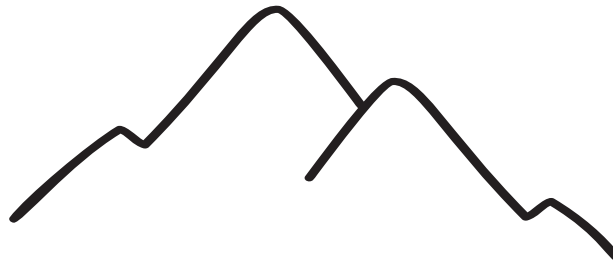




THE
WHISTLER
SESSIONS
SCENARIOS



*The results of the **Whistler Sessions** work was culminated on the shared, unceded territory of the Lil'wat People, known in their language as Íl'wat7úl, and the Squamish People, known in their language as Skwxwú7mesh.*

We respect and commit to a deep consideration of their history, culture, stewardship and voice.

THE WHISTLER SESSIONS SCENARIOS



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Message from Mayor Jack Crompton

Welcome to the Whistler Sessions scenarios.

The four scenarios you are about to read are meant to be a catalyst for discussion. They are intended to ask questions of ourselves, policies, development and community priorities. Not one of these scenarios are idyllic or preferred, nor can they be influenced or lead by one entity.

I invite you to use these scenarios creatively; host a discussion night with friends, write a short story or contemplate how the scenarios may influence your day-to-day.

The four scenarios were conceived by a group of extremely dedicated citizens including residents, businesses owners, non-profits and youth from within the Sea to Sky Corridor. I want to extend my deepest appreciation and admiration for these individuals who missed work, extracurricular activities and time with the friends and families to deliver this work. At times, it was a hard and emotional process. But the relationships built and the outcome of our work was extremely rewarding. Although the scenarios have been completed, our work continues. I look forward to sharing how the RMOW will be incorporating the scenarios into our planning, and how others in the community are utilizing them.

I am thrilled to present the Whistler Sessions work to you. I hope they inspire, motivate and evoke a sense of curiosity of what's to come and how we may work together to shape our shared future in Whistler.





Message from CAO Virginia Cullen

Pre-COVID, the future of Whistler was seemingly easier to predict; growth in visitation was linear, the general workforce population was strong, though under strain of adequate housing.

During the pandemic, the past certainty around visitation and resort success was absent. The Whistler Recovery Working Group (WRWG) struggled to define or outline the future we were aiming for post-pandemic. Without this certainty, the need was apparent for contemplating alternative future states in Whistler.

Consensus within the group was that we had an opportunity to build back better; to create a balanced state where environmental and social priorities were just as critical as the tourism economy.

It was time to think more deeply about what our ideal and improved future state should include and to also consider what other future states could occur given our external influences.

Led by Reos Partners, workshop participants were taken through a transformative scenario planning exercise over three days.

From this work, The Whistler Sessions were conceived.

If at the end of the day these stories promote discussion amongst the community about the future, and plans, strategies and policies are reviewed with a renewed perspective – the transformative scenario planning process would have done its job.

I appreciate the participants' contributions. This project required an enormous amount of time, personal energy and willingness to be vulnerable. I am grateful for this unique opportunity to get to know my fellow community members on a deeper and personal level.

One insight shared at the end of the workshops was that the outcome was more like art than science. Many of us struggled at the beginning of the process with detaching from the idea that we were creating idyllic plans for the future. Many of these scenarios have and will evoke an emotional response. This is good and is similar to art. Most art is not there to make you feel good. It is there to make you think differently.

I look forward to hearing from the community how you might use these stories in your day-to-day and how they may influence your future decisions.

Introduction

The “Whistler Sessions” Scenarios are stories about what could happen in Whistler’s future, from 2022 to 2050.

They are not predictions about what will happen (forecasts) or what should happen (a vision). Rather, the scenarios hypothesize different ways the future could unfold for Whistler’s communities, economy, environment, and culture. The purpose of these stories is to offer a shared language for discussing how the future could unfold and aims to help people working to improve Whistler’s future create more resilient and collaborative strategies.

The starting point for these stories is our current environment, in which many important community initiatives are already underway in key areas such as housing, climate action, and community balance.

While some things about the future are certain and constant, such as Whistler’s geography, these scenarios explore what is uncertain about the future, considering both factors within the community and external to the community.

The content of these scenarios was created by a scenario team representing diverse experiences and perspectives from across the community who together explored questions about the future, including:

Who will live, work, and feel a sense of belonging in Whistler? What kind of community will Whistler be?
Who will be able to afford to be in Whistler, and who will want to?
What could the future hold for Truth and Reconciliation in Whistler?
How might development unfold in the face of both pressures for growth and limits to growth?
How might climate change affect the community and economy, and how might Whistler respond? How effective might those responses be?

This process highlighted **seven key dimensions of uncertainty about the future**. The table that follows summarizes how each scenario unfolds differently for each uncertainty, and the narratives that follow tell a more detailed story of each scenario from 2022 to 2050.

1. **Thinking that drives decision making:** The logic, principles, or beliefs underpinning how Whistler’s government, businesses, and community make decisions that affect its future.
2. **Community wellbeing and belonging:** How the community’s social, physical, and mental health and wellbeing and sense of belonging changes as the future unfolds.
3. **Relationality between Lílwat7ú, Squamish Nation, and Whistler:** How the health, authenticity, and impact of relationships between Squamish Nation, Lílwat7ú and Whistler’s government and communities unfolds in the future.
4. **Housing and affordability:** The future of who can and cannot afford to live in Whistler and the conditions of their housing.
5. **Environment, sustainability, and responses to climate change:** How the environment and habitat in the Whistler area are affected by its future development, and how Whistler’s development agenda responds to environmental challenges.
6. **Development, economy, and infrastructure:** How economic drivers and infrastructure development decisions unfold in the future and the outcomes that result.
7. **Culture, arts, and education:** The future of the facilities and services that supports arts, culture, and education and the influence they have on the community.

Why these Four Scenarios, Why Now?

Whistler faces uncertain times for which there is no pre-existing roadmap to guide the way. In an uncertain future, scenarios help build shared capacity to talk together about how things could unfold. Thinking about the future together can help people collaborate to create the future they want.

The intent of the scenarios is to provide a structure and language to help Whistler's communities have those discussions about the future.

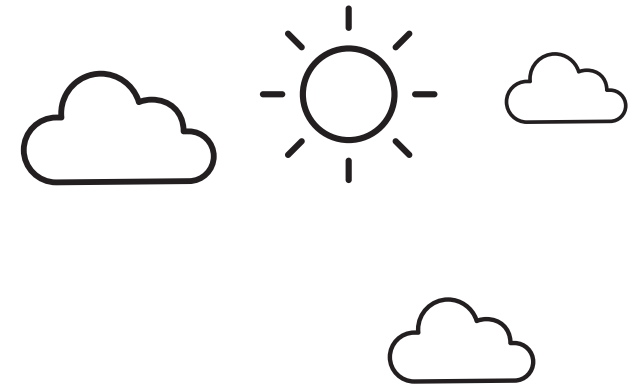
The scenarios do not aim to predict the future or state a desired vision. They aim only to provoke new thinking, make opportunities and threats more visible, and enable richer, more useful conversations about what Whistler must do to build the future it wants.

For example, the timelines of the various directions and implied decisions taken in the scenario narratives do not necessarily reflect the urgency needed for Whistler to address its toughest challenges. In this way, the scenarios aim to provoke that sense of urgency by telling a story of how things could unfold without it.

The scenarios also do not intend to represent any vision for "true" Truth and Reconciliation. It is not the place of the scenario team who created these stories to state that vision. While members of Squamish Nation and Lílwat7ú helped create these scenarios, this document does not attempt to speak for either Nation. In this way, each scenario serves a reminder of the work still ahead for Whistler on Truth and Reconciliation by telling a story about how efforts might fall short or see only lukewarm outcomes.

Each scenario includes several text boxes, which are summaries of articles from the real world that show how some aspect of the scenario already exists today. These include examples from both Whistler and around the world. Links to the source articles can be found in Appendix A.

The scenarios will likely evoke strong feelings, as they surface events that we may not yet have considered. Although we cannot predict or control the future, scenarios show us that we can work with and influence it.



How should organizations and individuals use the scenarios?

Whistler organizations and community members are encouraged to use the scenarios in planning sessions or community discussions about the future.

Scenarios play a unique role in strategic planning. Because they are fictional, and because there are several plausible stories, they offer the advantage of supporting informed debate without committing anyone to any particular policy position. More specifically, these stories support the formation of policy and strategy through the use of scenario-based dialogues. The purpose of such dialogues is not to redo the construction of the scenarios, but rather to use the scenarios as they are written to discover what can and must be done individually and collectively.

COMPARISON OF THE SCENARIOS



SKY'S THE LIMIT



WEATHER THE STORM



GROWING DIVIDE

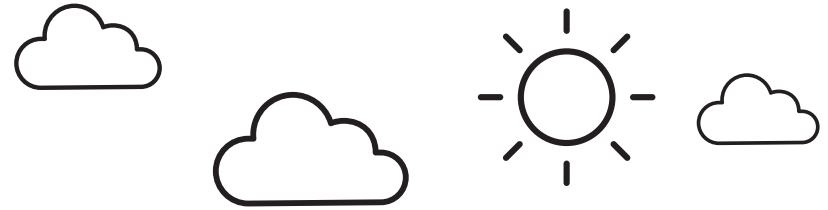


FROM THE ASHES



	SKY'S THE LIMIT	WEATHER THE STORM	GROWING DIVIDE	FROM THE ASHES
Thinking that drives decision making	Densification, and eventually growth, in response to tourism and housing demand	Restraint and innovation for housing and resilience to climate change	Leveraging wealth to manage limits to growth	Building a new community following collapse
Community wellbeing and belonging	Urbanization increases community diversity, with systemic racism growing and becoming more visible Growing workforce is less aware of available social services	Locally housed workforce contributes to culture and sense of belonging	Decentralized pockets of community in wealthy subdivisions Addiction and mental health challenges grow among the workforce	Rebuilt community based on connection to the land and uniqueness of Whistler
Relationality between Lílwat Nation, Squamish Nation, and Whistler	Attempts to advance Truth and Reconciliation results in new economic opportunities for First Nations	Partnerships to develop innovative water storage, fire suppression, and micro hydro energy projects	Wealthy philanthropists fund opportunities for First Nations	Reformed governance that elevates First Nations perspectives First Nations lead a return to a more traditional use of and reverence for the land
Housing and affordability	Affordable housing achieved through densification followed by growth	Affordable housing achieved through innovation and repurposing	High housing costs with workforce living out of town in high-density, dorm-style housing	Housing demographics shift with less second home ownership and reduced need for workforce housing.
Environment, sustainability, and responses to climate change	Per-capita decrease but overall increase in GHG emissions, and loss of green spaces and park land due to development	Innovation to build climate-resilient infrastructure, protect habitat, and achieve net-zero by 2050	Increased snowmaking to preserve the ski industry and increased GHG emission due to larger houses with few restrictions	Climate change drives collapse followed by a regenerative, land-based economy with reduced GHG emissions
Development, economy, and infrastructure	Densification, urbanization, and regional integration Increased commuter congestion	Innovative densification and net-zero, low-growth development	Housing and tourism infrastructure that caters to the wealthy	Resources scarce amid global, national, and local crises Repurposed infrastructure
Culture, arts, and education	Facilities and programs for artists and education expanded as population grows	Education emphasizes resilience to climate change, land-based learning	Arts and culture are vibrant in decentralized pockets, and private education expands	Arts and culture help drive the economy

