

C8 - Whistler Athlete Village: A Catalyst for Change

Presentation title: Whistler Athlete Village: A Catalyst for Change

Presenters:

Brent Harley - Brent Harley & Associates Inc.

Tom Barratt - Tom Barratt Ltd.

Mike Vance - Resort Municipality of Whistler

Joe Redmond - Whistler 2020 Development Corporation

Abstract

The planning and development of the Whistler Athlete Village is directly tied to a community in transition. Whistler as a resort community goes back to the early 1900s with the opening of a fishing lodge. In the 1960s an unsuccessful bid for the Winter Olympics led to the development of Whistler Mountain. By 1978 there were 500 full time residents catering to about 200,000 skier visits. Today there about 10,000 residents with up to 50,000 people there on any given weekend. A key to Whistler's ongoing success is the ability to service the needs and expectations of the tourists. To do this well you need to have people that are engaged and intimate with the community. To keep them, Whistler has to be affordable. Whistler targeted this as a critical issue to their future. In 2003, Vancouver won the bid for the 2010 Winter Olympics. Whistler was to host the mountain events for the Olympics and almost all of the Paralympic Games. To do this, Whistler must house about 3,000 athletes during the Games. The concept was to build an Athlete Village and then transform it into affordable resident housing after the Games. This became one of the primary legacies for Whistler after having agreed to host the 2010 Olympic Games. In 2005, Ekistics Town Planning Inc. and Brent Harley and Associates Inc. were engaged to create the Athlete Village Master Plan. This proved to be a challenging and exciting project. Exciting from the perspective that the Athlete Village will be:

- A primary hub of athlete's activity;
- A significant character piece in the athlete's impression of Canada;
- More than just accommodation...a place of celebration;
- A totally secured site;
- A project that will materialize. Challenging in terms of a site with a vast array of attributes and development issues:
 - Big views;
 - Environmentally sensitive qualities;
 - Access to incredible recreation areas
 - Difficult terrain
 - The Cheakamus River
 - Landfill
 - Hydro lines
 - Wastewater treatment Plant.

This development had to accommodate the needs of the Olympics as a self contained athlete centre. It also had to meet all of the post Olympic expectations as a legacy neighbourhood that:

- Provides a range of permanent, affordable resident housing for residents of Whistler;
- Respects Whistler's character and values;
- Utilizes progressive design and best building practices;
- Is pedestrian oriented, reducing dependency on the car;
- Is integrated into the natural environment.

Final approvals were in place by July 2006. Engineering, architecture, detailed costing, financing, design review and construction began. The Athlete Village must be ready for occupancy by September 2009. This includes all of the permanent and temporary structures and over 350 units of housing in a variety of forms. This will meet the needs of the Olympics, but more importantly, Whistler will get much needed affordable and attainable resident housing that will foster the sustained prosperity of this resort community.

Speaker Biography

Brent Harley, CLSA, MBA, BES, BLA: President of Brent Harley and Associates Inc., (BHA). Master Planners of ski and mountain resorts throughout the world since 1978. Recent works include the Callaghan Valley Feasibility Study; Bid Book Venue Design on Whistler, Blackcomb and Cypress; and the Master Plan of the Whistler Athlete and Legacy Village all for the Vancouver 2010 Winter Olympic Games. BHA is currently working on the Master Plans of Big White, Silver Star, Hemlock, and Porters (NZ) as well as the OCP for Revelstoke and the skiing facilities planning for the Canada Winter Games 2011.

Tom Barratt, CSLA, MLA, BLA: President of Tom Barratt Ltd., Landscape Architects. Tom has been the principal of his own firm in Whistler since 1986 specializing in resort development projects. Prior to private practice Tom set the course for park and trails development within Whistler as a Parks Planner for the Resort Municipality of Whistler. Recently, Tom has been involved in the Vancouver 2010 Olympic Bid and the design of the Whistler Athlete's Village.

Michael Vance: Currently the General Manager of Policy and Program Development for the Resort Municipality of Whistler. His responsibilities include the management of Whistler 2020, and participating in the delivery of the 2010 Olympic Athlete Village and sustainable Games. He was previously the Community Development Director for the Town of Mammoth Lakes, and the Director of Planning and Development for the Resort Municipality of Whistler.

Joe Redmond: President of the Whistler 2020 Development Corporation. The Whistler 2020 Development Corporation was established by the Resort Municipality of Whistler to oversee the planning and development of the Athletes' Village for the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Prior to his involvement with WDC, Joe was Vice-President of UBC Properties Trust, overseeing the planning of the non-institutional residential campus development, and directly responsible for the development and construction of all institutional buildings. Joe sits as a Government appointed Board Member of the Provincial Homeowner Protection Office as well as a member of the Advisory Design Panel in Whistler representing the Urban Development Institute. He graduated from UBC and holds degrees in both Arts and Architecture.

Mike Vance is General Manager of Policy and Program Development. Mike is part of the Whistler2020 Team coordinating the implementation of the Whistler2020 sustainability process. Whistler2020 is a comprehensive sustainability plan that moves beyond traditional piece-meal planning to broadly address social, economic and environmental issues in an integrated and upstream manner.