draft vision statement, drawing on and synthesizing the input received and reflecting the full range of topic areas.

Following input from an Elected Officials Forum, SLRD staff and the consultant revised the vision and goals. Additional changes were made based on input from the Regional Growth Strategy Steering Committee.

## **Part 2: Description of Stage I Consultation Activities**

This section describes the following Stage I consultation activities:

- Regional Ideas Symposium;
- Community engagement workshops;
- Elected Officials Forum;
- First Nations Pre-Consultation.

### **2.1 Regional Ideas Symposium**

A full-day Regional Ideas Symposium was held on September 15<sup>th</sup>, at Totem Hall in Squamish. The Symposium brought together approximately 120 stakeholders from throughout the region, including representatives of local governments, First Nations, community-based associations, senior government agencies, academics, RCMP, school districts, health authorities, and the development and planning profession. It was designed to provide a forum for local elected officials and a mix of stakeholders to come together to identify and discuss growth management issues / priorities, and share ideas about the future of the region.

The three primary objectives of the symposium were as follows:

1. Raise awareness of regional trends and important issues with respect to growth and growth management;
2. Identify and discuss key issues to be addressed in our Regional Growth Strategy; and,
3. Begin to develop our regional vision and long-term goals.

#### **Presentations**

Following an opening prayer by Squamish Nation members and opening remarks by the SLRD Chair, three guest speakers provided thought-provoking presentations during the morning session of the Symposium: David Baxter from the Urban Futures Institute, Jodie Siu from Smart Growth BC, and David Marshall from the Fraser Basin Council. David Baxter provided an overview of expected demographic and housing trends impacting the SLRD and its sub-regions over the next 25 years. Jodie Siu gave a presentation on the application of Smart Growth principles at the regional level. David Marshall spoke on the value of collaborative leadership in planning and promoting regional sustainability. Copies of the three presentations are available from the SLRD website ([www.slrld.bc.ca](http://www.slrld.bc.ca)).

#### **Small Group Discussions**

The afternoon session provided an opportunity for participants to break out into facilitated groups to identify and prioritize key issues, and to discuss visions and goals for the Regional Growth Strategy.

Participants were divided into fourteen discussion groups of 8 to 10 people, and each table had a facilitator who led the discussion, kept notes, and reported back to the large group. The groups performed two exercises. The purpose of the first group exercise was to identify and discuss

issues that participants felt the Regional Growth Strategy should address. Issues were discussed in the following broad categories:

- Regional land use;
- Transportation;
- Affordable housing;
- Economic development;
- Other

The purpose of the second group exercise was to discuss long-term vision and goals for the region. The results of this discussion will be used in preparing draft vision and goal statements. Questions considered included:

1. What is our vision of the region in 2025? Imagine the ideal state of the region, with a healthy environment, economy, social fabric, and governance.
2. What long-term goals will guide us toward that vision?

A PDF version of detailed notes from the 14 small group discussions is available on request (32 pages, 525 KB) by contacting [rgs\\_info@slrd.bc.ca](mailto:rgs_info@slrd.bc.ca).

## **2.2 Community Engagement Workshops**

The SLRD hosted an initial series of four community workshops during the week of September 27<sup>th</sup> to initiate community-level discussion on management of growth in our region over the next 20 years. The workshops were designed to achieve three objectives:

- Awareness and understanding of the Regional Growth Strategy process and regional growth issues;
- Broad public input on strategies for addressing these issues;
- Exploration of our vision and long-term goals for the region.

The 2.5-hour evening workshops focused on providing opportunities for dialogue in a roundtable format. The workshops included a presentation by the SLRD Manager of Planning and Development on the background and context of the Regional Growth Strategy. Through facilitated discussion, participants then addressed the following questions:

1. What do you think are some of the key growth management issues in our region?
3. What is our vision of the region in 2025?
4. What long-term goals will guide us toward that vision?

Workshop participants were also invited to complete feedback forms, highlighting their individual perspectives on priority issues, regional vision, and goals.

The mix of workshop participants included residents, community association representatives, planners, developers, elected officials, and First Nation members. The following table indicates the number of participants in each community workshop.