SCENARIO 1

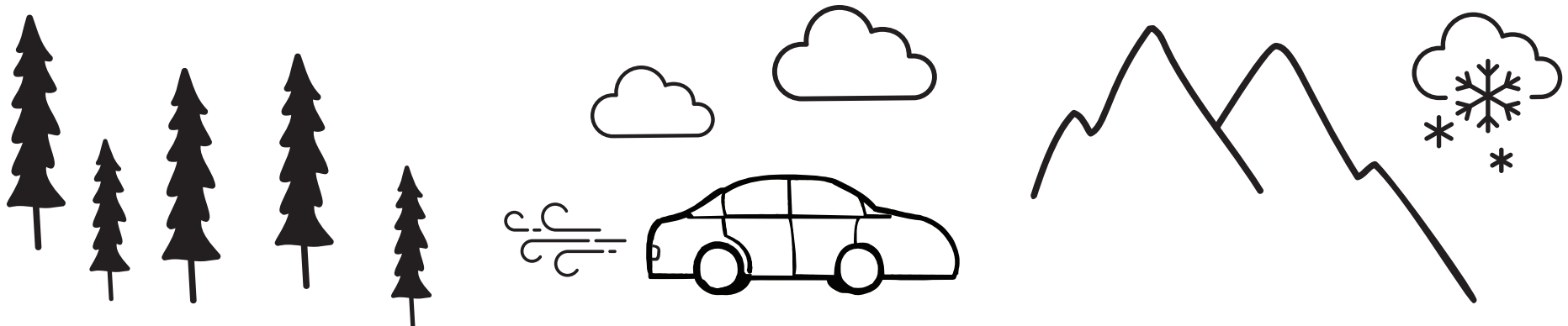


SKY'S THE LIMIT

Ever-increasing pressures for growth and densification lead Whistler to urbanize, regionally integrate, and diversify both economically and demographically.

As the resort town grows into a mountain city, more housing options and services become available. With Lower Mainland growth and expansion of the Vancouver International Airport, the mountain operator attracts more visitors through marketing campaigns and business strategies, driving further pressure to grow. As the town grows economically and in population, more stakeholders gain influence over its future, including those outside of Whistler and Canada. Major expansions in housing, commercial, transit, and tourism infrastructure come alongside bold affirmations of commitments to sustainability and Truth and Reconciliation.

As more diverse people participate in Whistler's government and businesses, including Squamish Nation and Lílwat7ú Nation members, reports of systemic racism become more prevalent. As the population grows, the underhoused population also grows as increases in affordable housing stock struggle to keep pace with demand. Market-driven pressures for growth come into tension with sustainability and other commitments, eventually leading to a loss of trails, park land, habitat, and missed emissions targets. First Nations derive economic benefits from growth and gain influence, but the learning and healing aspects of Truth and Reconciliation commitments make limited progress as the deep roots of systemic racism become more visible.



Why this story, why now?

This scenario asks us to contemplate how Whistler's future might unfold if the market pressures to densify and grow lead to a more built-up, populous, diverse town. The story represents an awareness that there are forces outside of Whistler's government's direct control that could influence its growth trajectory. It invites us to imagine how the policy "levers" used historically to limit growth might fail or become overwhelmed, or how future leaders of Whistler might choose or be forced to release them. This scenario also tells a cautionary tale about good intentions with respect to Truth and Reconciliation falling short of delivering on the outcomes of learning, healing, and understanding needed to heal past and present traumas.

EXTERNAL PRESSURES TO GROW

INCREASED GROWTH AT ODDS WITH SUSTAINABILITY AND SENSE OF PLACE

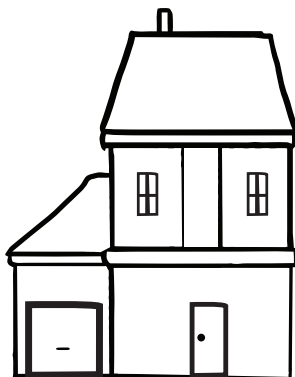
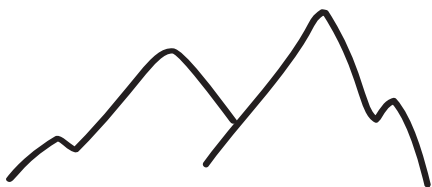
GHG EMISSION GOALS NOT MET

LOCAL ECONOMY GROWS WITH INVESTMENTS FROM STAKEHOLDERS OUTSIDE WHISTLER

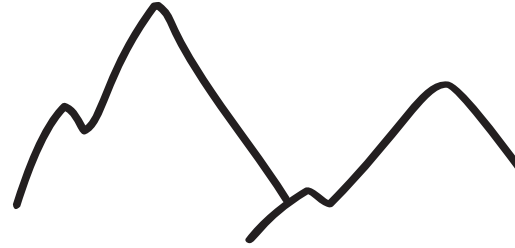
AFFORDABLE HOUSING STOCK DOES NOT KEEP PACE WITH POPULATION GROWTH

DESPITE THE PROMISES OF RECONCILIATION EFFORTS, RACISM INCREASES

THE
**WHISTLER
SESSIONS**



SCENARIO 1



IN 2023

- Lifting of all COVID-related restrictions worldwide sees international tourism bounce back, and within two years visitation to Whistler exceeds pre-pandemic levels.
- Each year brings more record-breaking wildfires.
- Mountain operator and Tourism Whistler run new marketing campaigns and business strategies to attract more visitors to Whistler.
- Densification and concerns over climate change dominate decision making throughout Whistler.
- These pressures provoke an agenda of green densification, aiming to house the workforce affordably in greener, denser homes and neighbourhoods.

IN 2024

- New recently elected Councillors from each of Squamish Nation, ʔílwat7ú, and Whistler Council build mandates into their portfolios to build closer government-to-government working relationships between each Nation and Whistler.
- Discussions also explore how to address systemic racism in Whistler's business and government institutions.

IN 2030

- Whistler redevelops many older buildings into lower per-capita carbon, denser housing.
- Whistler works with business leaders and the Province to begin developing housing and retail with new underground parking in the Village.

IN 2034

- Earlier collaborations between Whistler Council, Squamish Nation, and ʔílwat7ú have led to new efforts to support more representation of the Nations in government.

IN 2035

- Hotels routinely operate at 90% capacity, spurred by aggressive marketing.
- As 'green densification' will not alone meet the demand, Whistler's government, businesses, and developers pursue developments in Cheakamus and invite discussions with Squamish Nation and ʔílwat7ú about the Callaghan Valley.
- Driving time from Vancouver to Whistler averages four hours due to congestion, and car volumes necessitate new parking developments and shuttle systems in Whistler.



IN 2039

- Investment in Whistler and the region's development is at an all-time high.
- As more stakeholders come to own businesses and property in Whistler, business competition increases.
- Affordable housing supply has increased but not kept pace with growth in visitation or second home owners.



IN 2040

- Development begins for electrified rail that links Whistler, Vancouver, and the Fraser Valley.
- Due to intense housing development efforts, diverse demographics of employees can afford to live in Whistler.
- By 2041, the Sea to Sky Corridor population has doubled since 2022.



IN 2045

- Regionalized development strategy leads to a redevelopment and expansion of a university in the Corridor.
- The mountain operator works with Squamish Nation and Lilwat7ú to increase the Nations' representation in the management and decision making about resort development, eventually resulting in new developments in South Base and the Callaghan Valley.



IN 2036

- Cross-country skiing is no longer viable in Lost Lake Park due to climate change.
- Within two years, record-breaking flooding and debris flows in the Sea to Sky Corridor cause major damage, but urbanization and upgraded infrastructure helps mitigate the effects.



IN 2042

- Squamish Nation and Lilwat7ú members now living and working in Whistler report that systemic racism is worsening and becoming more visible.
- Tensions also arise in Whistler between the development priorities of government, regional, and foreign investors and the Lilwat7ú and Squamish Nation priorities for development.
- While green-growth policies reduce per-capita GHG emissions, the policies face resistance and implementation difficulties, causing overall emissions to rise.
- Development continues, but these difficulties do not help build the trust needed to pursue a Reconciliation agenda that goes beyond creating economic opportunities.

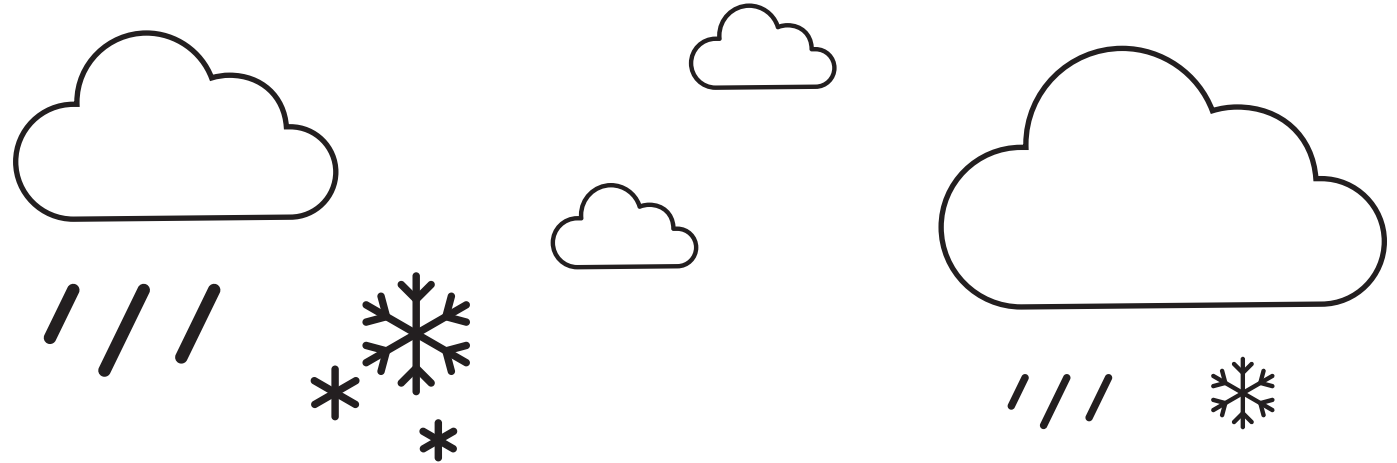


IN 2050

- Whistler's diversity and population have increased, and it becomes seen as a diverse mountain city.
- While Whistler has abandoned its goal to house 75% of the workforce in town, most of the workforce can afford to live in the Sea to Sky Corridor.
- Increasing traffic congestion continues to affect guests, commuters, and the environment.
- Systemic racism remains.
- Whistler's per-capita carbon footprint has reduced substantially, its overall carbon footprint has increased leading to loss of trail networks and parks.

