



# Building Better Homes and Communities

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**Affordability and Choice Today**

## ACT Solutions

### Neighbourhood Infill Housing for Whistler's Resident Workforce, Resort Municipality of Whistler, BC

#### Issue

Management and service sector workers looking for places to live in resort communities with huge, expensive houses on grand lots often face a tough choice: commute, or live in a home they can't really afford. Landowners need concrete examples in order to envision how affordable housing can fit into their community.

#### Plan

The Resort Municipality of Whistler prepared and presented working examples of three infill housing projects that examined the feasibility of proposed scenarios on actual properties in Whistler. After partnering with a local residential design firm, the project team solicited community feedback on final recommendations for infill policy reform and required bylaw amendments. The project's two public forums and one design exercise tested and communicated regulatory changes that would be needed to clear the way for affordable infill housing.

#### Project Team

Architect Brent Murdoch  
CHBA Sea to Sky



**Example of infill housing using a lot split option.**

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Resort Municipality of Whistler  
Planning staff  
Whistler Housing Authority  
Residential property owners

#### Results

Before the trio of infill scenarios was selected and developed, Whistler's Task Force on non-cost resident housing laid out their must-haves:

- a resale price restriction applied to the designated restricted unit or lot;
- density no greater than that permitted under existing residential zoning;
- building setbacks reflecting current zoning requirements;
- lot splits resulting in one parcel that meets the standard residential minimum size of 695 m<sup>2</sup> with the other parcel at least 400 m<sup>2</sup>; and
- one of the newly created units restricted for resident employees.

***It could work for you!***

Program Partners:



**Diagram showing the layout for the lot split scenario depicted in the elevation drawing.**

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Working under these requirements and with input from 35 community members at the initial public forum, the design team chose three sites from the 11 expressions of interest submitted by property owners. Thirty-three community members attended the next public forum to discuss the most attractive and challenging features of the different scenarios:

- lot split;
- duplex; and
- multiple suite option.

“Everyone had their own opinion of what was the most attractive option,” says Guy Patterson, planner for the Resort Municipality of Whistler. “Some people said the multiple suite option, which is already happening to some extent in Whistler, was their favourite, while others preferred the duplex scenario.”

The infill working examples highlighted key design considerations such as parcel and building size, building orientation for views and solar access, design for neighbourhood compatibility, parking and building code requirements, and street frontages. The project team recognized zoning regulations, subdivision patterns and the construction challenges presented by the natural topography of a forested, mountain community.

The examples gave landowners a chance to imagine the potential impacts and opportunities created by proposed regulatory changes. Meanwhile, some community members focused more on the economic feasibility and attractiveness of infill housing for their own properties.

“The crux of it for many people is the money, and we had a lot of people ask: ‘Why would I do this if I’m not going to get anything back?’” Patterson says. “Our answer to them is that infill housing gives people an opportunity to work in Whistler and remain living in Whistler, while at the same time it provides an opportunity to further develop their property at no less than a break-even cost.”

Thanks to the development scenarios, many landowners recognized that additional dwelling units could add value to the property, contribute to their monthly mortgage payment, or provide an avenue to access equity in their property. Financing and affordability considerations were not directly addressed in the examples, yet there was still considerable interest in lot-specific infill scenarios.

*It could work for you!*