<b>Community</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Venue</b>	<b>Number of participants</b>
Squamish	Sept. 28	Sea to Sky Hotel	8
Whistler	Sept. 29	Myrtle Philips Elementary	12
Pemberton	Sept. 30	Pemberton Community Centre	18
Lillooet	Oct. 1	Lillooet Community Center	18
<b>Total</b>			<b>56</b>

The SLRD received 25 completed feedback forms from workshop participants and 22 via completion of a feedback form on the SLRD website.

## 2.3 Elected Officials Forum

A half-day Elected Officials Forum was held October 28 at the Pemberton Community Centre. Fifteen SLRD Directors and Council members participated, along with five administrators and staff. Detailed results of the Elected Officials Forum are found in Section 3.5 of this report.

Participants discussed and completed a feedback form on draft versions of the issues analysis, vision statement, and goals. Results included the following:

- Clarification of the scope of the RGS in relation to LRMPs (Land and Resource Management Plans);
- Addition of two issues (solid waste management and public safety) and reframing of several other issues;
- Overall confirmation of the ranking of priority issues, with one issue elevated in priority (water and air quality) and another lowered (protection of parks, green space, and habitat);
- Reworking of the draft regional vision statement;
- Reworking and validation of draft goals in five areas (regional land use, transportation, housing, economic development, and parks and recreation).

In addition, participants achieved consensus on three key items:

- It will be important to develop a set of broad principles as a core element of the RGS;
- The existing timeline for development of the RGS is adequate for development of a high-level document, possibly to be called a Memorandum of Understanding, and completion of detailed studies or strategies can be completed in a second phase;
- Having a forum for dialogue among elected officials is valuable, and should be continued beyond the RGS process.

## 2.4 First Nations Pre-Consultation

Pre-Consultation with First Nations included initial meetings and discussion with First Nations leaders to seek their input and explore options for more effective First Nations involvement in

the RGS process. Several First Nations have expressed interest in being more fully involved, through Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the SLRD and other less formal mechanisms.

The SLRD recognizes that there is a significant opportunity to build constructive and enduring relationships with local First Nations through this process and that this work could lay the foundation for continued constructive dialogue on regional growth management and land use planning issues. Building these strong and respectful working relationships is especially important given the many development pressures in the Squamish-Whistler-Pemberton corridor and the complexity of issues facing all levels of government.

Under the existing Consultation Plan, there are already several mechanisms for First Nations participation in the RGS strategy development that are being pursued. These include open invitations to participate in the Regional Ideas Symposium (held Sept 15, 2004), Public Engagement Workshops, and Elected Officials Forum. First Nations representatives have participated in each of these.

The SLRD recognizes, however, that First Nations have specific needs and preferred mechanisms for communicating within their communities and with other levels of government. For the RGS to effectively engage First Nations in ways that work for the individual Nations, innovative approaches and additional resources will be needed.

The SLRD is currently developing a proposal for an enhanced First Nations consultation program. It is intended to be a discussion document to be further refined in collaboration with First Nations representatives.

The purpose of this proposed consultation program is to outline process steps that will enhance First Nations participation in the development of the SLRD Regional Growth Strategy. The four specific goals of this program are to:

- Raise awareness of the RGS and growth management issues in the SLRD region among First Nations communities;
- Provide appropriate mechanisms for First Nations leadership and community members to provide input on the RGS;
- Compile and present First Nations input and feedback in a manner that informs the development of the Regional Growth Strategy;
- Foster effective working relationships and collaborative planning among First Nations and local government bodies in the region.

## Part 3: Issues Summary

A primary objective for the first stage of consultation on the SLRD Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) was to identify and prioritize growth management issues. This section of the report synthesizes and describes the key issues emerging from the Regional Ideas Symposium, the four community meetings, and feedback forms submitted by meeting participants and others.

The issues are clustered into five subsections – highest, high, moderate, lower - based on the frequency with which they were raised and the priorities assigned by symposium participants. The issues were then further ranked by the elected officials during the October Elected Officials Forum. Results from the Elected Officials Forum are described in Section 3.5.

Four of the top five specific issue areas reflect the topics that symposium and community meeting facilitators asked participants to address (in addition to “other”: regional land use, transportation, housing, and economic development.

Priority level	Issue category
Highest	Regional Land Use
High	Alternative Transportation Modes Housing Parks, Green Space and Habitat Regional Economic Development
Moderate	First Nations Issues/Interests Water and Air Quality Protection of Agricultural Land Reserve Alternate Routes to the Sea-to-Sky Highway Backcountry Use and Access
Lower	Governance/Communication Energy Health Care and Other Services
Sub-Regional	Various

### 3.1 Highest Priority Issues

The top priority issue-area or theme to be addressed by the RGS is regional land use.