THE WHISTLER SESSIONS

SCENARIO 2

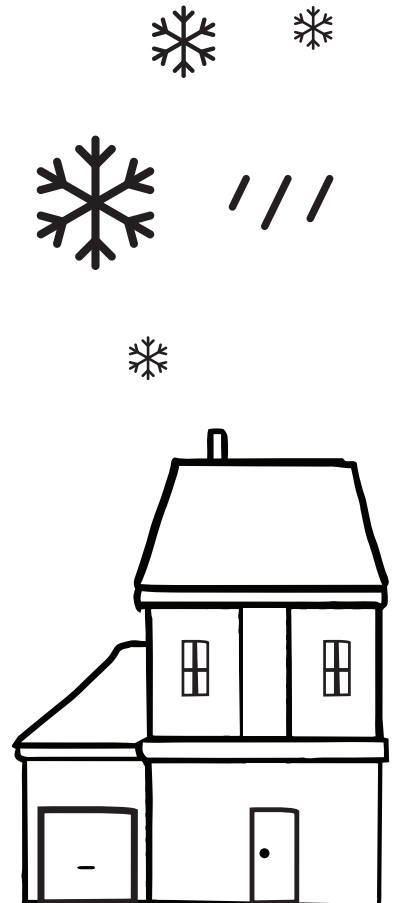


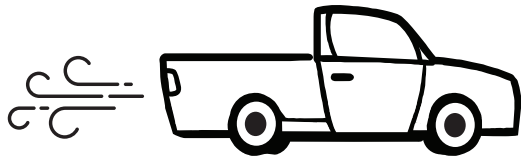
WEATHER THE STORM

Faced with increasingly stretched capacity and the urgent need to become more resilient to the earlier-than-anticipated effects of climate change, innovation becomes a dominant driving force in decision making throughout Whistler.

Policy shifts aim to restrain growth, cap visitation, aggressively pursue water management, wildfire preparedness and emergency responses, and commit all new housing development to affordable housing. The mountain operator and other businesses are partners with the municipality to cap visitation and develop low-carbon transit, and they partner with the Squamish Nation and the *Łílwat7ú* to develop renewable energy.

This agenda aims to realize Whistler's vision as a climate-resilient resort that preserves a sense of belonging for its residents. Implementing this vision proves politically challenging, government, business, and community leaders must incur costs and endure pains to realize the agenda. First Nations leadership grows in energy, resources management, and international sporting events, and youth leaders become more engaged in government. More innovative housing options and diverse tourism offerings become available, and Whistler becomes seen as the world's most climate-resilient resort town.





Why this story, why now?

This scenario is a story about innovation, restraint, and perseverance. It paints a picture of how creating a Whistler that is inclusive, sustainable, and prosperous could be a difficult journey. This story invites us to think about the opportunities that could influence Whistler's vision as a "place where community thrives, nature is protected, and guests are inspired". The scenario also asks us to consider how that vision could become more difficult to implement, for example due to accelerated effects of climate change, resistance to new policies, or scarcity of capital. With the many pressures that Whistler's environment, communities, and businesses may face in the future, this scenario tells a story about navigating the tensions to deliver on its vision as a sustainable, inclusive community.

**RESOURCE AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT
BECOMES A SHARP FOCUS FOR COMMUNITY**

**ACTIVE PURSUIT OF GROWTH MANAGEMENT
STRATEGIES**

**FIRST NATIONS AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT
COLLABORATE ON CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION**

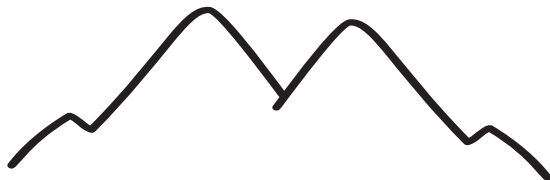
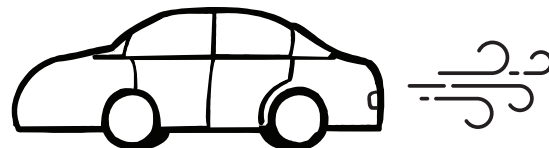
**INNOVATIVE MEASURES TAKEN SO
WORKFORCE CAN LIVE LOCALLY**

**FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP IN ENERGY,
RESOURCES MANAGEMENT, AND
INTERNATIONAL SPORTING EVENTS**

**TRANSPORTATION PLANNING
FOCUSES ON CAR-FREE TRANSPORT**

**ECO-TOURISM OFFERINGS
INCREASE**

**THE
WHISTLER
SESSIONS**



SCENARIO 2

IN 2023

- The global tourism economy is in recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Businesses and community organizations apply lessons learned from forced adaptation during the pandemic to operate with stretched capacity and short staffing.
- As visitation rates increase, by 2025 many small businesses shut down due to an increasing worker burn-out, while others limit their services.
- Health and social services also face increased demand and limited capacity.
- Current housing projects are completed providing additional capacity.

IN 2026

- Wildfires destroy another two small towns and force evacuations in several areas around BC.
- Heat-related deaths in summer and wetter falls/winters cause frequent flooding around the province and more rainy ski days in Whistler.
- The climate impacts cost lives, property, and habitat, but Whistler avoids major damage, and tourist inflow to Whistler continues unabated.

IN 2028

- Labour shortages lead businesses, social services, and the community to put more pressure on local politicians to increase affordable rental housing supply.
- Owners of employee housing are retiring and staying in their homes, further reducing availability.
- Leadership shifts priorities towards an innovation-heavy agenda to ensure Whistler will be a climate-resilient sustainable resort that still has local workers and belonging of Whistler culture.
- Whistler Council prioritizes ensuring that the tourism economy is resilient to climate change.
- Supported by the RMOW and mountain operator, the Lílwat7ú and Squamish Nation partner with the private sector to develop a new renewable energy company and an Independent Power Producer agreement (IPP).
- Squamish Nations and Lílwat7ú leaders host a highly acclaimed North American Indigenous Games event in 2027.

IN 2030

- Whistler begins enforcing new limits to trail building, aiming to preserve habitat, and revises its net-zero target date to 2050.
- New policies, including expanded tax schemes to fund a zero-emissions transit system, reduced parking spaces and increases to parking fees, pre-booking systems, and other incentives for car-free access.
- The mountain operator and other local businesses expand practices of employee shuttles and payment for commuter travel time.
- Building on earlier policies that eliminated single-use plastics, Whistler develops aggressive programs to reduce all forms of waste in response to climate change.

IN 2031

- Businesses implement structural changes, including new reservation systems that help manage demand and incentives for more full-time employment.
- Whistler's key players commit to partnership investments in wildfire mitigation and a resort-wide goal for carbon reduction, emphasizing that a reputation as the world's leading climate-resilient resort bring economic opportunities.
- These strategies of restraint continue to be politically contentious. The community feels the tension between a commitment to restraint and the need for services for a growing community.



IN 2032

- Łílwat7ú and Squamish Nation develop innovative water storage, fire suppression, and micro hydro energy projects.
- Key areas and features of Whistler, including the mountain, officially change names to include Squamish Nation and Łílwat7ú traditional names.
- Attracted by Whistler's leadership on climate action and lifestyle more remote workers move into the community.
- Investments in more affordable housing.



IN 2040

- Private investment has grown substantially in renewable energy, climate-resilient infrastructure, and upgraded snowmaking infrastructure.
- New infrastructure is designed to mitigate flooding and withstand increased rain runoff while storing water for fire suppression.
- The tourism economy is diversifying, with new offerings in ecotourism and learning about Squamish and Lil'wat history and culture.
- Tourism offerings grow in indoor recreation, water sports, and other weather-independent activities.
- Development for a zero-carbon rapid transit line from Vancouver to Pemberton while upgrading local transit.
- The Sea-to-Sky Highway undergoes flood resilience upgrades.



IN 2035

- Some community resistance to new policies remains but is countered with support.
- Whistler launches a "business accelerator" to incubate new ventures that aim to help it achieve net-zero.
- By 2038, 80% of Whistler's employees live in housing close to their place of work.



IN 2045

- Whistler becomes car-free, and day lots convert to community parks.
- Autonomous electric shuttles connect Squamish and Lil'wat communities.
- By 2047, the most severe "atmospheric river" event on record causes major flooding around Whistler, but upgraded infrastructure helps mitigate long-term damage.



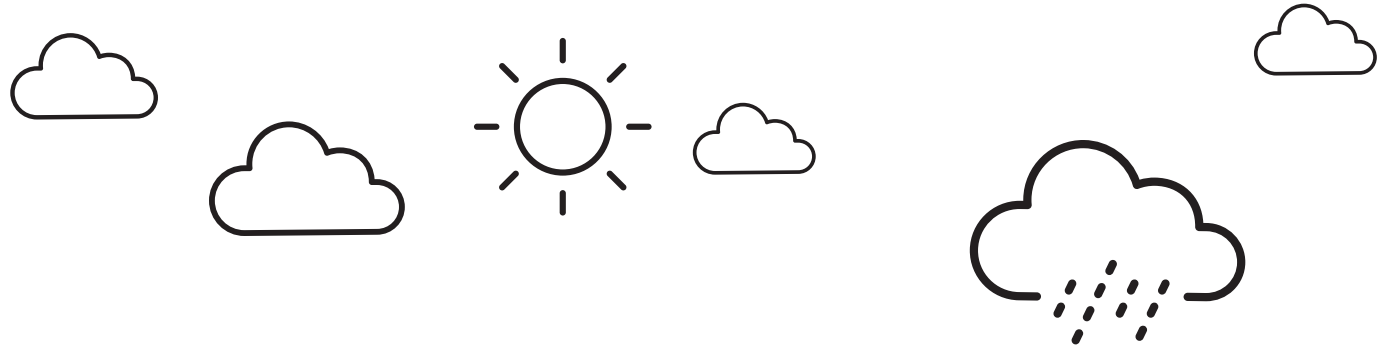
IN 2050

- Whistler is seen as the world's most climate-resilient resort town.
- The majority of the workforce is either housed in town or a short commute away from work.
- Whistler's culture aligns with the vision of a net-zero, climate-resilient, sustainable resort town with a "mountain culture".



THE WHISTLER SESSIONS

SCENARIO 3



GROWING DIVIDE

Tourism demand grows, pressure on affordable housing increases, and Whistler's government manages its growth strictly.

As pressures mount on businesses and services, growing operating costs lead to increased prices. Tourism revenue increasingly comes from wealthier tourists who stay for longer and spend more, serving as a "self-limiting" strategy for managing visitation while growing the economy. The economy becomes dominated by large businesses based outside of Whistler, and the mountain operator's influence on decision making grows.

