

B9 - Planning For Corridors & Protected Areas Within The Urban Environment

Presentation # 1 title: A Proposal For a Regional Ecological Corridor Network for Metro Vancouver

Presenter:

Jamie Vala - space2place design inc

Abstract

Habitat fragmentation and destruction are the leading causes of biodiversity loss. Biodiversity loss is problematic because it leads to the reduction of ecosystem services on which humans are dependent for survival. These ecosystem services are mostly taken for granted but are estimated to be worth over \$33 trillion US dollars per year. Services such as pollination, cleansing of water, seed dispersal, carbon storage, purification of air, and soil fertility are just a few that humans require every day. Maintenance of connectivity in the landscape is important to halt biodiversity loss and hence preserve ecosystem functioning. Protection of biodiversity in urban regions is a critical part of a global conservation strategy. Many urban regions, such as Metro Vancouver, are located in biodiversity hotspots where species are dependent upon the resources located in that particular area. Furthermore as the world's population continues its immigration to urban centres, ways must be found to preserve biodiversity of these regions that are being heavily impacted by rapid and massive population growth. One of the best ways to maintain biodiversity, especially in urban environments, is to protect the important habitat patches and connect them with corridors. Corridors are especially important in fragmented landscapes as they allow species movement between habitat patches, room for ecological processes to occur and provide the opportunity for gene flow between individuals and populations. Space for movements and adaptations are especially important as an 'insurance tool' to allow species to survive a range of natural or human made disturbances such as drought or larger impacts such as climate change. Corridors may also be the most important solution in the Metro Vancouver as many of the important habitat patches are already protected or the land values are prohibitively high. This project outlines a physical completion of the landscape system that moves the current proposal from policy to implementation and subsequently provides a prototype applicable to other regional biodiversity strategies. Three scales of the corridor network will be examined. Firstly, a method for ascertaining a primary regional ecological network of corridors is explored. The proposed method is founded on ecological principles and it takes advantage of existing landscape features to create a network that could function as a complete ecosystem rather than a landscape made up of discrete patches. Secondly, a method and criteria for exact on-the-ground placement and feasibility of an urban corridor are discussed. Finally, design solutions are proposed for three sites along a corridor. These propositions explore solutions for creating an intact, functioning ecological corridor that provides space for human activities while at the same time increasing indigenous biodiversity, thereby creating a more livable region for all inhabitants.

Speaker Biography

Jamie has over eight years of experience researching biodiversity issues in Canada and Italy. She has co-authored a book on urban biodiversity issues and has thoroughly investigated the possibilities for and value of ecological corridors within Metro Vancouver. She is currently working at space2place design inc. where she combines the principles of landscape ecology and landscape architecture to work on projects that increase the overall health and sustainability of the region.

Presentation # 2 title: Impact of the Whistler2020 Vision on Community Land Use

Presenters:

Laura MacKay - Whistler Centre for Sustainability
Kevin Damaskie - Whistler Centre for Sustainability