#### Regional Land Use Issues

Participants had much to say about regional land use. The overarching theme was a desire for a sense of predictability, order, and balance to land use in the region. Related issues relevant to specific aspects of land use are dealt with separately in this report (such as First Nations issues; parks, green space and wildlife corridors; backcountry use; and the Agricultural Land Reserve).

Many participants called for the RGS to focus on urban containment or nodes of development around existing urban communities. People cited “Smart Growth” principles and the desire for compact communities with accessible public spaces and services, parks, and cultural and recreation amenities. The “node” concept was also seen as addressing concerns about an over-

reliance on cars, promoting healthy lifestyles (i.e. walking or cycling to work and services), and enhancing overall environmental sustainability (e.g. fewer impacts on the environment).

Participant input suggested a number of guiding principles for a regional land use strategy:

- Providing a mechanism for coordination of land use planning within the region and with adjacent jurisdictions;
- Acting as a catalyst for better coordination and harmonization on land use issues among government agencies;
- Providing a process in the near future for dealing with long-term land use decisions related to the 2010 Olympics;
- Improving SLRD communities' understanding of planning issues and the need for a broader rather than a narrow, community-focused vision;
- Providing a basis for management of rural lands;
- Addressing the need for sustainable land use that will protect both the region's natural environment and cultural heritage that are key to the region's identity.

### **3.2 High Priority Issues**

Stage I consultation participants ranked alternative transportation modes, housing, protection of parks, greenspace and habitat and regional economic development as high priorities.

#### **Alternative Transportation Modes**

Under high priority issues, the first on the list was concern about an over-reliance on, and lack of alternatives to, automobile use within and through the region. Participants saw automobiles, most notably in the Sea to Sky corridor, as a prime contributor to increasing air and noise pollution. They also expressed concern about highway safety in the face of increasing traffic levels – levels that will peak during the 2010 Olympics. A number of people said highway use and planned expansions are having a negative impact on wildlife habitat. Finally, some people from rural areas cited conflicts between automobiles and slow-moving farm vehicles and livestock.

Participants are looking to the RGS to articulate a strategy for alternatives to the car – strategies that meet the test of affordability and convenience and include alternatives such as:

- Improved public bus service within and between Squamish and Whistler;
- The introduction of bus service between communities in the north and south portions of the region (although it was noted that rural areas might not be able to sustain such a service);
- Possible creation of a Regional Transit Authority under the SLRD;
- Passenger/commuter train service using existing rail lines (with schedules that are commuter-focused);
- Additional flight options and possibly airport expansion in Pemberton;
- Water transport such as a high-speed ferry from Vancouver Airport or Coal Harbour to Squamish;

- Cycling and pedestrian “commuter” and “recreation” trails – commuter trails both within and between communities and a Sea to Sky Trail through the entire Sea to Sky corridor and on to Lillooet via the Douglas Trail / Highline Road.

## **Housing**

Housing issues also ranked in the top three high priority issues. Participants conveyed a strong message about the need to plan for and support a range of adequate housing types in the region.

***Affordable housing:*** Although there was debate about what defines “affordable”, many people articulated the need for housing that low to middle income residents and employees can afford, especially in the face of substantially increased housing costs in Whistler, Squamish and Pemberton. Overall, participants were looking for a regional approach. Suggested strategies for increasing the stock of affordable housing included:

- Requiring that a minimum percentage of new housing development be social housing (e.g. 10%);
- Looking for low-maintenance designs for such housing;
- Accessing government financing and assistance programs to provide social housing;
- Redirecting a portion of property transfer taxes to create affordable housing;
- Providing incentives to developers to provide mixed housing through rezoning, regulation of density, and Official Community Plans;
- Asking developers to provide a contribution, such as parkland, to social housing;
- Support for smaller than standard lots, infill or secondary suites and rental suites.

***Seniors housing:*** A number of participants cited the need to plan now to meet the housing needs of increasing numbers of seniors in the region, so that people who are currently middle-aged can live and remain as seniors in their home communities. Incentives to developers were suggested here as well.