The only new employee housing is dorm-style rental housing far away from employees' places of work. More second homeowners engage in local government and philanthropy, and social service priorities become driven by the mountain operator's and philanthropists' personal interests and resources. Bolstered by an increasingly wealthy population, local philanthropy supports new economic opportunities and cultural activities. New activities include diversified opportunities to learn about Squamish Nation and *Íílwat7ú* culture and history, as well as offerings represented as "Indigenous" that some see as culturally appropriative.

Whistler's "mountain culture" shifts into a form more influenced by wealthy visitors and residents. Long-term and new wealthier residents enjoy a high quality of life and vibrant culture in their communities, while systemic gentrification puts economic burdens on the workforce that exacerbate mental health and wellbeing challenges.



Why this story, why now?

This scenario invites us to imagine how Whistler's future could unfold if affordability continues to decrease, the tourism economy becomes built primarily for the affluent, and decision making becomes dominated by corporate influence. It asks us to contemplate how gradual displacement of long-term residents and smaller local businesses might influence its culture, inclusivity, and sense of belonging. This story asks us to reflect on the potential benefits of increased wealth, while also listening to the voices in the community who feel the effects of current economic trends and ask, "do I have a place in Whistler's future?"

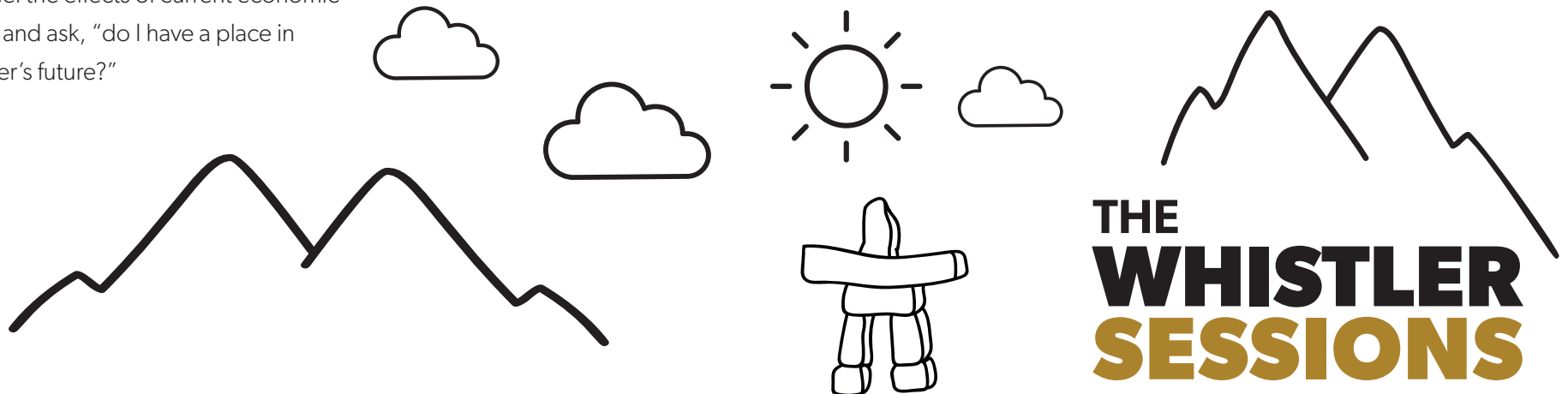
WHISTLER'S CHARACTER IS INFLUENCED BY WEALTHIER RESIDENTS AND GUESTS

LOCAL PHILANTHROPY SUPPORTS NEW ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

BED CAPS ARE STRONGLY ENFORCED

LIMITED GROWTH HAS HELPED PROTECT WILDLIFE HABITAT IN WHISTLER.

BY 2035, 90% OF THE LOCAL BUSINESSES IN OPERATION IN 2022 HAVE SOLD THEIR OPERATIONS TO LARGER BUSINESSES



**THE
WHISTLER
SESSIONS**

SCENARIO 3

IN 2023

- Economic recovery following COVID-19 has been robust.
- Global tourism economy has recovered swiftly.
- Housing costs have continued to rise.
- Pressure grows for the construction of workforce housing.

IN 2025

- Businesses raise prices, attracting wealthier domestic and international tourists.
- Price increases lead to visitors who stay for longer and spend more on average.
- The mountain operator experiences record sales and ramps up its donations to community foundations.

IN 2028

- Highly profitable tourism sector attracts more business investment.
- Whistler's petition for changes to federal and provincial foreign worker policies does not succeed.
- Attempts to increase density and affordability through infill housing meet resistance from wealthy homeowners.

IN 2031

- Newly elected Councils focus on progressing more quickly on commitments to Truth and Reconciliation but no significant actions result.
- Whistler's economy has grown by record margins since 2022.
- Tourism offerings adapt to wetter winters at Village elevation.
- Housing and business costs continue to increase.

IN 2033

- Large proportion of the workforce commutes from Pemberton or Squamish or lives in high-density, dorm-style rental housing in Cheakamus and north of Wedgewoods.
- Limited housing options place pressure on mental health and wellbeing of some Sea to Sky Corridor residents.
- Small businesses struggle to attract and retain the staff needed.

IN 2035

- 90% of the local businesses in operation in 2022 have sold their operations to larger businesses.
- A greater proportion of the tourism industry becomes owned by companies outside of Whistler, and a smaller proportion of tourism revenue recirculates in the local economy.



IN 2037

- The loss of “mountain culture” is an ongoing conversation amongst residents and some visitors. Strategies to preserve what is left is examined.
- New offerings to deepen cultural experiences include unique opportunities for learning about Squamish Nation and Lílwat7ú culture and history.
- Second homeowners become more engaged in local government and philanthropic work in the community.
- The mountain operator becomes the largest donor to local organizations.



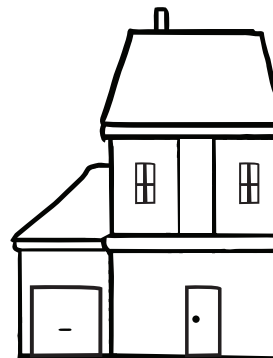
IN 2040

- Whistler’s tourism economy has tripled since 2022.
- Businesses respond to labour shortages by adopting new automation technologies that replace frontline workers.
- More high-end restaurants open, and fine dining becomes a bigger differentiator of Whistler’s tourism marketing.
- On the mountain, climate change impacts have led to a need to urgently expand existing snowmaking and fire mitigation infrastructure.
- As the community ages and fewer families in need of daycare can afford to live in Whistler, social service offerings expand to include aged-care.



IN 2045

- A large proportion of Whistler’s remaining workforce, which has shrunk since 2022, commutes via transit to their places of work.
- Natural snowfall on the mountain is limited to the high-alpine areas, but the skiing industry remains robust through large expansions to snowmaking equipment.
- Snowmaking equipment and water storage reservoirs are repurposed in summers to augment fire risk protection.



IN 2043

- A integrated healing centre in Whistler is developed that they market as an important step towards Truth and Reconciliation. The Squamish Nation and Lílwat7ú are not involved in the early stages of its conception. As a result, its offerings do not represent Lílwat7ú or Squamish Nation culture and teachings.
- The centre charges a large fee and attracts wealthy clients, including many non-First Nations people.
- There are several new net-zero buildings in the Village, but the building of larger houses with few restrictions on energy technologies leads to Whistler’s GHG emissions increasing overall.
- Local businesses regain a footing in the economy and are owned and operated by high-net worth residents.



IN 2050

- The sense of belonging in Whistler exists in its subdivisions, where housing costs have increased dramatically, and affordability is at an all-time low.
- Whistler’s “mountain culture” has shifted into a form more influenced by wealthy visitors and residents.
- The rich First Nation culture in place around Whistler has not yet been represented in a way that feels authentic to the Squamish Nation or Lílwat7ú.
- Majority of Whistlerites report a high quality of life in Whistler, while a minority report that Whistler provides excellent services, but economic pressures continue to affect their wellbeing.

THE WHISTLER SESSIONS

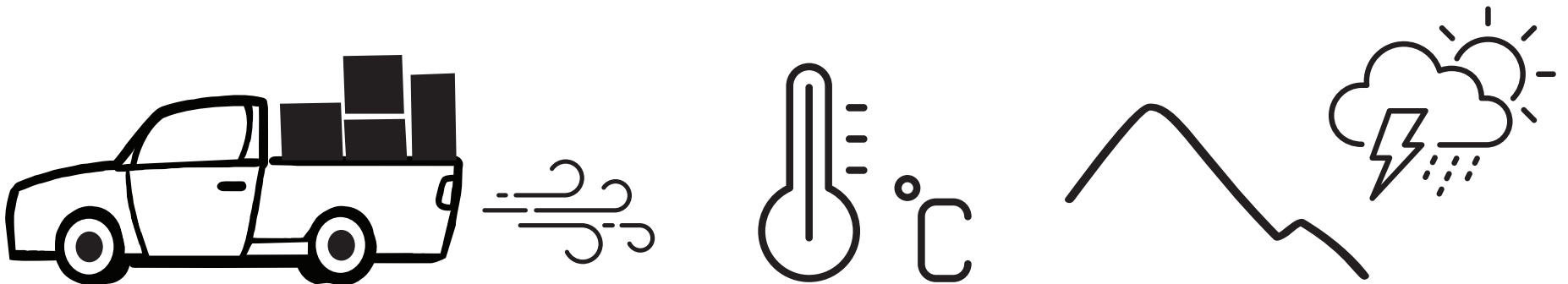
SCENARIO 4

FROM THE ASHES

Global climate and financial crises converge to devastate economies both internationally and in Canada. Whistler's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic is unstable, wildfires inflict massive damage to its infrastructure, and snowfall declines faster than anticipated due to climate change.

These intersecting crises lead to an economic collapse in Whistler, with many small businesses and residents leaving due to untenable levels of uncertainty. The mountain becomes locally owned and managed.

A shrinking population brings more affordability, as well as a concentration of community values based on common ground between those who remain: a connection to the land and the uniqueness of Whistler as a place, and its rich history that is held by the Squamish people and Lil'wat people. These values drive a new agenda of rebuilding post-collapse, including reformed governance structures that centre around the Nation's perspectives. The community builds a new regenerative economy, including Indigenous-led tourism offerings based on arts, culture, and the land.



Why this story, why now?

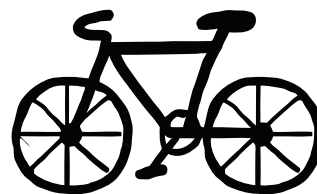
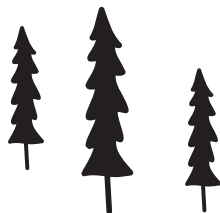
This scenario invites us to imagine how Whistler's future might evolve if its foundations were to be shaken by immense disruption. The story reflects an awareness that, globally, Whistler's communities and economy are connected to a larger world in which stability is not guaranteed, for example, due to climate change, global conflict, or economic crisis. It invites thinking and discussion about how Whistler might need or choose to transform economically and socially in response to that kind of disruption.

