

**CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND  
STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT: A CASE STUDY OF  
AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN WHISTLER**

by

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STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT: A CASE  
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# **Abstract**

In many mountain resort communities, affordable housing for employees is limited due to a variety of forces. The overall objective of this research is to apply the fundamentals of CSR and stakeholder engagement to examine the extent to which resort corporations are shaping socially responsible management policies and practices to address affordable housing issues. A case study was undertaken in Whistler, British Columbia, in which this objective was examined.

Findings suggest that Intrawest has been supportive in helping the community develop policies to address affordable housing issues. However, Intrawest has been reluctant to develop more affordable housing beyond its initial staff-housing. It has also been disinclined to engage community stakeholders in its business decisions that may impact housing affordability.

Several management recommendations are suggested which represent opportunities for Intrawest to incorporate CSR into its operating strategies. These are also designed to mitigate affordable housing issues while enhancing corporate value creation.

## **Dedication**

*To Michaela for her endless love, support,  
inspiration, humour, and joy of life.*

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# Table of Contents

<b>Approval</b> .....	<b>ii</b>
<b>Abstract</b> .....	<b>iii</b>
<b>Dedication</b> .....	<b>iv</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	<b>v</b>
<b>Table of Contents</b> .....	<b>vi</b>
<b>List of Figures</b> .....	<b>ix</b>
<b>List of Tables</b> .....	<b>ix</b>
<b>List of Abbreviations and Acronyms</b> .....	<b>x</b>
<b>1 Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
1.1 Research Rationale .....	1
1.2 Research Objective and Questions .....	2
1.3 Research Approach.....	3
1.3.1 Literature Review .....	3
1.3.2 Case Study .....	3
1.4 Research Importance .....	4
1.5 Structure of Research .....	4
<b>2 Literature Review</b> .....	<b>6</b>
2.1 Introduction .....	6
2.2 Affordable Housing and Corporate Social Responsibility .....	7
2.2.1 Changing Community Structure and the Loss of Affordable Housing .....	7
2.2.2 Applying Corporate Social Responsibility to Affordable Housing Issues.....	9
2.3 Business Drivers of Corporate Social Responsibility .....	19
2.3.1 Optimal Profit versus Profit Maximization .....	19
2.3.2 The Affordable Housing–Sustainable Profit Linkage .....	22
2.3.3 CSR as a Mechanism for Risk / Opportunity Assessment and Management .....	23
2.3.4 Providing Value of Brand Image and Reputation .....	25
2.3.5 Supply Chain Forces.....	27
2.4 Stakeholder Engagement and Corporate Social Responsibility in a Mountain Resort Context .....	28
2.4.1 Stakeholder Management .....	29
2.4.2 Stakeholder Inclusiveness .....	31
2.4.3 Human and Social Capital .....	34



2.5	External Evaluation Standards and Reporting Measures of Corporate Social Responsibility .....	35
2.5.1	Reporting Socially Responsible Corporate Policies and Activities .....	35
2.5.2	Socially Responsible Investing and Affordable Housing.....	37
2.6	Summary.....	39
2.7	Assessment Framework.....	43
<b>3</b>	<b>Methods .....</b>	<b>46</b>
3.1	Research Objectives and Questions.....	46
3.1.1	Central Objective.....	46
3.1.2	Key Research Questions.....	46
3.2	Case Study Selection .....	47
3.3	Qualitative Interviews .....	48
3.3.1	Interview Instrument .....	48
3.3.2	Interview Process.....	49
3.3.3	Sampling and Recruitment Process .....	50
3.3.4	Interview Data Analysis .....	52
3.4	Secondary Data Analysis.....	52
3.5	Potential Study Limitations .....	53
3.5.1	Limitations of the Interview Approach .....	53
3.5.2	Limitations of the Case Study Approach.....	54
<b>4</b>	<b>Findings and Analysis .....</b>	<b>56</b>
4.1	Introduction .....	56
4.2	Whistler, British Columbia.....	56
4.3	Intrawest Corporation: Whistler-Blackcomb .....	59
4.4	Interview Results .....	62
4.4.1	Current Trends in Affordable Housing Issues.....	62
4.4.2	Impacts from a Lack of Affordable Housing .....	77
4.4.3	Roles of Intrawest in Addressing Affordable Housing .....	87
4.4.4	Benefits to Intrawest by Addressing Affordable Housing .....	97
4.4.5	Municipal Government Impediments and Support for Corporate Affordable Housing Strategies .....	101
4.4.6	Affordable Housing Indicators and Reporting Practices.....	108
4.5	Summary.....	112
<b>5</b>	<b>Management Recommendations .....</b>	<b>116</b>
5.1	Recommendations .....	116
5.1.1	Establish a Corporate Sustainability Culture.....	116
5.1.2	Establish a Business Case for Supplying Affordable Housing .....	118
5.1.3	Develop a Diverse Group of Working Partnerships.....	118
5.1.4	Increased Government Incentives for Developers to Initiate and Build Affordable Housing. ....	120
<b>6</b>	<b>Conclusions .....</b>	<b>123</b>
6.1	Summary of Conclusions .....	123
6.2	Recommendations for Further Research .....	130