***Higher-density housing:*** A number of people saw a greater emphasis on higher-density housing in urban areas as a key element of a regional housing strategy. They spoke of higher-density units being part of mixed housing, close to where residents live, work and play and as part of the solution to the affordability issue. Suggested strategies also included infill housing, units above commercial space, LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) standards, and environmentally friendly “green buildings”.

***Mix of housing:*** In general, participants spoke of a vision of a housing mix in the region that addresses the needs of families, singles, seniors and low-income earners. Additionally, a number of people raised the town centre concept, where mixed housing is developed within walking distance to services. This was viewed as especially important for seniors.

## **Parks, Green Space and Habitat**

Issues of habitat and parks/green space emerged as a high priority at all consultation events. Participants expressed that the RGS should:

- Address preservation of habitat and ecological functioning;
- Plan for, develop, and protect natural wildlife corridors;

- Acknowledge and address conflicts in values between environmental interests, tourism and industry;
- Define and protect ecologically sensitive areas from activities such as heli-skiing, independent power projects (IPPs) and other development;
- Define areas for parks/green space and consider a regional parks management function.

## **Regional Economic Development**

Stage I participants also ranked a regional approach to economic development as a high priority. They cited several principles and components as being fundamental to a regional strategy:

***A proactive and specific strategy:*** There appeared to be consensus that a regional economic development strategy should be proactive, identifying both potential economic opportunities and strategies for actualizing them. It was suggested that the strategy should build on synergy within the region and simultaneously address opportunities at the community level. Additionally, the strategy needs to address the imbalance in economic activity and opportunity between the south and the north parts of the region.

***Sustainability:*** Participants saw sustainability as a cornerstone of the strategy. Many people said that the region’s natural environment is its greatest economic and cultural asset and development must be done in a way that sustains the region’s beauty and character. However, it was pointed out that being a “playground” for visitors does not necessarily build a sense of community.

***First Nations:*** Raised frequently was the issue of sensitivity to and participation of First Nations in economic development. It was felt that First Nations must be meaningfully involved in the process; one group said the SLRD Board should have a First Nations representative to facilitate this engagement.

***Community involvement:*** At least half of the small groups at the symposium noted the importance of involving individual communities in planning and decision-making regarding the region’s future economy. Several people suggested communities need to learn about the issues and need to invest in infrastructure and flexible zoning to attract and facilitate investment.

Participants had an array of economic development strategies that would harmonize with the above principles:

- Value-added industry;
- Focus on the region within a global context;
- Additional tourism, eco-tourism, and agri-tourism development;
- “Clean” industry such as knowledge-based, high tech, alternative power sources, high performance buildings, and new models for existing industries such as forestry;
- Incentives for local industry;
- Increased apprenticeship and education opportunities to encourage young people to stay in the region;
- Use of local resources;
- Coordination of an industrial land use strategy so communities are not competing for the same types of businesses;
- Opportunities for good-paying jobs;
- Description of how to best use taxes in the region;

- Develop distinctive export products including experience-based products like the Okanagan wineries;
- Develop an alliance between local producers and retailers, including a joint marketing strategy;
- Plan for swings in population growth;
- Develop a regional commercial centre and growth nodes rather than strips of commercial activity along the highway (see “Growth Nodes” for more on this subject).

### **3.3 Moderate Priority Issues**

The second tier of issues was raised with somewhat less frequency but with no less passion.

#### **First Nations Interests**

A key message emerging from Stage I consultations was that the RGS must acknowledge and incorporate First Nations interests. The range of those interests included:

- Aboriginal title and rights;
- Reserve lands and settlement (e.g. impacts of various land uses on adjacent reserve lands);
- Participation of First Nations in the region’s economic development;
- First Nations involvement in consultation and decision-making around the RGS (e.g. a collaborative process such that the RGS reflects First Nations’ needs, desires and values).

#### **Water and Air Quality**

Water and air quality surfaced as an important priority in Stage I. Residents were concerned about:

- A healthy and sustainable supply of water – need to assess the impact of development and population growth on water supplies;
- An air and water quality management plan, perhaps as part of a broader regional environmental plan that also addresses groundwater, storm water, solid waste and effects of climate change;
- An integrated planning process, based on improved inventories, indicators and understanding of ecosystem functions.