**ACCELERATING CLIMATE CHANGE FORCES
RESORT TO FOCUS ON GUEST EXPERIENCES
IN THE SUMMER, SPRING, AND FALL**

**INTENSE WILDFIRE DESTROYS COMMUNITY
INFRASTRUCTURE AND DEVASTATES TOURISM
ECONOMY**

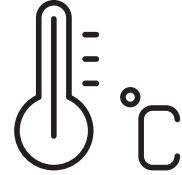
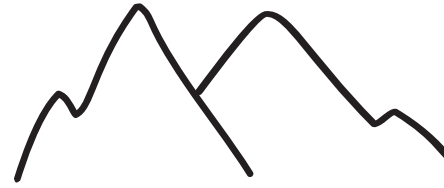
**OPPORTUNITIES EMERGE FOR RECONCILIATION
THROUGH COMMUNITY PLANNING AND
REFORMED GOVERNANCE**

**MANY RESIDENTS LEAVE WHISTLER,
WITH SOME STAYING DUE TO A STRONG
CONNECTION TO PLACE**



**THE
WHISTLER
SESSIONS**

SCENARIO 4



IN 2023

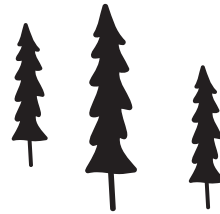
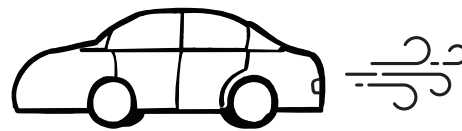
- Whistler's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic is unstable.
- In 2025, a global financial crisis marks the start of a global recession, and the global tourism industry contracts further than it did during the pandemic.

IN 2027

- A massive wildfire causes major damage in Whistler, destroying key ski industry infrastructure and most homes in one of Whistler's subdivisions.
- Businesses and government experience difficulties in planning their operations in a context of economic and climate-related unpredictability.

IN 2028

- A large proportion of small businesses and some residents in affordable housing leave Whistler.
- Some local businesses and residents attempt to stay despite the difficulties, wanting to benefit from the way of life in Whistler.



IN 2032

- Whistler's tourism economy has shrunk by a third since 2022, with a shift from winter activities to more offerings in the summer, spring, and fall.
- Many Whistler businesses close.
- Mental health crises grow among Whistler residents.
- Some wealthier Whistler residents and second homeowners choose to stay in Whistler, while others try to mitigate losses.
- Vacant infrastructure and decreased burdens on health and social services result in a lower cost of living, more accessible services, and more affordable housing.



IN 2030

- Globally, climate change has significantly affected the social license for international travel, and the global financial crisis has devastated economies.
- Climate change has affected snowfall on the mountain faster than anticipated, and all tourism-based businesses are operating at the lowest capacity in decades.

IN 2035

- The economic decline stabilizes, and a new community dialogue process begins to develop a new direction for Whistler.
- This process starts with a discussion that reveals common themes in why people chose to stay: their love for the place, the outdoors, and their well-being. While others stay because Whistler is home.



IN 2036

- The community develops a new agenda for Whistler's future development and redevelopment.
- The new governance model includes reformed leadership structures that integrate the teachings of the Líl'wat7ú and Squamish.
- The basis of this new direction is a more localized, regenerative economy that protects Whistler's natural resources, and positions Whistler to visitors as a place where people come not just for recreation, but to be well.

IN 2038

- Skiing facilities on the mountain have downsized and the mountain has become locally owned and managed.
- With the bottom of the mountain untenable for skiing, much of the resort land is repurposed for new community and economic activities.
- Elite sporting events decline, but recreational and casual sports remain popular throughout Whistler.
- For some, Whistler becomes an affordable alternative suburb to the Lower Mainland.

IN 2040

- Small, local businesses constitute the majority of Whistler's economy.
- The community develops additional tourism offerings based on the idea of sharing Whistler with the world, honouring the area's rich history that is held by the people of Squamish Nation and Líl'wat7ú.
- By 2042, Whistler's tourism industry is again robust but now attracts a different type of visitor than it did in 2022.

IN 2050

- Whistler's population has recovered from the economic collapse, and the diversity of people living in town has increased significantly since 2022.
- Líl'wat7ú and Squamish Nation teachings, knowledge, and people have been deeply integrated into Whistler's governance.
- Its economy is largely localized and rooted in the land, including a sustainable local food system and new offerings in arts and culture.
- The tourism economy includes virtual offerings and focuses on physical, spiritual, and emotional wellness.

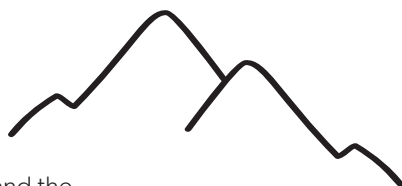
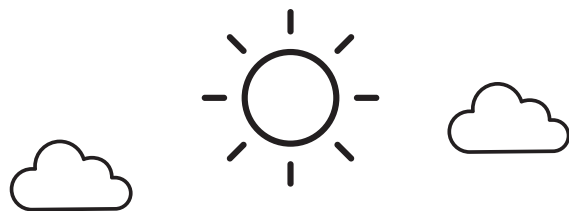
IN 2044

- A sustainable local food system has been developed in the Sea to Sky Corridor.
- New restaurants open in Whistler offering local meals, including establishments owned by Squamish and Líl'wat people serving wild game and other traditional food.
- Whistler employs rainwater harvesting methods and water storage technology to augment irrigation and supplement drinking water supplies.
- Squamish Nation and Líl'wat7ú reclaim their authority to play their roles as stewards of the land,

IN 2047

- A global climate-related migration crisis is unfolding, and BC accepts tens of thousands of climate migrants.
- Offers to house a large number of refugees, and the community leads initiatives and volunteer programs to help refugees find their bearings in BC.

THE WHISTLER SESSIONS



SCENARIO 1: SKY'S THE LIMIT

In 2023, the lifting of all COVID-related restrictions worldwide sees international tourism bounce back, and within two years visitation to Whistler exceeds pre-pandemic levels. Each year brings more record-breaking wildfires, severely damaging infrastructure in other BC tourist destinations and driving further traffic to Whistler. The mountain operator and Tourism Whistler run new marketing campaigns and business strategies to attract more visitors to Whistler, while explosive growth in Vancouver and the Sea to Sky Corridor contributes to the continued pressure for growth in businesses, amenities, housing, and overall capacity.

Densification and concerns over climate change dominate decision making throughout Whistler. These pressures provoke an agenda of green densification, aiming to house the workforce affordably in greener, denser homes and neighbourhoods through Whistler Housing Authority and other channels. The agenda reaffirms the goal of an 80% GHG emissions reduction by 2050, and Whistler expands low-carbon building requirements and advances new infill housing policies, aiming to increase housing sustainability, availability, and affordability amid the anticipated economic boom.

By 2024, new recently elected Councillors from each of Squamish Nation, Łílwat7ú, and Whistler Council build mandates into their portfolios to build closer government-to-government working relationships between each Nation and Whistler building on earlier agreements established between 2017 and 2020. The new Councillors collaborate to develop new economic opportunities for Łílwat7ú and Squamish Nation, including affordable housing for Nation members and new business developments on Legacy Lands.

These discussions also explore how to address systemic racism in Whistler's business and government institutions. Whistler's government expresses further intentions to do the "Settler's work" of learning, teaching themselves, and reckoning with history to support understanding and healing, aiming to ensure that Nation members feel a sense of belonging in a growing Whistler. The discussions identify key challenges, but they do not result in concrete commitments.

By 2030, Whistler redevelops many older buildings into lower per-capita carbon, denser housing. Portions of the Village are redeveloped to increase density, Whistler works with business leaders and the Province to begin developing housing and retail with new underground parking in the Village.

By 2034, earlier collaborations between Whistler Council, Squamish Nation, and Łílwat7ú have led to new efforts to support more representation of the Nations in government. A member of one of the Nations is elected to Whistler Council, which partners with Łílwat7ú and Squamish Nation to develop new off-reserve housing developments to offer more opportunities for Nation members to participate in Whistler's booming economy.

By 2035, hotels routinely operate at 90% capacity, spurred by aggressive marketing. The growing scale of development and increased bed cap has overwhelmed services and infrastructure, affecting quality of life and warranting major investments in new amenities and infrastructure to meet the demand, in some cases with third party partners. As 'green densification' will not alone meet the demand, Whistler's government, businesses, and developers pursue developments in Cheakamus Crossing associated with the 2010 Legacy Lands and the Whistler Mountain South Base, and invite discussions with Squamish Nation and Łílwat7ú about the Callaghan Valley.

Approvals of new rezoning proposals lead to thousands of new bed units' worth of undeveloped lands beginning development, including low-carbon WHA housing units. Whistler's government engages with the Squamish-Lillooet Regional District (SLRD), District of Squamish, Village of Pemberton, and the Łílwat7ú and Squamish Nation to develop an updated Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) that enables more growth, but there are tensions around differing priorities for development and preservation of green spaces. The RGS is eventually amended to allow for satellite communities throughout the Regional District and the approval of a new four season resort, creating further commuting pressure on the Sea-to-Sky Highway. By 2036, the driving time from Vancouver to Whistler averages four hours due to congestion, and car volumes necessitate new parking developments and shuttle systems in Whistler. Whistler's petitions to federal and provincial governments gain ground, leading to new funding for affordable housing, transit, and climate adaptation infrastructure.

By 2036, cross-country skiing is no longer viable in Lost Lake Park due to climate change, while Whistler is upgrading its infrastructure to be more resilient to climate risks. Within two years, record-breaking flooding and debris flows in the Sea to Sky Corridor cause major damage, but urbanization and upgraded infrastructure helps mitigate the effects on Whistler's services and economy.

November 2021 highway traffic in Whistler was highest on record

November 2021 saw a record number of vehicles on the Sea-to-Sky Highway, with traffic counters at Brio averaging roughly 25,000 cars a day. The number exceeded the volumes seen even before the COVID-19 pandemic in Novembers 2018 and 2019. [1]

By 2039, investment in Whistler and the region’s development is at an all-time high, including from federal and provincial government, regional, and foreign investors. As more stakeholders come to own businesses and property in Whistler, business competition increases, and decision making becomes more complex.

As the population increases, as does the underhoused population. Affordable housing supply has increased but not kept pace with growth in visitation or second home owners. As business owners focus on managing demand, employees rely on social networks to spread awareness of mental health and social services that, in part, help the workforce find safe, affordable housing.

By 2040, development begins for electrified rail that links Whistler, Vancouver, and the Fraser Valley. Due to intense housing development efforts, diverse demographics of employees can afford to live in Whistler. Community organizations and businesses introduce new supports for local businesses and artists, including an arts incubator in the Village. By 2041, the Sea to Sky Corridor population has doubled since 2022.

Staff at community organizations become targets of racism

In 2020 and 2021, multiple staff working at community organizations in Whistler reported incidents in which they were targets of racist abuse, part of a broader BC trend of an uptick in such incidents. A community member and equity expert commented that Whistler is “perceived as White Space, so while it’s disappointing that overt racism occurs, it’s not surprising.” [2]

By 2042, tensions between the federal government and First Nations around the country are rising over legal disputes. Squamish Nation and Łílwat7ú members now living and working in Whistler report that systemic racism is worsening and becoming more visible, stating that business and government institutions still centre whiteness in their culture and policies.

