

To: Mayor and Council
From: The Whistler Tennis Association Board of Directors
John Konig - President, 2225 Gondola Way, Whistler, BC, V8E 0B4

Members of the Whistler Tennis Association (WTA) were present at the council meeting on February 21st when RMOW planning manager, John Chapman, presented a report on the Phase 2 Community Engagement Process for the redevelopment of 4500 Northlands. Overall, we were pleased to hear municipal staff acknowledge that, according to the feedback they compiled in this process, the protection of a long-standing recreation facility is a priority for the community.

The WTA obviously holds and champions the same view. We believe our message carries much more weight now that the consensus on the issue is clearly evident in the extensive public engagement process. The WTA feels compelled to clarify a number of conclusions that we draw from our own analysis of the Phase 2 Community Engagement Report which we felt were not fully reflected in the presentation, particularly with respect to a multi use racquet centre. There were, in our view, also some errors of omission that we feel must be identified.

First of all, a bar graph on page 9 of the report illustrates how respondents answered the following question, which appeared at the beginning of the survey:

“What land uses do you feel are best-suited and should be prioritized for this site? Select the uses that should be included. Check all that apply.” 3 of the 19 options offered were; Employee housing, Large scale recreation facility (including tennis and pickleball), World class tennis facility.

From the 365 participants who completed the questionnaire 237 prioritized employee housing, 189 prioritized a large scale recreation facility (including tennis and pickleball), and 120 prioritized a world class tennis facility, leading staff to conclude that employee housing was the “top priority”. We feel this is misleading because the questionnaire effectively split the community's support for a multi-use racquet centre into two separate categories. If the votes for both of these very similar choices are consolidated then 309 prioritized the community's desire for a multi use racquet centre. It becomes clear that recreation is the “top priority”.

It is interesting to note that while support for a multi use racquet centre was split into two categories, support for child care facilities, health care offices, community spaces, senior centre were combined into one category giving it a strong third place finish right after a large scale racquet centre.

The community's expressed support for recreation does not end there. Question 4 of the report asked:

“The above development overlay demonstrates the physical footprint of the existing tennis facility that occupies the site. Retaining this footprint would limit the ability to

deliver a mix of housing forms, as well as other community uses and public open space. Given the space requirements, do you feel a dedicated tennis/pickleball facility with indoor courts, like what currently exists, should be a priority inclusion on the site?"

Despite the arguably leading nature of this question, 53% of respondents answered *yes* (i.e. we want to keep the facility even if it means less housing), vs. only 38% *no* (i.e. take down the WRC and build more housing). Why is the result to this critical question not highlighted in the report?

Incidentally, The Pique Magazine ran an online poll shortly after the RMOW presented the Phase 2 Community Engagement Report to council, asking: "[How do you envision the future of the Whistler Racket Club?](#)" Results from over 1400 respondents reflected a nearly unanimous degree of support to prioritize recreation with only 5% of votes cast indicating the "Whistler doesn't need a racket club." The remaining 95% of votes were split between three different options to retain (12%), rebuild (55%), or relocate (28%) the Whistler Racket Club.

We also wish to draw council's attention to Question 5 of the Phase 2 Engagement Report, which is perhaps an even more leading or at least a more loaded question than Question 4 discussed above. It asks:

"Other community amenities could be included on site including employee housing, childcare, healthcare space, and community space. Should a dedicated tennis/pickleball facility be a priority for the resort community above other community needs?" A slim majority of respondents replied "Yes" to this provocative question.

Although the WTA prefers not to think about this process in zero-sum terms, pitting one community asset and its users against another, we think this speaks to the strong desire within the community to make recreation, and more specifically a multi use racquet centre, the top priority for Whistler in the Northlands Blvd. redevelopment process.

If the community were to decide to eliminate an existing recreation facility to meet other community needs, why is this question posed in a way that pre-determines the fate of the WRC as the one and only asset that should be sacrificed? Could the same goal not be accomplished by removing existing baseball diamonds, a driving range, a skating rink, a few holes on one of the three golf courses, etc.? The WTA does not advocate for the removal of *any* existing recreational asset, but if this is the debate that staff wishes to raise in the community then we expect it to be presented in a fair, comprehensive, and thoughtful way.

Finally, we highlight the last question in the Phase 2 Community Engagement Survey, which asked respondents to express: "Any final thoughts that weren't captured in the questionnaire." According to our analysis of the results, recreation once again came out on top with 86 of the responses to this question expressing their support for a multi-use racquet centre vs. just 21 responses mentioning employee housing.

The WTA would like to reiterate that we prefer not to frame this process in zero-sum terms. Our mandate is to advocate for tennis within a multi use racquet centre. The WTA supports the inclusion of staff housing in the comprehensive Northlands rezoning process, but only insofar as it does not eliminate an existing recreational and social amenity that has served the needs of thousands of residents of and visitors to Whistler for over 30 years. The unequivocal support that was expressed in the Northlands Phase 2 Report for recreation as the top priority echoes our position.

Whistler Tennis Association Board of Directors.
John Konig - President
2225 Gondola Way, Whistler, BC, V8E 0B4