

fresh eyes on

GIBSONS

This report was prepared in October, 2000 for the Town of Gibsons by the UBC Urban Studio – a joint effort of the UBC Schools of Architecture, Community and Regional Planning, and the Landscape Architecture Program, under the direction of professors Ron Walkey, Penny Gurstein, and Patrick Condon.

We owe a great deal of thanks to Mayor Barry Janyk and Town Planner, Chris Marshall without whose assistance this report would not have been possible. We would also like to thank those individuals and organizations who provided resources and information towards the preparation of this report. They include:

Town of Gibsons Staff and City Council
Sunshine Coast Regional District
Gibsons Economic Development Partnership
Community Futures Development Corporation

John McRae, Realtor
Emily Perry, Gibsons Chamber of Commerce
Steve O'Neil, Gibsons Landing Business Association
Lola Westell, Elphinstone Pioneer Museum

CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	i
Contents	ii
Executive Summary	iv

PART ONE – COMMUNITY ANALYSIS

A-1	Demographics	1
A-1.1	Age And Gender	1
A-1.2	Family Characteristics	1
A-1.3	Dwelling Types	1
A-1.4	Ethnicity	2
A-1.5	Education Levels/Fields of Knowledge	2
A-1.6	Labour Force / employment	2
A-1.7	Income Levels	3
A-1.8	Transportation	3
A-2	Social History of the Community	4
A-2.1	Local History	4
A-2.2	Salient Opinions Expressed By The Community	6
A-2.3	Needs Identified by the Community	7
A-2.4	Current Social Networks	8
A-2.4	Future of Gibsons' Social Networks	9
A-3	Physical History of the Community	10
A-3.1	Current Physical Networks	10
A-3.2	Future of Gibsons' Physical Networks	11
B-1	Architectural Types, Historic and Emerging	13
B-2	Mass/Void Analysis of Community Structure and the Public Realm	22
B-3	Heritage Buildings and Landscapes	28
B-3.1	Our Definition of Heritage	28
B-3.2	Designated Heritage	28
B-3.3	Other Locally Recognized Buildings and Sites	28
B-3.4	Buildings & Landscape Worthy Of Respect:	31
B-4	Major Shared Visual and Experiential Landscape Resources	34
C-1	Topography, Geology and Soil	37
C-1.1	Geomorphology of South Western British Columbia	37
C-1.2	Effect of Glacial Activity on Soils	37
C-1.3	Soil Mapping of the Gibsons Area	37
C-1.4	Suitability of soils for Land Use	38
C-1.5	The Importance of Soil and its Effect on Water Resources	39
C-2	Vegetation and Terrestrial Habitat	40
C-2.1	Vegetation	40
C-2.2	Mammals	40
C-2.3	Birds	40
C-2.4	Environmentally Important Sites	41

CONTENTS

C-2.5	Forests: Corridor Potential and Visual Resource Management	41
C-2.6	Historical Patterns of Vegetation Removal	42
C-3	Stream Systems And Stream Habitat	43
C-3.1	Watershed Character	43
C-3.2	Hydrology	44
C-3.3	Stream Summaries	46
D-1	Transportation System	48
D-1.1	Street Systems	48
D-1.2	Car Dependency	49
D-1.3	Engineering Standards	49
D-1.4	Alternatives/Challenging the Status Quo	49
D-2	Drainage System	50
D-2.1	Charman Creek Watershed and Drainage System	50
D-2.2	The Weird and the Wonderful	51
D-2.3	Traditional Drainage Systems	52
D-2.4	Alternative Drainage Systems	52
E-1	Economic Profile of The Community	53
E-1.1	Economic Sectors and Employment	53
E-1.2	Partnerships Toward Development	54
E-1.3	Visions Toward Economic Development	55
E-2	Real Estate Development Trends	56
F-1	Existing Municipal and Area Economic Development Objectives	58
F-2	Existing Municipal Ecological Protection Objectives	60
F-3	Regional and Provincial Economic and Ecological Protection Objectives	62
F-4	Public Opinion and Debate	64

PART TWO - TEAM PROPOSALS

Team One	Fundamental Building Blocks	64
	Vision	75
Team Two	Fundamental Building Blocks	88
	Vision	101
Team Three	Fundamental Building Blocks	114
	Vision	123
Team Four	Fundamental Building Blocks	143
	Vision	153
Team Five	Fundamental Building Blocks	165
	Vision	173

INTRODUCTION

In the fall of 2000, thirty-three UBC students from the Schools of Architecture, Community and Regional Planning, and the Landscape Architecture Program applied their “fresh eyes” to the coastal town of Gibsons and its hinterlands. This unique six week Urban Studio was run as a series of small charrettes, wherein students were introduced to the town in September, and by the end of October were to produce a multifaceted blueprint for the future.

A fundamental goal of the Urban Studio is to explore the power of urban design to structure an equitable, healthy, sustainable and gratifying context for the social lives of a particular urban context. In meeting this goal, students are required to address the following objectives:

- to design for people and their real needs;
- to use form and structure to make places;
- to understand the various schools of urban design thought and to experiment with their adaptation to local circumstances;
- to provide a particular site with evocative visions for a complex and dynamic urbanism; and
- to enhance the economic, social, and ecological sustainability of urban form, and of a selected site in particular.

WHY GIBSONS?

The population of Gibsons and its environs will, over the next four decades, double from its present population of 10,000 to an estimated 20,000. This is a phenomenal rate of growth and will inevitably change the look and feel of Gibsons. The Urban Studio posed some basic questions such as: what will this larger community look like, feel like, be like; how will the citizens of this landscape work, have families, age, make friends, acquire a home, make a life, face death; and will this change be for the better or for the worse? Gibsons represents, in microcosm, all of the issues that confront the larger Georgia Basin landscape, some of which include aging-in-place, long commutes, telecommuting, tourism, and making the transition from a resource-based economy to a service-based economy. The coincidence of these important issues places Gibsons in a unique position to reconsider its role within the larger region, and to chart its course for the future.

REPORT ORGANIZATION

This report is divided into two parts: “Community Analysis” and “Team Proposals”. Part One, Community Analysis, provides a basic understanding of Gibsons by means of a fairly typical empirical analysis of past and existing site conditions (i.e., social and physical history, building typology and heritage, biophysical features, infrastructure, economic development, and policy). For this section, students were also required to ask: Does what you have found have physical consequences for the future of Gibsons?

Part Two presents the five team proposals, each of which are divided into two sections. In the first section, Fundamental Building Blocks, teams started by composing a “manifesto” as a way of developing a strong position toward how various issues and problems facing Gibsons as presented in Part One were to be addressed. Using their manifesto, teams developed a series of physical directives – or patterns – that, when combined with the empirical information from Part One, would result in their physical proposition for Gibsons. The second component of each team proposal shows the synthesis of their fundamental building blocks into an overall vision for the future.

CONCLUSION

The following report represents six weeks of intensive analysis, brainstorming, synthesizing, and form-making. However, it is only a start. While many of the issues and ideas presented in this document are already familiar to many Gibson’s locals, they have not been illustrated until now. Thus, the research, building blocks, and alternate visions contained in this document are intended as a source for continued dialogue and debate among Gibson’s citizens and public officials. In short, it is hoped that this document will provide the seeds for further investigation and exploration, and a means for envisioning what the Town and its environs could one day become.