

August 6, 2022

Mayor and Council
Resort Municipality of Whistler
4325 Blackcomb Way
Whistler, BC V8E 0X5

Submitted via email to: corporate@whistler.ca

Dear Mayor and Council:

On behalf of our 700 members who employ more than 80% of Whistler's workforce, I want to extend our appreciation for the extensive engagement process underway for the 4500 Northlands Development ("the Development").

As one of the last remaining undeveloped sites in close proximity to the village, we support its re-zoning for employee housing and market accommodation units.

We commend the commitment by Council and staff to an enhanced planning process for this project.

Based on our review of the conceptual designs, The Whistler Chamber of Commerce ("the Chamber") makes the following recommendations:

- Optimize employee housing opportunities to address **our community's severe and persistent housing crisis**;
- Prioritize **commercial or retail development on site to integrated health, daycare or other community services and spaces**; and
- Ensure **input from employers and workers collected by the Chamber** is reflected in results of the Phase 2 engagement process.

Employee Housing Opportunities

Current alternative design concepts for the Development include a total of 42 employee bed units. In the Chamber's view, this limited number of units is not sufficiently additive to our community's existing employee housing inventory. The proposed 42 employee bed units will quickly be absorbed by the additional workforce required by operational activities on site.

The Chamber strongly recommends that Council and staff prioritize a net positive contribution of employee bed units associated with this Development to address our community's severe employee housing shortage. The Chamber believes that optimizing the Development's density and mix of market

accommodation units with a much larger proportion of resident restricted housing will not only meet the net positive employee housing in the Development, but it will also provide an appropriate market lift for a meaningful community amenity contribution. A higher proportion of resident occupied units will animate the Development and bring a dynamic atmosphere to the space year-round.

Several ideas have been suggested with respect to the Development's community amenity contribution. The Chamber recommends family-focused employee housing take top priority with additional units outside the Development.

We acknowledge the successful efforts of the municipality to meet its Official Community Plan (OCP) objective of housing 75 per cent of Whistler's workforce in our community. However, we believe that the severity of today's employee housing crisis is impacting OCP Policy 5.2.2.10, which states: *"when determining the objective of housing 75 per cent of Whistler's workforce is being met, factor in quality, livability, appropriateness and affordability indicators such as number of people per room or dwelling, percentage of income spent on housing, life stage and family size."*

The use of community amenity contribution funds to develop market-restricted covenant-based homes, Whistler Housing Authority (WHA) homes, and WHA rentals would create ownership and rental opportunities for community members and additional family-focused will also address the 80% of family renters who cannot afford to purchase. Whistler's real estate prices have permanently eclipsed most community members' ability to purchase market inventory, prioritizing the need for resident-restricted ownership and rental opportunities.

Finally, the Chamber supports a strategic approach to the market accommodation units proposed for the Development. The Chamber recommends Phase 1 market accommodation units to allow for long-term rental opportunities that could help counteract Whistler's consistent decrease in market residential housing. Furthermore, re-zoning under Phase 1 could facilitate the Developer's allotment of a substantial portion of units for resident-restricted purchase and rental opportunities within the Development.

Employee Housing Opportunities – Recommendation Summary:

1. Optimize the number of resident restricted and employee bed units that could be delivered on site with the goal of addressing Whistler's employee housing crisis through private development.
2. Prioritize community amenity contribution funds on development of resident-restricted housing ownership and rentals at a suitable site in our community, with more family-friendly units.
3. Require the Developer allocate a proportion of the accommodation bed units to resident-restricted housing to make a net positive contribution to employee housing above the employee requirements for servicing the final Development.

Commercial and Retail Development

The Chamber's view is that the proximity of the Development to Whistler Village negates the need for significant additional commercial or retail space other than those that address the services needs of our community.

The Chamber supports designating the commercial space for integrated healthcare, daycare or other non-profit office and community gathering space. When surveying our members, two key necessities are missing in Whistler for long term retention of residents – affordable housing as addressed above and access to health care, in particular primary care and general practitioners. Wellness and recreational facilities do not address this need.

The Chamber also recommends that given the Development's proximity to the village, any additional retail outlets reflect capacity needs identified by our business community to service the resort, such as high-end food and beverage businesses.

As noted above, it is the Chamber's view that any commercial and retail development will require employees, further exacerbating the need for increased employee housing on and off this site.

Commercial and Retail Development – Recommendation Summary:

1. Prioritize community needs and benefits within the Development's commercial and retail spaces.

Chamber Engagement with Employers and Workers

As our members attempt to achieve some measure of economic recovery while battling severe staff shortages, the Chamber has taken the lead in gathering input from these important stakeholders who remain integral to the viability and sustainability of our community and Whistler's guest experience.

Businesses and their employees have had little available time or resources to participate in the online survey. Therefore, the Chamber directly engaged with employers and workers to collect their feedback.

Overwhelmingly, our members and their employees have requested action on one issue – **employee housing**. This issue underpins employers' ability to attract and retain talent and employees' ability to safely live and work in our community and, ultimately, stay in Whistler.

Younger workers' clarion call for employee housing during the Whistler Sessions initiative was evident in a recent opportunity to learn more about the Development. During that session, younger workers identified the Development as one of the remaining employee housing opportunities in close proximity to the village yet feared significant employee housing additions would not come to fruition. In the Development's current proposed form, these concerns are valid.

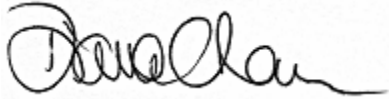
The Chamber is confident that our recommendation to prioritize employee housing is aligned with what our community's employers and employees want and need and should be appropriately weighted in the Phase 2 engagement results.

Chamber Engagement with Employers and Workers – Recommendation Summary

1. Ensure valuable input from employers and workers collected by the Chamber is meaningfully reflected in results of the Phase 2 engagement process.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of these recommendations.

Sincerely,



Diana Chan
Board Chair, Whistler Chamber of Commerce

CC: Virginia Cullen, Chief Administration Officer, Resort Municipality of Whistler
Chris Vick, Director, Hotel Association of Whistler
Eric Griffith, Chair, Restaurant Association of Whistler