Abstract

Whistler2020 moves beyond traditional planning and has been developed to address social, economic and environmental challenges in an integrated and upstream way. Land use decisions and other community-based decisions, are supported by a scientifically credible decision-making framework aligned with the resort community's shared vision, strategies and sustainability objectives. Aligned Decision-making: Aligned decision-making happens informally through simple awareness of Whistler2020, or more formally by integration of the Whistler2020 framework into organizational policies and systems. While a shift in how decisions are made takes understanding and time, a shift is the ultimate desired outcome for the resort community. The spirit of cooperation among residents, business owners, the municipality and other stakeholders flourishes in Whistler due to years of working together and encouraging each other to achieve the shared vision embodied by Whistler2020. Case studies will be presented in which the Whistler 2020 framework played a significant role in land use decision-making. In this context, the impact of both the Whistler 2020 task forces and Whistler 2020 partner alignment will be highlighted. Cultural Relationship: As critical context, the community's cultural relationship with the land will be explored. Trends in community surveys over the past five years will be examined for the potential influence of Whistler2020 in the relationship between community members and the land. Specific case studies are yet to be determined, leaving open the possibility that instructive stories may emerge in the period July 2008 - May 2009. Case studies will also be drawn from the accumulated five years' experience of Whistler2020 visioning and planning. Case studies will be chosen with consideration of their accessibility to participants on a bike tour or self-guided podcast tour during the Land Summit. Topics for consideration include: 1. Agricultural Land Use Decisions, impacted by community values of food security and affordability, promotion of ecological and sustainable farming practices, and ongoing availability of agricultural / food service jobs. 2. Neighborhood Land Use Decisions impacted by community values of affordable housing for local workers, distinctive attractive neighborhoods with a strong sense of place, design for density, neighborhood site design sensitive to important ecological areas, and continued opportunities for developers aligned with the community's vision. As context, 3,500 - 4,000 (or 20 - 30 %) of the population live in 'employee-restricted' housing (which includes houses, town homes and apartments). 79% of people working in Whistler, also live in Whistler. 3. Natural / Aesthetic / Recreational Land Use Decisions, impacted by community values of access to natural systems and parks for recreation and leisure, integration of natural systems with human activities for increased aesthetic pleasure, conservation of sensitive ecological areas and increasing numbers of visitors to the resort based on its natural asset management. As context, in the resort community, there are 15 parks offering 551.3 hectares of parkland and five major lakes. The context for land use decisions is within a resort community continually managing intense pressure for development. There are approximately 2.1 million visitors to the resort community every year, including non-overnight visitors, with approximately 48% of visitation in the winter and 52% in the summer. By contrast, there are 9,248 permanent residents of the Resort Municipality of Whistler and 2,500 seasonal workers. In addition, 9,100 second-home owners are invested in the community. As a result, the resort community is challenged by diverse and sometimes contradictory forces of change.

Speaker Biography

Laura MacKay and Kevin Damaskie work for the municipality as part of the Whistler2020 team. Laura manages relationships with 40 + partners of the municipality, many of whom participate on the Whistler2020 task forces. Kevin manages the cycle of the annual task force participatory process, a process which garnered the 2008 Smarty Award in the "People" category (for communities under 50,000) at the 2008 Smart Growth BC Awards. Task force members contribute around 2,000 hours of their collective time every spring on seventeen (17) task forces to review performance indicator data and develop a shared current reality in relation to a vision of success and sustainability in the future, enabling them to create collaborative and creative actions. Currently in the fifth year of task force action planning, to date, roughly 350 actions have been developed, recommended and accepted for completion by dozens of local organizations. With around eighty percent of accepted actions already completed or currently in progress, community task forces have had a significant impact on land use decisions in Whistler since their first convention a half decade ago. Task forces are intentionally populated with professionals drawn from diverse backgrounds and other stakeholders to form a 360 degree perspective on strategy areas.

Presentation # 3 title: Nature Without Borders

Presenter:

Jack Minard - Comox Valley Land Trust

Abstract

Opens with a series of illustrations showing how rapidly we are losing biodiversity in the Comox Valley. Moves through a description of the Strategy and how it can increase protection of remaining sensitive ecosystems and provide for biodiversity while allowing for sustainable development that ensures restoration of lost ecosystems and landscape level linkages.

Speaker Biography

Jack Minard comes from a mixed background of fishing and logging resource extraction work and theatre and television. Upon losing his home to the downturn in Commercial fishing he was re-trained as a fisheries technician by HRDC in conjunction with a local Enhancement Society. Since 1997 Jack has been working with local, regional and provincial organizations to restore and preserve natural areas and systems. Jack is currently the Executive Director of the Comox Valley Land Trust and is deeply involved with the CV Conservation Strategy Community Partnership and moving forward the recommendations in 'Nature Without Borders'