

JUDE ALLEN
3358 Lakeside Road
Whistler, BC
Email: [REDACTED]

August 22, 2020

BY EMAIL: corporate@whistler.ca

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

Attention: Council Members

Dear Council:

Re: Mis-Use of Lakeside Park and Heavy Traffic Congestion in Alta Vista

I am writing regarding the longstanding issue of increasing congestion that has exploded in the small residential area of Alta Vista over the last few years as tourists flock to Lakeside Park on day trips throughout the summer. I apologize for the length of this letter, however, I think it is important that you understand the full scope of the problem. The residents of Alta Vista and, in particular, those of us who live along Alta Vista and Lakeside Roads, are having to endure hundreds of vehicles clogging our local residential streets on a daily basis. The traffic doesn't begin and end on the weekends either. As long as the weather is decent, vehicles arrive in droves to our small residential neighbourhood. They carry with them hundreds of people who bring their bikes and water toys, wagons full of food and toys, with children and pets in tow.

I'm sure you're aware that Lakeside Park was never ever intended to be a public park. Three acres of the park were donated by a local developer, with the intention that it would become a pocket park for locals, not an RMOW-sanctioned venue for out of town tourists. Further evidence of that is that much of Alta Vista only has parking on one side of the street. Our infrastructure was not designed to be a major public park for tourists. It cannot be argued that this is a tourist town and we need the revenue because the vast majority of visitors to the park are day trippers, who contribute absolutely zero to the community and leave us with nothing but their garbage.

The park is so crowded that visitors are using the fenced area along the creek to hang out when the grassy area fills up. People trying to walk or bike through the park are constantly trying to push through the obstacle course of people in order to avoid an accident. Locals can't use the park anymore because it's been taken over. This issue has been progressively worsening for years now and, rather than address the problem, Council appears to be encouraging it by adding two stand alone bathrooms at the end of Lakeside Road that are highly visible, very ugly and greatly devalue our community.

This problem is not restricted to Covid, with British Columbians choosing to staycay, although this is the worst year by far. Social distancing is as non-existent as Council's efforts are to remedy it.

When the streets are filled from the highway to the lake with vehicles and there is seemingly nowhere left to park, visitors park along the shoulder of the roads and around the corners, blocking the view to drivers who try to turn into or out of our streets. Vehicles line up all along the streets, engines running, looking for an opening and when they can't find one, they circle the block, waiting. After parking, they often leave their vehicles running for several minutes. People park on both sides of the roads, even where parking is prohibited, diminishing the already clogged area to one vehicle of traffic only. They often park on the Valley Trail and either stay there or hang out for a while to drop off friends / family, blow up water toys, play their tunes, get changed, dump their garbage, etc.

Day trippers regularly use our driveway and yard as a staging zone. Friends or family will drop them and all of their gear and family members in our driveway to wait while the driver looks for parking, or they just stay in front of our house for 10-20 minutes to unload everything rather than use the cul de sac at the end of the road which was designed for that purpose. Their kids and dogs use our yard for a playground while the adults all stand around and talk. The same play happens in reverse when they repack their vehicles. Many people think it's perfectly okay to park across our driveway and block us in, or out as the case may be. I've often seen people use other owners' driveways as a parking lot when the owners aren't home. Low tech measures, like putting large stones in front of driveways, doesn't always work as tourists have been known to move them and park there anyway.

Owners worry that a child or pet will be seriously injured or killed due to the congestion. Scores of people walk on the streets to access the park, causing even further delay for vehicles trying to come and go and heightening the concern that accidents will occur. I've seen some vehicles being ticketed (not often) but no one is towing. There is no park presence to control the crowds and no one is picking up the garbage being left along our roads and in our ditches (other than by residents who can't stand to look at it anymore). The bylaw officers ride by on their bikes, doing very little, and never address the parking situation. There are simply no measures in place to control traffic in the area.

The one speed bump on Lakeside Road does nothing to slow people down. Since the road shoulders are filled with cars and the Valley Trail on the other side is filled with people and their belongings, there is barely room on the street for one car to get by, let alone two. Frustrations often rise, then the honking and yelling begins, and people start speeding over the Valley Trail to try and circumvent the congestion.

The slated improvement for the Valley Trail is allegedly a plan to raise it up from street level, presumably in an attempt to divide vehicles from people. If people think it's okay to use our driveways as parking lots, staging zones and turnabouts, do you really think a raised Valley Trail will have an effect? Not likely, but it will probably cause more bike accidents.

Vehicles use our driveways to turn around – all day. We had one car turn into our driveway so fast and hard that he missed and ended up driving his pickup truck into the ditch and, ultimately, impacted a portion of our driveway really hard. He just backed out and left, leaving us with the mess to clean up. Our dog used to like to lie down in the driveway but we can no longer allow that (in our own yard) because there is a very real danger she will be run over. I know other owners who are in the same situation.

Excessive litter is commonplace and it's not unusual to find big garbage bags full of the day's leftovers thrown in ditches as a gift to residents. The garbage cans at the park are almost

always filled over capacity, with tourists just dropping their garbage beside them. This is a serious bear attractant.

Several years ago, tour buses began arriving to our small hood and literally parked on the Valley Trail blocking the entrance to the park off Lakeside Road. They would stay for up to an hour while the international tourists sat at the park and used the facilities. The drivers never turned off their engines, polluting the residential area with their exhaust. Although I called Bylaws about it several times, it continued. I'm sure that but for Covid and a lack of international visitors this year, we would still be enduring it. The park was clearly not designed for this purpose either.

Revitalization work has already started in the neighbourhood. When it reaches Lakeside and Alta Vista Roads, is there any plan in place to prohibit all but local traffic? I can't imagine it becoming any worse here in summer months, except if that happens.

A suggestion that many residents agree with and makes sense would be to prohibit parking on the local streets to residential use only. Park users should only use the designated parking lot and perhaps a small portion of Hillcrest Drive. If the parking lot is full, then capacity at the park has been reached, especially if you add in local users who walk to it. The local streets should be permit parking for residents and guests only. A limited amount of day permits could be issued for the boat launch area so people can still use it to access the lake and park their vehicles along the street without causing congestion. Another suggestion would be to add large speed bumps on the streets to slow traffic. I understand owners along Alta Vista Road already approached Council to request this and were turned down. Why?

Homeowners in Alta Vista question Council's lack of concern and action over this serious issue and, worse, the steps that are actually being taken by Council to encourage it! You need to take this matter seriously, and now before someone is badly injured, or worse. The park and neighbouring residential streets need to be returned to the purpose for which they were intended – local residential use for the taxpayers who live here.

I look forward hearing from you with plans for a proactive approach to a fair and safe resolution.

Sincerely,

Jude Allen