<b>Appendices</b> .....	<b>133</b>
Appendix A:    Colorado Rural Resort Region Land-use Policies and Bylaws to Encourage Affordable Housing.....	133
Appendix B:    Intrawest Corporation Success Formula .....	134
Appendix C:    Corporate Accountability and Reporting Standards .....	135
Appendix D:    Canadian Socially Responsible Investments .....	138
Appendix E:    Interview Survey.....	140
Appendix F:    Interview Consent Form .....	146
Appendix G:    Description of Research for Interview Respondent .....	147
<b>References</b> .....	<b>148</b>

## List of Figures

Figure 1: Map of Sea-to-Sky Region.....	58
Figure 2: Average Whistler real estate sale prices, 1999-2004 .....	65
Figure 3: WB Seasonal Employee Housing Needs Assessment Process .....	111

## List of Tables

Table 1: Examples of CSR Principles.....	10
Table 2: Employer Housing Programs in Eagle County, Colorado.....	17
Table 3: Assessment Framework for CSR Policies in Mitigating Affordable Housing .....	43
Table 4: Distribution of Stakeholder Groups Interviewed .....	51
Table 5: Average real estate prices in Whistler by type, 1999-2004.....	65
Table 6: Real estate sales in Whistler by type, 1999-2004.....	66
Table 7: Housing Affordability in Whistler vs. British Columbia vs. Canada.....	68
Table 8: Calculations to determine wage required to meet affordable housing costs.....	69
Table 9: Intrawest resident-restricted housing developments .....	88
Table 10: Percentages of employee housing offered by Vail Resorts Inc. ....	89
Table 11: Perspectives concerning Intrawest’s responsibility to provide support for affordable housing solutions in Whistler.....	95
Table 12: Intrawest’s responsibility to address affordable housing in Whistler .....	96
Table 13: Summary of ratings regarding how Intrawest might create corporate value by addressing affordable housing problems .....	98
Table 14: Summary of benefits respondents believed Intrawest could achieve by actively addressing affordable housing issues .....	100
Table 15: Assessment Framework – Performance of Intrawest Using CSR Policies to Address Affordable Housing Issues in Whistler .....	113

## **List of Abbreviations and Acronyms**

CMHC	Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation
CSP	Comprehensive Sustainability Plan
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
IOC	International Olympic Committee
RMOW	Resort Municipality of Whistler
SRI	Socially Responsible Investments
VANOC	Vancouver Organizing Committee for the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games
WB	Whistler-Blackcomb
WHA	Whistler Housing Authority

# **1 Introduction**

## **1.1 Research Rationale**

The availability of appropriate, affordable housing is central to the health, quality of life and economic stability of communities. However, in many North American mountain resort communities, access to such housing for employees is limited (Clifford, 2002). It is in these places that resort corporations often have significant direct and indirect influence on the affordability of housing. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) entails businesses operating in economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable ways (Business for Social Responsibility, 2003a). The concepts of stakeholder engagement hold a fundamental linkage with CSR by suggesting that business operations must also meet the interests of all its stakeholders because these individuals or groups can affect or are affected by a corporation's activities (Freeman, 1984). By including these stakeholders in their activities, corporations can increase value beyond that of shareholders to all stakeholders (Svendsen, 1998; Kemp, 2002; Phillips, 2004). This research provides a valuable lens through which to explore the CSR and stakeholder engagement activities of Intrawest Corporation and its Whistler-Blackcomb (WB) operation – a leading tourism business in Whistler – in terms of addressing affordable housing issues.