Tensions also arise in Whistler between the development priorities of government, regional, and foreign investors and the Łílwat7ú and Squamish Nation priorities for development. Amid competing priorities, some new developments take over trail networks and park land. While green-growth policies reduce per-capita GHG emissions, the policies face resistance and implementation difficulties, causing overall emissions to rise. Development continues, but these difficulties do not help build the trust needed to pursue a Reconciliation agenda that goes beyond creating economic opportunities.

By 2045, the regionalized development strategy leads to a redevelopment and expansion of a university in the Corridor, with an expanded campus based in Squamish and satellite campuses in Whistler and Pemberton. In response to increasing media attention about systemic racism throughout Whistler, the mountain operator works with Squamish Nation and Łílwat7ú to increase the Nations’ representation in the management and decision making about resort development, eventually resulting in new developments in South Base and the Callaghan Valley.

By 2050, Whistler’s diversity and population have increased, and it becomes seen as a diverse mountain city. Its economy has diversified and become more regionally integrated, with tourism remaining a key driver. Whistlerites largely become accustomed to the “new normal” of extreme crowds in tourism peak seasons. While Whistler has abandoned its goal to house 75% of the workforce in town, most of the workforce can afford to live in the Sea to Sky Corridor. Health and social services are keeping pace with need for most residents, with wellbeing indicators on par with other similarly-sized towns in BC.

Increasing traffic congestion continues to affect guests, commuters, and the environment. Squamish Nation and Łílwat7ú have derived some economic benefits from growth, but systemic racism and the effects of trauma, both past and present, remain. While Whistler’s per-capita carbon footprint has reduced substantially, its overall carbon footprint has increased, and expansion has led to loss of trail networks and park in the region.

How Cancún Grew into a Resort City

Prior to the late 1960s, Cancún, Mexico was small community that was virtually unknown to the rest of the world. In the 1970s, the Mexican Government began developing the area as a tourist destination, chosen for its year-round good weather, attractive seascapes and beaches, and proximity to population sites such as the Mayan ruins at Chichen Itza and Tulum. As of 2019, Cancún was a city of nearly 1 million people that hosted over 2 million tourists per year, accounting for roughly 25% of Mexico’s tourism revenue. [3]

SCENARIO 2: WEATHER THE STORM

In 2023, the global tourism economy is in recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Businesses and community organizations apply lessons learned from forced adaptation during the pandemic to operate with stretched capacity and short staffing. While many businesses return to offering pre-pandemic operating hours and services, labour shortages, overloaded management and high debt accumulated through the pandemic remain challenges to stability. As visitation rates increase, by 2025 many small businesses shut down due to an increasing worker burn-out, while others limit their services and face increased cost of doing business. Health and social services also face increased demand and limited capacity. Current housing projects in Cheakamus Crossing and elsewhere are completed providing additional capacity.

By 2026, wildfires destroy another two small towns and force evacuations in several areas around BC. Heat-related deaths in the hundreds become common in the summers in BC, while wetter falls and winters cause frequent flooding around the province and more rainy ski days in Whistler. In 2028, a wildfire near Whistler forces a major evacuation and cuts off highway access for a few weeks. The climate impacts cost lives, property, and habitat, but Whistler avoids major damage, and tourist inflow to Whistler continues unabated.

By 2028, labour shortages lead businesses, social services, and the community to put more pressure on local politicians to increase affordable rental housing supply. Owners of employee housing are retiring and staying in their homes, further reducing availability for the active workforce. Faced with stretched capacity and the clear threats of climate change, leadership shifts priorities towards an innovation-heavy agenda to ensure Whistler will be a climate-resilient, sustainable resort that protects a sense of belonging for its residents and ensures its workforce can live locally and contribute to Whistler's culture. It aims to address worker burn-out through innovative visitor volume management strategies and a commitment that virtually all future housing development will be for employee housing. Whistler Council prioritizes ensuring that the tourism economy is resilient to climate change, stating that economic stability will support the investments needed to achieve its ambitious goals. Council sets an objective to implement major changes to infrastructure within 5 years.

With support from the municipality and the mountain operator, Łíłwat7ú and Squamish Nation partner with the private sector to develop a new renewable energy company and an Independent Power Producer agreement (IPP), including investments in the necessary education and training. Encouraged by the climate agenda, youth activists and leaders become more engaged in government and take advantage of new leadership development programs.

Squamish Nations and Łíłwat7ú leaders host a highly acclaimed North American Indigenous Games event in 2027. By 2029, Squamish Nation, Łíłwat7ú, Musqueam Nation, and Tsleil-Waututh Nation lead most of the region's bids for sporting events.

By 2030, Whistler begins enforcing new limits to trail building, aiming to preserve habitat, and revises its net-zero target date to 2050. Whistler begins implementing new policies, including expanded tax schemes to fund a zero-emissions transit system, reduced parking spaces and increases to parking fees, pre-booking systems, and other incentives for car-free access. Aiming to ensure stability and wellbeing in the workforce, the mountain operator and other local businesses expand practices of employee shuttles and payment for commuter travel time. Local transit availability and ridership also increase, widening the pool of available workforce. A provincially established mobility tax for the corridor helps to fund transportation improvements.

Building on earlier policies that eliminated single-use plastics, Whistler develops aggressive programs to reduce all forms of waste, including policies and systems to ensure irrigation uses only recycled water. Whistler develops new campaigns and community dialogues that aim to engender cultural shifts, including more public support for higher-density housing, co-op home ownership, and infrastructure transformation in response to climate change.

By 2031, businesses implement structural changes, including new reservation systems that help manage demand and incentives for more full-time employment, which helps relieve pressure on the workforce and their housing. Whistler's local government, mountain operator and private sector collaborate to build a shared understanding of the risks of climate change to the community and economy. They commit to partnership investments in wildfire mitigation and a resort-wide goal for carbon reduction, emphasizing that a reputation as the world's leading climate-resilient resort bring economic opportunities.

These strategies of restraint continue to be politically contentious. The community feels the tension between a commitment to restraint and the need for services for a growing community. This resistance makes it clear that the aggressive policy direction will take longer to implement than expected.

First Nation leadership in British Columbia's renewable energy future

As of 2021, First Nations in British Columbia, owned, operated, or partnered in renewable energy projects that account for 13% of the province's electricity. First Nations have also invested millions of dollars in renewable energy projects, attracting capital independently and through partnerships with Independent Power Producer (IPP) companies. [4]

By 2032, Łílwat7ú and Squamish Nation develop innovative water storage, fire suppression, and micro hydro energy projects under the earlier IPP. Following years of effort, key areas and features of Whistler, including the mountain, officially change names to include Squamish Nation and Łílwat7ú traditional names. Whistler revises marketing materials to transition the names and include more voices of Squamish Nation and Łílwat7ú members.

Attracted by Whistler’s leadership on climate action, natural beauty, and lifestyle more remote workers move into the community. Whistler implements aggressive policy interventions in the housing market, including new investments in rental housing and repurposing of existing bricks and mortar. New partnerships between businesses, the Whistler Development Corporation (WDC), and the Whistler Housing Authority (WHA) form to invest in more affordable housing. While new policies to phase out residential natural gas, reduce water usage, and introduce a carbon tax on large homes make progress, the capital required to make major infrastructure changes proves scarce.

Public Opposition to Pay Parking in Whistler Parks

In 2021, Whistler introduced pay parking at some of its most popular municipal parks. A June 2021 Change.org petition expressed opposition, stating that “Locals are fed up with having to once again foot the bill for a busy tourist season.” As of August 2021, the petition had 2000 supporters. [5]

By 2035, some community resistance to new policies remains but is countered with supportive letter-writing campaigns from people who believe that workforce housing and continued investment in climate initiatives are necessary to preserve the way of life they value. Whistler launches a “business accelerator” to incubate new ventures that aim to help it achieve net-zero. By 2038, 80% of Whistler’s employees live in housing close to their place of work.

By 2040, private investment has grown substantially in renewable energy, climate-resilient infrastructure, and upgraded snowmaking infrastructure. New infrastructure is designed to mitigate flooding and withstand increased rain runoff while storing water for fire suppression. The mountain operator draws on knowledge and technology from other ski resorts to provide leadership in Whistler on water capture and storage, wildfire mitigation, and emergency response planning. The tourism economy is diversifying, with new offerings in ecotourism and learning about Squamish and Lil’wat history and culture, and the Nations are developing new environmental and land stewardship education programs for tourists and residents. Tourism offerings grow in indoor recreation, water sports, and other weather-independent activities.

Helped by a new BC policy that protect important economic assets from climate change, Whistler’s municipality, the province, and the mountain operator partner to develop a zero-carbon rapid transit line from Vancouver to Pemberton while upgrading local transit. The Sea-to-Sky Highway undergoes flood resilience upgrades, and Whistler benefits from new highway tolls that fund its innovation agenda. New wildlife corridors on the highway help mitigate habitat fragmentation.

By 2045, Whistler becomes car-free, and day lots convert to community parks.

Autonomous electric shuttles connect Squamish and Lil’wat communities, part of a new net-zero transit system that serves Whistler’s communities. Excess energy produced through the renewable energy partnership between Łílwat7ú, Squamish Nation, and Whistler provides power to the transit system and the expanded snowmaking equipment. Climate change has reduced snowfall on the mountain, but a diversified tourism economy with more weather-independent offerings helps Whistler avoid economic impacts. By 2047, the most severe “atmospheric river” event on record causes major flooding around Whistler, but upgraded infrastructure helps mitigate long-term damage.

By 2050, Whistler is seen as the world’s most climate-resilient resort town, with an evolved brand that emphasizes diverse offerings for tourists and opportunities to learn from Squamish Nation and Łílwat7ú culture. The community includes a young, seasonal workforce, retirees and longer-term permanent residents who work in the resort. The majority of the workforce is either housed in town or a short commute away from work, and Whistler’s culture aligns with the vision of a net-zero, climate-resilient, sustainable resort town with a “mountain culture”.

Carbon Capture Innovation in the Sea to Sky Corridor Region

In 2021, Squamish-based company Carbon Engineering partnered with Air Canada to explore and develop solutions for using carbon capture technology to help decarbonize aviation. Carbon Engineering has developed technology that can remove CO2 from the atmosphere, as well as convert captured CO2 to less carbon intensive forms of fuel. [6]

SCENARIO 3: GROWING DIVIDE

In 2023, Whistler’s economic recovery following COVID-19 has been robust, while the community continues to feel the social and wellbeing impacts of the pandemic. The global tourism economy has recovered swiftly since pandemic restrictions ended. Housing costs have continued to rise, raising the cost of labour. In the context of a community that is still recovering, concerns with overcrowding and overloaded services dominate decision making discussions. Pressure grows for the construction of workforce housing.