#### **Backcountry Use and Access**

As a specific issue, backcountry use and access comes out as a comparatively moderate priority; however, this issue was also likely implicit in discussion about parks, green space and wildlife corridors (a high priority issue). Participant remarks about backcountry use related to:

- The need for a process to manage commercial backcountry use, backcountry tenures, and existing/new applications;
- Maintaining and expanding public access to the backcountry;

- Balancing backcountry use with preservation of habitat and wildlife corridors.

### **Protection of Agricultural Land Reserve**

Participants from all parts of the SLRD said Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) lands in the region need to be preserved for food production. They expressed concerns about pressure mounting to use these lands for housing, commercial or industrial development. In the words of one symposium group, ALR lands “should not be seen as a land bank.”

### **Alternative Routes to the Sea-to-Sky Highway**

Several people in the southern part of the SLRD (Whistler and south) said the region needs alternatives to the Sea-to-Sky highway. No specific highway routes were cited, but the notion of bicycle paths adjacent to the highway and sustainability of road design were raised.

## **3.4 Lower Priority Issues**

### **Governance/Communication**

Participants made a number of comments related to governance and communication. The overarching theme of these comments was a need for improved coordination between all levels of government within the region – regional, municipal, First Nations, provincial and federal. In fact, this theme was part of many of the high and medium priority issues.

Coordination and cooperation were seen as fundamental to reducing confusion, overlap, gaps and inefficiencies. Specific examples people gave of issues requiring such coordination included Land and Resource Management Plans (LRMPs), Independent Power Project (IPP) policy, and emergency planning for fires, floods, landslides and highway accidents. Finally, several people said the region should look at whether it has sufficient governance and the right governance relationships in place (e.g. local government jurisdictional boundaries, potential change in SLRD boundaries, and relationships with First Nations).

### **Energy**

As noted above, several people suggested that the RGS needs to deal in some way with IPPs as part of an overall policy on energy in the region, a policy based on development of renewable, alternative and innovative energy sources.

### **Health Care and Other Services**

Two of the symposium groups said health care services for a changing, aging population are an important aspect of regional planning. Participants also raised a variety of quality of life topics such as access to services in rural areas (challenges in topography, distance, competition for service), the need to inventory needs and thresholds for services, and preserving a sense of place, pride and community.

### 3.5 Summary and Ranking of Issues by the Elected Officials Forum

This section of the report synthesizes and describes the prioritization of key issues emerging from the Elected Officials Forum. Fifteen elected officials and five staff persons took part in the Elected Officials Forum held October 28, 2004 in Pemberton. Elected Officials were asked to fill out a circulated feedback form in order to individually rank the issues in order of importance. The issues of solid waste management and public safety were added to the list of issue categories. The issue of social infrastructure (later changed to social services) was added to under “health care”. This was intended to include court services, human resources programs, and all social services. The results of the Elected Officials’ prioritization exercise are shown in the following table.

Priority level	Issue category
Highest	Regional Land Use
High	Water and Air Quality Alternative Transportation Modes Regional Economic Development Housing Protection of Agricultural Land Reserve Energy Health Care and Social Services
Moderate	Governance/Communication First Nations Issues/Interests Parks, Green Space and Habitat Backcountry Use and Access
Lower	Public Safety / Critical Infrastructure Solid Waste Management Alternate Routes to the Sea-to-Sky Highway

The similarities and differences between the ranking of issues by the public and the EOF can be briefly summarized as follows:

- Both the public and the Elected Officials Forum ranked the issue area of Regional Land Use as a very high priority;
- Water and Air Quality was ranked as a higher priority by the Elected Officials than by the public at large;
- Regional Economic Development, Housing, Alternative Transportation Modes were all considered a high priority by the Elected Officials and the public at large;
- Protection of Parks, Greenspace and Habitat was seen as slightly more important by the public than by the Elected Officials;
- Protection of the ALR, Energy, Health Care and Social Services and Governance Issues rose in importance under the Elected Officials’ ranking of regional priorities.