## 1.2 Research Objective and Questions

The overall objective of this research is to apply the fundamentals of CSR and stakeholder engagement to examine the extent to which resort corporations are shaping socially responsible management policies and practices to address affordable housing issues. In the context of Intrawest and the Resort Municipality of Whistler – the mountain resort corporation and community chosen for this study – the more applied questions are:

1. What are current trends in affordable housing issues in Whistler, and how does Intrawest Corporation contribute to these trends?
2. What are the social and economic impacts of a deficiency of affordable housing within Whistler?
3. Who are the critical stakeholders that are needed to address the deficiencies of affordable housing?
4. What are the demands and interventions on Intrawest Corporation regarding affordable housing?
5. What will be the demands and interventions on Intrawest Corporation regarding affordable housing in the future?
6. Why should Intrawest Corporation be involved in determining solutions to affordable housing issues in Whistler?
7. How can Intrawest Corporation best use CSR principles to guide it in responding to challenges of affordable housing?
8. What corporate CSR policies or practices exist to promote the provision of affordable housing?
9. How does the Resort Municipality of Whistler best encourage Intrawest Corporation to act in a socially responsible manner to address the affordable housing issues?
10. To what extent does Intrawest Corporation measure, monitor, and report the effectiveness of CSR in terms of affordable housing policies and practices, and how do those measures impact their bottom line?

## **1.3 Research Approach**

### **1.3.1 Literature Review**

Initially, a literature review was carried out in order to develop a theoretical frame and associated themes and indicators for assessing the extent to which resort corporations are involved in mitigating affordable housing challenges in mountain resort communities. The theoretical bases for this framework are corporate social responsibility (CSR) and stakeholder engagement. These theoretical concepts and their relevance to this study's focus are described in Chapter Two.

### **1.3.2 Case Study**

Based on the research framework established in the literature review, a case study is used to examine the assessment themes and ultimately address the main research question. In the first component of the case study semi-structured interviews are conducted with key corporate and community stakeholders from the study area. The purposes of the corporate interviews are to 1) identify the forces behind corporate social responsibility policies/practices, particularly as they relate to affordable housing; and 2) to identify the relationships between these policies (or lack thereof) and their effects on the community. The interviews with the community stakeholders and other relevant organizations explore the relationship between Intrawest Corporation and the community's affordable housing needs. Where appropriate, the data collected via these interviews are coded and analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively using descriptive statistical techniques.

The second component of the case study involves a review of other sources of information (e.g. newspaper articles, corporate and community reports, government policy documents, Canada Census data, real estate data). These data provide support for the interview findings by filling in information gaps associated with recent affordable housing trends and issues.

#### **1.4 Research Importance**

This research expands on existing literature related to corporate social responsibility and concepts of stakeholder engagement by applying them to a recurring tourism destination community issue. In the process of doing this it provides practical data and proactive management recommendations for developing affordable housing policies and practices mainly for corporate organizations, but also for municipal planners. The data and recommendations can enhance the success of corporate planning initiatives and municipal affordable housing strategies that may already exist. Finally, the management recommendations and conclusions derived from the case study may be of relevance for other resort corporations and communities who share similar housing issues.

#### **1.5 Structure of Research**

Chapter Two reviews the literature concerning corporate social responsibility and stakeholder engagement, as well as research relating to affordable housing in mountain resort communities. Based on this literature, an assessment framework is developed that includes themes and criteria for examining the extent to which resort corporations are involved in addressing affordable housing challenges in mountain resort communities in



which they operate. Chapter Three discusses the research design and methods used in this research to explore corporate strategies and relationships with community stakeholders in the context of affordable housing. Chapter Four outlines the research context and describes the findings of the case study. Chapter Five provides management recommendations for integrating CSR and engaging with stakeholders creating more effective affordable housing strategies and actions. It also suggests additional municipal planning and policy incentives to encourage such corporate involvement. Finally, Chapter Six presents the major conclusions that have been identified from the study, and provides recommendations for further research.

## **2 Literature Review**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter reviews existing research literature to determine how corporate social responsibility (CSR) policies and concepts of stakeholder engagement pertain to affordable housing issues in resort corporations and mountain communities. To begin, it describes the changing community structure of many mountain resort communities, which sets the context of the current housing challenges in these places. The chapter then identifies what CSR means in the context of affordable housing; the factors that influence the extent to which corporations need to include affordable housing strategies in their management actions; and what potential business benefits influence how CSR principles related to housing issues are implemented. The second section examines how the concept stakeholder engagement applies to corporate stakeholder engagement in mountain resort communities in the context of affordable housing solutions. The chapter's final section outlines several evaluation standards and reporting practices as tools that might be used to measure how well CSR policies are integrated into business management. The chapter culminates with an assessment framework that consists of themes and criteria for evaluating the extent to which resort corporations are shaping socially responsible management policies and practices as well as working with key community stakeholders to address affordable housing issues. The assessment framework guides the form and content of an interview instrument used to determine the case study findings presented in Chapter Four.