By 2025, faced with the need to limit numbers while ensuring sufficient resources to aid recovery, businesses raise prices, deterring lower-income visitors and attracting wealthier domestic and international tourists. Price increases lead to visitors who stay for longer and spend more on average. The mountain operator experiences record sales and ramps up its donations to community foundations. This influx of resources helps Whistler’s community organizations and non-profits secure more funding to aid in the recovery, and by 2026 community wellbeing is on par with the pre-pandemic situation.

By 2028, the highly profitable tourism sector attracts more business investment, bringing more products that cater to high-net-worth visitors. Whistler manages its bed caps judiciously, and businesses increase prices as a “self-limiting” approach to managing tourism numbers in the long-term. Whistler’s petitions for changes to federal and provincial foreign worker policies do not succeed. Attempts to increase density and affordability through infill housing meet resistance from wealthy homeowners, quashing these efforts.

By 2031, the newly-elected Councils of Whistler, Squamish Nation, Łílwat7ú engage in a discussion about their relationship in the context of a changing community. The discussion focuses on how to progress more quickly on commitments to Truth and Reconciliation but result in no significant actions.

Whistler’s economy has grown by record margins since 2022. Private health and wellness services have grown along with many tourism services and businesses, including activities for those who prefer low-risk activities. Tourism offerings adapt to wetter winters at Village elevation, while longer dry spells in the summer put stress on water supplies. Housing and business costs continue to increase, and international businesses and chains gain ground in Whistler’s economy, including through partnerships with the mountain operator. Limited growth has helped protect wildlife habitat in Whistler.

By 2033, a large proportion of the workforce commutes from Pemberton or Squamish or lives in high-density, dorm-style rental housing in Cheakamus and north of Wedgewoods, commuting by bus. Limited housing options place pressure on mental health and wellbeing of some Sea to Sky Corridor residents who cannot afford to live near their workplace. Addiction is a growing issue. Small businesses struggle to attract and retain the staff needed to provide the high level of service expected by higher-paying tourists, and staff burnout exacerbates mental health issues.

By 2035, 90% of the local businesses in operation in 2022 have sold their operations to larger businesses. Some sellers choose to take advantage of the economic conditions to retire, with others being forced to sell due to untenable costs of doing business for small, independent operations. A greater proportion of the tourism industry becomes owned by companies outside of Whistler, and a smaller proportion of tourism revenue recirculates in the local economy.

Second homeownership increases, housing is increasingly commodified, and the only new employee housing developments since 2022 are dorm-style facilities for the young, seasonal workforce. Much of Whistler’s affordable housing is retained by retirees, and many senior level employees leave Whistler for more affordable places.

By 2037, the loss of “mountain culture” is an ongoing conversation amongst residents and some visitors amid a changing economy with more influence from corporations based outside of Whistler. Prompted in part by this concern, Whistler’s government and businesses partner on a strategy to preserve what is left of “mountain culture” by examining the roots of Whistler’s DNA. This in part leads to a deepening of culture-based tourism offerings, and they develop new facilities and programs for local art exhibitions and cultural and sport events. New offerings include unique opportunities for learning about Squamish Nation and Łílwat7ú culture and history.

The Rising Price of Whistler Vacations

As the price of vacationing in Whistler increases, some BC residents are being priced out. In 2018, the cost of a four-night family ski vacation in Whistler was comparable to a seven-night, 4.5-star all-inclusive resort near Cancun, a cruise from Shanghai to Japan, or eight nights in Puerto Vallarta. [7]

Whistler’s health and social services include a mix of public and private offerings which provide a high level of care, and more cosmetic clinics open. Second homeowners become more engaged in local government and philanthropic work in the community, and the mountain operator becomes the largest donor to local organizations. Social service priorities become driven more by the mountain operator’s and philanthropists’ personal interests than by government programming, and Whistler’s community organizations leverage these resources to provide more support for the community.

By 2040, Whistler’s tourism economy has tripled since 2022. Businesses respond to labour shortages by adopting new automation technologies that replace frontline workers, outsourcing administrative operations to remote workers, and other changes to maximize efficiency while preserving guest experience for the wealthy market. More high-end restaurants open, and fine dining becomes a bigger differentiator of Whistler’s tourism marketing. On the mountain, climate change impacts have led to a need to urgently expand existing snowmaking and fire mitigation infrastructure.

As the community ages and fewer families in need of daycare can afford to live in Whistler, social service offerings expand to include aged-care, and some daycare buildings are repurposed to support this services. Whistler’s children increasingly attend private schools both within and outside of the community.

The Impacts of Whistler’s Affordability Challenge
In 2018, Whistler beat Vancouver for the title of Canada's 'craziest housing market'. Affordability challenges have both economic and social impacts on the community, with people being forced out of the market or into cramped housing conditions. [8]

In 2043, a group of Whistler philanthropists develop an integrated healing centre in Whistler that they market as an important step towards Truth and Reconciliation. The centre employs a mix of First Nations and non-First Nations staff and serves as a weather-independent, year-round tourism offering. The Squamish Nation and Łílwat7ú are not involved in the early stages of its conception. As a result, its offerings do not represent Łílwat7ú or Squamish Nation culture and teachings, and instead it offers a blend of Western and “pan-Indigenous” perspective that incorrectly represents Indigenous culture as homogeneous. The centre charges a large fee and attracts wealthy clients, including many non-Indigenous people.

This philanthropic investment is one of many in Whistler, where the wealth gap is among the largest in Canada. There are several new net-zero buildings in the Village, but the building of larger houses with few restrictions on energy technologies leads to Whistler’s GHG emissions increasing overall. Rainbow, Creekside, and Cheakamus each run seasonal farmers’ markets, and local businesses regain a footing in the economy and are owned and operated by high-net worth residents.

By 2045, a large proportion of Whistler’s remaining workforce, which has shrunk since 2022, commutes via transit to their places of work. The majority of the workforce use Whistler’s services but do not actively participate in community development or leadership. Natural snowfall on the mountain is limited to the high-alpine areas, but the skiing industry remains robust through large expansions to snowmaking equipment and expanded terrain at higher elevations. Snowmaking equipment and water storage reservoirs are repurposed in summers to augment fire risk protection, while wealthy taxpayers help fund a municipal electric helicopter for daily aerial wildfire surveillance.

By 2050, the sense of belonging in Whistler exists in its subdivisions, where housing costs have increased dramatically, and affordability is at an all-time low. Whistler’s “mountain culture” has shifted into a form more influenced by wealthy visitors and residents. The rich First Nation culture in place around Whistler has not yet been represented in a way that feels authentic to the Squamish Nation or Łílwat7ú. The majority of Whistler residents report that they experience a high quality of life and a vibrant culture in Whistler, while a minority report that Whistler provides excellent services, but economic pressures continue to adversely affect their wellbeing.

The Impact of Vail Resorts on Communities:
In 2022 in the United States, Vail Resorts faced a wave of complaints on social media and in national news, citing issues that include an overworked, underhoused workforce and negative impacts on skiing and snowboarding. Online petitions have sprung up across the country, including a petition against its management of Stevens Pass, Washington, which had 44,000 supporters as January 2022. [9]

SCENARIO 4: FROM THE ASHES

In 2023, Whistler's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic is unstable, both economically and for the health and wellness of the community. Visitation rates vary widely between seasons, and many community members struggle to find stability in their lives and livelihoods. In 2025, a global financial crisis marks the start of a global recession, and the global tourism industry contracts further than it did during the pandemic. This contraction threatens the viability of many local businesses that struggled to stay afloat during the pandemic.

In 2027, a massive wildfire causes major damage in Whistler, destroying key ski industry infrastructure and most homes in one of Whistler's subdivisions. Federal and provincial governments commit funds to construction, and the mountain operator moves to rebuild, but progress is slow amid the financial crisis. Businesses and government experience difficulties in planning their operations in a context of economic and climate-related unpredictability.

By 2028, a large proportion of small businesses and some residents in affordable housing leave Whistler, as the uncertainty makes it untenable for them to run their businesses and livelihoods in the community. Some local businesses and residents attempt to stay despite the difficulties, wanting to benefit from the way of life in Whistler and hopeful that a full recovery may come soon.

By 2030, globally, climate change has significantly affected the social license for international travel, and the global financial crisis has devastated economies internationally and in Canada. In Whistler, climate change has affected snowfall on the mountain faster than anticipated, and all tourism-based businesses are operating at the lowest capacity in decades. The mountain operator employs half the staff it did in 2022, and skiing is open on only half of the terrain due to decreased snowfall and decreased visitation.

By 2032, Whistler's tourism economy has shrunk by a third since 2022, with a shift from winter activities to more offerings in the summer, spring, and fall. Many local and small businesses go out of business, and large businesses owned by companies outside of Whistler also close operations. Mental health crises grow among Whistler residents, especially for lower-income and more vulnerable people.

Some wealthier Whistler residents and second homeowners choose to stay in Whistler for the way of life, while others have attempted to sell their homes earlier in the economic decline to avoid losses. Many of those who lose tourism jobs move away from Whistler, but population loss is offset by the arrival of remote workers who choose to make it their home. Vacant infrastructure and decreased burdens on health and social services result in a lower cost of living, more accessible services, and more affordable housing. As Whistler's population contracts, Squamish Nation and Łílwat7ú make up a larger proportion of the population and experience a greater sense of belonging in areas previously dominated by Settler culture.

By 2035, a shrinking local economy brings with it a concentration of values based on common ground between the residents who remain. The economic decline stabilizes, and a new community dialogue process begins to develop a new direction for Whistler. This process starts with a discussion that reveals common themes in why people chose to stay: some stay because of their love and reverence for the place itself, its nature, and how being outdoors helps them be well, while others stay because Whistler is their home, and their connection to the land cannot be transplanted elsewhere.

By 2036, the community develops a new agenda for Whistler's future development and redevelopment, starting the development of a new model for planning, governance, and decision making. The new governance model includes reformed leadership structures that integrate the teachings of the Łílwat7ú and Squamish Nation and integrate their Nations' governance principles and philosophies into a new vision, new processes for decision making, and a new Official Community Plan. The basis of this new direction is a more localized, regenerative economy that protects Whistler's natural resources, and positions Whistler to visitors as a place where people come not just for recreation, but to be well.

How the Tourism Industry and Climate Crisis are Linked

Climate change is having an impact on tourist destinations around the world, threatening collapse of these industries in places like Alaska, Solomon Islands, and Greece. The tourism industry is itself a contributor to the crisis, as it contributes 8% of global emissions and has caused damage to ecosystems around the world. [10]

By 2038, skiing facilities on the mountain have downsized and the mountain has become locally owned and managed. With the bottom of the mountain untenable for skiing and limited access to finances following economic collapse, much of the resort land is repurposed for new community and economic activities, including expansion of hydroponic farming and new arts, culture, and education facilities for Squamish Nation and Łíłwat7ú youth. The new mountain operators replant the flora that had previously been removed from the mountain, enabling bears to return to those areas. Elite sporting events decline, but recreational and casual sports remain popular throughout Whistler. For some, Whistler becomes an affordable alternative suburb to the Lower Mainland.