## Part 4: Vision and Goals

### 4.1 Overview

The purpose of the regional vision and goal statements is to support collaborative planning and consensus-based problem solving over the long term. In addition, these statements will provide a foundation for development of strategies and identification of specific actions. Our vision of the region in 2025 and beyond is as follows:

**The Squamish-Lillooet Regional District is a spectacularly beautiful, economically vibrant region. The region features a number of distinct, liveable communities that have been developed within a regional context that respects individual community values and diversity. Residents and guests enjoy easy access to outdoor recreation opportunities. Communities work together, respecting the natural environment and celebrating the uniqueness of the history and culture of the region and its residents. Government organizations, of all levels, actively engage residents in the region in their decision-making processes and collaborate and communicate effectively among themselves.**

### 4.2 Regional Land Use (settlement areas) Goals

1. Plan and manage land use based on natural units and systems (i.e., drainages, watersheds and ecosystems).
2. Develop our urban centres within strong containment boundaries.
3. Retain and strengthen the unique identity of each community.
4. Encourage mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented development that fits in with the natural setting.
5. Encourage retention of greenspaces and undeveloped spaces between existing communities.

### Objectives

- Identify areas most appropriate for settlement and development (avoiding environmentally sensitive and culturally sacred areas).
- Negotiate urban containment boundaries.
- Ensure view-scapes are not impaired by commercialism.
- Create green buffer areas, separating settled areas.

### Strategies

- Use a set of sustainable development design guidelines and tools.
- Use flexible zoning that encourages higher density development.
- Encourage infill development.

## **4.3 Transportation Goals**

- 1. Expand alternative transportation options.**
- 2. Create an integrated, multi-modal and viable transportation system that is efficient, clean, flexible and affordable.**

### **Objectives**

- Create bike lanes and off-highway paved trails (for bicycles, motorized scooters, etc).
- Expand bus and shuttle services.
- Promote car sharing and carpooling.
- Establish passenger rail services to meet the needs of residents and guests.
- Develop regional airport capacity.

### **Strategies**

- Create a regional transportation plan.
- Work with the Greater Vancouver Regional District to ensure connection and integration of transportation systems.

## **4.4 Housing Goals**

- 1. Create a range of housing types for seniors and other population groups and lifestyles.**
- 2. Develop and protect affordable housing that allows people to live, work and play in their own community.**

### **Objectives**

- Create an abundance of seniors housing.
- Ensure that the region has affordable housing options for all residents.
- Expand the supply of housing, and of necessary supports, for all life stages.

### **Strategies**

- Review and address the factors that affect affordability (e.g., house taxes).
- Allow secondary suites.
- Assist with and contribute to non-market housing.
- Plan for a variety of housing types, including live/work and aging in place options.

## **4.5 Economic Development Goals**

- 1. Diversify the regional economy, encouraging local spending and small business.**
- 2. Expand opportunity for a range of employment types and pay levels.**
- 3. Reduce poverty and enhance affordability by encouraging a vibrant economy.**

### **Objectives**

- Expand employment and other economic opportunities, especially for First Nations.
- Increase regional self-reliance (e.g., through production and consumption of locally grown food).
- Continue to expand tourism and related sectors, including recreation/arts/culture.
- Establish downtown tourist attraction areas.
- Attract seniors who want to move away from major urban centres.
- Proactively target knowledge-based and high tech industries.

### **Strategies**

- Create regional and local economic development strategies.
- Ensure economic development officers are responsive to community needs and independent from politics.
- Find ways to prevent economic leakage out of the region (e.g. promote local procurement/spending).
- Adopt policies to make farming feasible.
- Preserve agricultural land.
- Adopt “open for business” policies to encourage investment.
- Market tourism at the regional scale, with a year-round focus.

## **4.6 Parks and Recreation Goals**

- 1. Manage access to public lands and waterways.**
- 2. Manage the variety and accessibility of recreational facilities.**

### **Objectives**

- Create a region-wide trail system (including high elevation accommodation facilities).
- Limit motorized recreation to designated areas.

### **Strategies**

- Establish a regional parks function with the SLRD.
- Encourage development of desired recreational facilities.

## **4.7 Environment/Ecosystem Goals**

- 1. Restore and protect ecological functioning across all areas.**
- 2. Protect water quality and air quality.**

### **Objectives**

- Restore environmentally damaged lands.
- Create wildlife corridors.
- Minimize solid waste.
- Protect water quality.
- Protect air quality.

### **Strategies**

3. Encourage the use of non-polluting forms of energy (e.g., solar, wind, and geothermal).
4. Implement community management of forest and waterways.
5. Create and enforce strong environmental bylaws (e.g. banning pesticides in urban areas).