## **2.2 Affordable Housing and Corporate Social Responsibility**

### **2.2.1 Changing Community Structure and the Loss of Affordable Housing**

Many mountain resort communities have gone through dramatic transformations in terms of their social and economic structures. One of the principal recurring transformations involves the reduction in the stock of affordable housing available to resort employees. This situation is directly induced by the growing popularity of mountain resort destinations as places of residence for wealthy amenity migrants. Amenity migrants are people who seek permanent or part-time residence in areas where they can gain on-going access to higher quality natural and cultural resources than would normally be available to them in their previous place of residence (Moore et al, in press). This community transformation can be described as typically happening in three sequential phases:

#### **Stage 1: Ski Town to Modern Lifestyle Resort**

Skiing has long been the main leisure attraction of many mountain communities around the world. As the popularity of the activity grew in many of these towns, there arose a steady development of “commercial area(s) to service the multitudes who were sure to come” (Resort Municipality of Whistler, 2002a: 5). For many communities, what began as collections of guest services for skiers was gradually transformed into complex resort towns that rapidly became lifestyle centres with their own unique set of social, economic and environmental issues. In many cases, the focus on skiing itself became less dominant in these mountain towns (Coleman, 1996; Clifford, 2002). In a growing number of these places, the traditional ski-culture gave way to a broader and more urban set of values and lifestyle activities associated with accessible adventure opportunities, retail

service consumption, and ‘people-watching’ – where simply being immersed in the lifestyle is valued.

### **Stage 2: Development to Meet Increasing Lifestyle Demands**

Walking through the main villages of many of these mountain resorts, the type of development that has arisen in order to meet the demands of such a lifestyle resort clientele is obvious. Designer boutiques, brand-name outlets, specialty shops, upscale restaurants with award-winning chefs, and urban café icons are frequently filled with patrons throughout the day and well into the night. The demand for developments that meet the needs of such upscale lifestyles is created by the seasonal surges of domestic and international visitors, and the more recent escalation of affluent amenity-seeking migrants (Moore et al, in press).

### **Stage 3: Gentrification**

In combination with this commercial development, the specific accommodation demands and purchasing power of amenity migrants create housing prices that far exceed ‘normal’ market conditions (Moore et al, in press). The inflated cost of housing constrains the ability of the original residents and service-oriented employees to become homeowners or even renters, forcing them to move to down- and up-valley communities further away from the resort where prices tend to be more affordable.

The implications of this pattern of gentrification can pose serious challenges associated with growing income disparities between haves-versus-have-nots (Clifford, 2002). It can also create acute labor attraction and retention problems as well as jeopardize the high levels of service of expected businesses operating in these

destinations. Addressing the impacts of this gentrification process on resident employee housing supply is a challenge confronting mountain resort destinations across North America (Clifford, 2002).

### **2.2.2 Applying Corporate Social Responsibility to Affordable Housing Issues**

Fuelled by the forces of globalization and competition, the growing influence of external stakeholders, the increasing size and influence of corporations, and the escalating importance of intangibles to business success, a growing number of corporations have been adopting corporate social responsibility (CSR) strategies. These policies extend beyond traditional compliance with government-based social and environmental regulations (Bhat, 1996; Zadek, 2000, 2001). Corporate social responsibility is neither a new nor radical idea. In 1933, Berle and Means published "*The Modern Corporation and Private Property*" that warned readers about the increasing power of corporations. They suggested that there was growing social pressure on corporations to use their influence for the benefit of society. More recently, the notion of CSR has been conceptualized into a set of principles guiding corporations to operate in economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable ways while recognizing the interests of their stakeholders (Business for Social Responsibility, 2003a). Table 1 presents examples of principles that guide corporations in acting in a socially responsible way.