By 2040, small, local businesses constitute the majority of Whistler's economy, which includes wellness tourism offerings, dispensaries, healing services, and galleries that sell local art, including works from Łíłwat7ú and Squamish Nation artists. The community develops additional tourism offerings based on the idea of sharing Whistler with the world, honouring the area's rich history that is held by the people of Squamish Nation and Łíłwat7ú. New businesses form that offer virtual-reality tourism to bring economic value to Whistler while teaching virtual visitors about the land and its history without the impacts of physical travel. By 2042, Whistler's tourism industry is again robust but now attracts a different type of visitor than it did in 2022.

How Tourist Priorities Could Change

As the tourism industry emerges from the COVID-19 pandemic, travellers' priorities may evolve, including more consideration of sustainability, a growing desire for holidays to be meaningful, and interest in learning about culture and history, skills, and local traditional livelihoods. [11]

By 2044, a sustainable local food system has been developed in the Sea to Sky Corridor, and the majority of vegetable-based food consumed in Whistler comes from within a 100km radius. Within two years several new restaurants open in Whistler offering local meals, including establishments owned by Łíłwat7ú and Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish and Łíłwat7ú) people serving wild game and other traditional food.

With climate change causing dryer, hotter summers, Whistler employs rainwater harvesting methods and water storage technology to augment irrigation and supplement drinking water supplies. Squamish Nation and Łíłwat7ú reclaim their authority to play their roles as stewards of the land, they revitalize controlled burns, or cultural burns, which help reduce wildfire risk.

By 2047, a global climate-related migration crisis is unfolding, and BC accepts tens of thousands of climate migrants. Whistler, which still has vacant infrastructure following its economic contraction, offers to house a large number of refugees, and the community leads initiatives and volunteer programs to help refugees find their bearings in BC, build relationships with the community, and take advantage of opportunities to develop language skills and find employment.

By 2050, Whistler's population has recovered from the economic collapse, and the diversity of people living in town has increased significantly since 2022. Łíłwat7ú and Squamish Nation teachings, knowledge, and people have been deeply integrated into Whistler's governance. Its economy is largely localized and rooted in the land, including a sustainable local food system and new offerings in arts and culture. The tourism economy includes virtual offerings and focuses on physical, spiritual, and emotional wellness.

Global leadership of Indigenous Youth in Food Systems

Indigenous youth around the world are leading innovative solutions and collaborations to meet basic needs in their communities amid the adversity of the COVID-19 pandemic. Examples exist around the world, including in the US, Kenya, Philippines, Russia, and Canada. [12]

Appendix A: Articles Referenced in Text Boxes

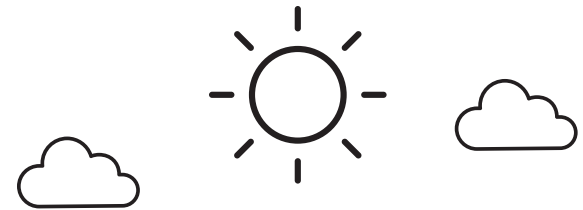


SKY'S THE LIMIT:

- [1] November 2021 highway traffic was the highest on record
 - o Source: November highway traffic in Whistler was highest on record, Pique News Magazine, Dec 24, 2021
 - o Link: <https://www.piquenewsmagazine.com/local-news/november-highway-traffic-in-whistler-was-highest-on-record-4891746>
- [2] Community Organizations' Staff the Targets of Racist Incidents
 - o Source: WCSS staff has been target of 'multiple' racist incidents, non-profit says, Pique News Magazine, May 7, 2021
 - o Link: <https://www.piquenewsmagazine.com/must-reads/wcss-staff-has-been-target-of-multiple-racist-incidents-non-profit-says-3753675>
- [3] How Cancún Grew into a Major Resort
 - o Source: How Cancún Grew into a Major Resort
 - o Link: <https://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/images/146194/how-cancun-grew-into-a-major-resort>

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- [4] First Nation leadership in British Columbia's renewable energy future
 - o Source: First Nation leadership in British Columbia's renewable energy future, Pembina Institute, Aug 11, 2021
 - o Link: [https://www.pembina.org/pub/first-nation-leadership-british-columbias-renewable-energy-future#:~:text=First%20Nations%20have%20invested%20millions,Power%20Producer%20\(IPP\)%20companies](https://www.pembina.org/pub/first-nation-leadership-british-columbias-renewable-energy-future#:~:text=First%20Nations%20have%20invested%20millions,Power%20Producer%20(IPP)%20companies)
- [5] Public Opposition to Pay Parking in Whistler Parks
 - o Source: Introduction of parking passes for Whistler locals by RMOW, Change.org petition, June 2021
 - o Link: <https://www.change.org/p/resort-municipality-of-whistler-introduction-of-parking-passes-for-whistler-locals-by-rmow>
- [6] Carbon Capture Innovation in the Sea to Sky Region
 - o Source: Squamish's Carbon Engineering teams with Air Canada, The Squamish Chief, Nov 11, 2021
 - o Link: <https://www.squamishchief.com/local-news/squamishs-carbon-engineering-teams-with-air-canada-4748086>



GROWING DIVIDE:

- [7] BC Skiers Priced Out of Whistler
 - o Source: Resort for the rich? Whistler ski vacations can cost as much as exotic getaways
 - o Link: <https://bc.ctvnews.ca/resort-for-the-rich-whistler-ski-vacations-can-cost-as-much-as-exotic-getaways-1.3835449>
- [8] The Impacts of Whistler's Affordability Challenge
 - o Source: Whistler beats Vancouver for title of Canada's 'craziest housing market', HUB SmartCoverage, May 1, 2018
 - o Link: <https://www.hubsmartcoverage.ca/news/whistler-beats-vancouver-title-canadas-craziest-housing-market/>
- [9] The Impact of Vail Resorts on Communities:
 - o Source: Backlash against Vail Resorts growing among skiers and snowboarders across the country, Burlington Record, Jan 29, 2022
 - o Link: <https://www.burlington-record.com/2022/01/29/vail-resorts-complaints-epic-pass-staffing-colorado/>

FROM THE ASHES:

- [10] How the Tourism Industry and Climate Crisis are Linked
 - o Source: Can the tourism industry survive the climate crisis?, The Guardian, Dec 2, 2021
 - o Link: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/dec/02/tourism-industry-climate-crisis>
- [11] How Tourist Priorities Could Change
 - o Source: Six travel trends that will be big post-lockdown according to an industry insider, Condé Nast Traveller, June 9, 2020
 - o Link: <https://www.cntraveller.com/article/an-industry-insider-on-the-future-of-travel>
- [12] Global leadership of Indigenous Youth in Food Systems
 - o Source: Actions of Indigenous youth in local food systems during times of adversity, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2021
 - o Link: <https://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cb6895en/>

Appendix B: Threats and Opportunities Identified by the Community

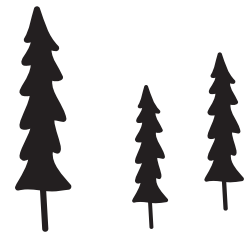
On March 10, 2022, the Whistler Sessions process convened 120 community members to discuss these scenarios and identify their implications for what Whistler can and must to do create the future it wants.

Considering each scenario individually and all four scenarios as a whole, the community identified the following threats to Whistler's future:

- Impacts of climate change
- Accessible, affordable & dignified housing
- Income & wealth inequality
- Accessible, affordable, & dignified transport
- Erosion of Whistler's culture
- Fragmentation & separation of people across incomes & geography
- Paralysis driven by complacency
- Paralysis driven by fear
- Demand for social services exceeds capacity
- Outsized influence of external economic forces & actors
- Insufficient investment in public infrastructure
- Economic growth mindsets
- Inauthentic Truth & Reconciliation with Squamish Nation & Łílwat7ú
- Out-Migration

The community also identified the following opportunities:

- Innovation in green economy & climate resilient technology
- Community vibrancy through the arts
- Centering Squamish Nation & Łílwat7ú expertise, knowledges, history & leaderships
- Re-imagine and re-ignite shared vision and purpose
- Deploy innovative housing options
- Deploy innovative visitation demand management
- Genuine dialogue and addressing power dynamics
- Re-imagine the local economy
- Meaningful, well-paid, dignified employment
- Regional integration
- Bring Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion lens to government and decision making



Appendix C: Whistler Sessions Workshop Placement

THREATS & OPPORTUNITIES		ACTIONS WE CAN TAKE
Sky's the Limit	Weather the Storm	To ADAPT to the Future
Individual Reflection	Individual Reflection	
Growing Divide	From the Ashes	To INFLUENCE the Future
Individual Reflection	Individual Reflection	

Appendix D: Reflection Questions



What feelings does each scenario evoke in me?

What excites me? What worries me?

What do I see now that I didn't see before?

Are there themes in the scenarios that you are starting to see emerge?

Is there a scenario that you prefer, and one you want to avoid?

How might these scenarios influence your personal actions on a daily basis?

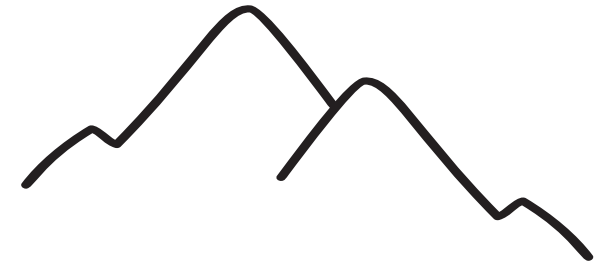
What could you be doing to help create a better future? Individually? In your workplace or organization?

How might these scenarios influence how you increase your involvement in the community?

How might the scenarios guide, or even change, the strategic direction of your community group or business?

How might these scenarios influence what you choose learn about?

Appendix E: About the Whistler Sessions and the Whistler Recovery Working Group



Since 2020 Whistler has been managing through unprecedented times with no pre-existing road map to guide the way.

In summer 2020, following four Community Conversations virtual town hall meetings and associated online engagement, a diverse group of representatives came together to form the Whistler Recovery Working Group to collaborate on a strategic recovery for Whistler from the COVID-19 pandemic. In the year to follow, the group was successful in cross-organizational community projects and initiatives as well as creating opportunities for the group to gather, share, learn and challenge one another. A systems approach was taken in this work to look at our community as a connected system rather than silos or special interest groups.

In fall 2021, to build on the work to date, the RMOW convened the Whistler Sessions: Possible Futures to Guide Us Beyond Recovery. This initiative brought together a diverse group of people from the earlier group and others from across Whistler, Squamish Nation, and Lil'wat Nation to work through a structured and creative process to develop a set of scenarios - or stories - about Whistler's multiple, possible futures.

Through three workshops, the team grappled with three key questions:

- What is happening? How do we see, from our different perspectives, the complex current reality in and around Whistler?
- What could happen? How could – not will, not should – our lives unfold over the decades ahead?
- What could and must we do? How must we act – individually and together – to achieve our Vision?

Acknowledgement goes out to everyone involved for the time, contribution and commitment to the Whistler Sessions throughout the process.

It is inspiring what has been achieved in this work, from the new relationships and ways of working together, to the scenarios themselves.



THE
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