## **4.8 Social and Cultural Goals**

- 1. Maintain and strengthen sense of place, with strong community spirit and a diverse population.**
- 2. Create an exceptional quality of life so that whole extended families choose to live in the region from cradle to grave (e.g., children born here have the opportunity to continue to live here, retire here, and have their grandkids stay here too).**
- 3. Provide adequate health, social, educational, recreational, and commercial services to meet the needs of people of various ages, abilities, income levels, etc.**
- 4. Respect and celebrate ethnic and cultural diversity, including First Nations heritage.**

### **Objectives**

- Improve access to community resources and information.
- Improve access to education and lifelong learning.

- Improve access to health care.
- Expand opportunities for volunteerism.
- Develop traditions of including newcomers and welcoming visitors.
- Improve child-friendliness of communities.
- Enhance cross-cultural understanding and harmony.
- Celebrate each distinct community and culture, with pride and respect.
- Encourage the arts and cultural vitality.
- Promote understanding and appreciation of local and regional heritage.

### **Strategies**

- Maximize safety through healthy communities' initiatives.
- Celebrate heritage (e.g., through increased First Nations influence in tourism, signage revealing area history and resource heritage).
- Rename parks, reclaiming original names.
- Map community assets, including natural and social/cultural amenities.

## **4.9 Governance Goals**

- 1. Make decisions in ways that are inclusive, coordinated, and transparent, based on mutual respect and a culture of collaborative management.**
- 2. Strengthen regional governance.**
- 3. Seek just resolution and accommodation of Aboriginal title and rights.**

### **Objectives**

- Promote collaborative, regional thinking.
- Develop an improved regional governance model, including partnership among local government and First Nations.
- Coordinate and integrate planning across jurisdictions.
- Strengthen public involvement in governance and planning.

### **Strategies**

- Develop inter-governmental jurisdictional agreements including First Nations.
- Provide transparent financial reporting and other accountability information for all levels of government.
- Review regional boundaries, in consultation with neighbouring regional districts.

## **Part 5: RGS Implementation**

In addition to discussing substantive issues and goals, Symposium participants commented on ideas about the Regional Growth Strategy itself. These ideas included broad goals and suggestions on implementation and monitoring.

This section presents a summary of participant input regarding what the RGS should accomplish and how it should be implemented and monitored.

### **Objectives**

Participants in the stage I consultation suggested the following objectives for the Regional Growth Strategy itself.

- Create and adopt a holistic regional vision, including principles.
- Develop long term, multi-generational solutions.
- Develop a shared framework to live by, decide by, and plan by.
- Foster effective communication, coordination, and collaboration and among local governments and other levels of government.
- Integrate the various needs of communities.
- Embrace adaptive management that is responsive to change.

### **Strategies**

- Aim high; define what we want to achieve.
- Adopt and apply Smart Growth principles.
- Build new guidelines, similar to Whistler's Natural Step strategy.
- Promote a strong regional perspective in planning.
- Understand and fully utilize current tools under existing legislation.
- Build collective ownership of the Regional Growth Strategy and ensure all governments buy in.
- Emphasize the importance of compromise and consensus building in planning and collaborative decision-making.

### **Implementation and Monitoring**

- Ensure that guiding principles are embedded in land use policies and zoning.
- Engage local governments, First Nations, provincial and federal agencies, businesses, community groups, and the public in Regional Growth Strategy implementation.
- Monitor quality of life on a regional basis.
- Review and revise the Regional Growth Strategy on a regular basis.
- Provide continuing education on the Regional Growth Strategy.
- Communicate the regional vision to provincial and federal agencies.

## **Part 6: Conclusion and Next Steps**

The completion of this report marks the end of Stage 1 of the SLRD Regional Growth Strategy consultation process. Analysis of stakeholder input on what growth management issues need to be addressed reveals a remarkable level of commonality across the region. Similarly, analysis of input on the regional vision and goals suggests high levels of agreement on the direction desired by residents, elected officials, and stakeholder organizations. As the next stages proceed, however, there will likely be significant challenges in finding common ground and building the necessary buy-in.

Stage 2 of the process will include further scoping of the key issues, and more detailed research and analysis on selected issues. In addition, the SLRD will widely circulate this report and invite feedback and additional input.

Stages 3 and 4 will each include a series of community meetings and other consultation activities designed to ensure that the RGS process actively invites input from residents, community based organizations, elected officials, First Nations, federal and provincial agencies, and other interested parties.