**Table 1: Examples of CSR Principles.**

PRINCIPLE	DESCRIPTION OF PRINCIPLE
Community relations	Value relationships with the community and recognize that thriving businesses depend upon thriving communities. Community programmes are, therefore, rooted in business strategies and are an important management responsibility <sup>1</sup> .
Improving performance	Increase the social and economic benefits and reduce the environmental impacts of business activities over the short and long term, and become a more profitable and competitive organization <sup>2</sup> .
Culture	Ensure that wider social responsibilities influence the way the company manages, rewards and develops employees in order to become part of the company culture <sup>3</sup> .
Ethics	Commit to corporate ethics, honesty and sincerity. Do not offer, request or accept unwarranted gifts and payment nor limit free and fair competition. By adhering to Group policies so that the company's integrity cannot be questioned, the company enables shareholders, customers, employees and other concerned parties to make balanced and well-founded decisions <sup>4</sup> .
Three Bottom Lines	Examine how the company manages impacts from its operations, weigh environmental values with economic ones and plan for a future with more green energy in our system (environmental bottom line). Social bottom line includes how the company ensures the safety and well-being of people – employees, customers and the general public – and the health of the communities in which we live and work. Economic bottom line means making it possible to stay in business forever, by being an efficient, productive and profitable company and by providing value to customers and the province <sup>5</sup> .
Political Contributions	Ensure employees do not make any contribution of company funds, property or services to any political party or committee or to any candidate for or holder of any office of any government. No direct or indirect pressure in any form is to be directed toward employees to make any political contribution or participate in the support of a political party or the political candidacy of any individual <sup>6</sup> .

Sources: 1 <http://www.guscsr.com/2004/2b.htm>  
2 <http://www.alcan.com/web/publishing.nsf/content/Sustainability+Home>  
3 <http://www.guscsr.com/2004/2b.htm>  
4 <http://www.nordea.lv/sitemod/default/index.aspx?pid= 82512&strcorecontentarea=444>  
5 <http://www.bchydro.com/policies/tbl/tbl1263.html>  
6 Dupont, 2004

Aspen Skiing Company uses these types of principles to guide the company in its everyday business activities in Colorado:

“We have a collective responsibility to ensure our company is a rewarding place to work, and our community is a desirable place to live. We strive to preserve and enhance the delicate balance between "resort" and "community" that makes Aspen/Snowmass unique. The combination of a values-based company and the quality of mountain sports, community, history, culture, and environment found in Aspen/Snowmass gives us a unique market niche. We will be successful because we believe in the values and principles expressed here, and we are committed to them.” (Aspen Skiing Company, 2004)

Though the wording of these CSR principles may differ between corporations, the fundamental elements of social, environmental, and economic sustainability are strongly endorsed. Specifically, CSR philosophy suggests that corporations assume responsibilities to society beyond the profit mandate:

"Corporations possess the power to control and influence the quality of life of employees, customers, shareholders, and residents of local communities in which they operate. A single corporate decision can irrevocably change the lives of thousands of people. Power necessarily entails responsibility." (Pava and Krausz, 1995: 1)

A basic premise of CSR is that companies have a responsibility beyond meeting the current legal requirements of business to society. In this respect, many mountain resort communities are seeking greater corporate social responsibility, particularly as it pertains to the provision of affordable housing for local residents. Clifford (2002) recognized that there is a “chain of connectivity” between the development of ski resorts and the loss of affordable housing in the surrounding communities. This can be linked to the development of surrounding private lands that take advantage of the rising real estate values created by ski area development. Clifford (2002) further stated,

“The deteriorating human condition... around major ski areas is indirectly but inextricably linked to the presence and expansion of those resorts. Although it may be true that ski executives have little ability to solve social problems fifty or a hundred miles away, it is disingenuous of them

to disavow all responsibility when their workers live there.” (Clifford, 2002: 191)

### **Local Government Initiatives**

Many municipal governments and/or regional planning departments have enacted local bylaws and policies to help meet the housing needs of their respective communities. These help fill the disparity between corporate laws that favor maximizing shareholder profit and the realities of corporate development activity that have considerable impacts on the affordability of resident housing. A growing number of municipal councils in mountain regions recognize that affordable housing is becoming increasingly scarce for a larger proportion of the population. As a result “mountain communities are disintegrating, both metaphorically and literally (that is, dis-integrating), in the face of corporate skiing” (Clifford, 2002: 190). The scarcity of affordable housing is affecting not only lower-income groups, but also influencing moderate-income wage-earners as well (Grasseschi, 2004).

Throughout the Colorado Rural Resort Region (including the counties of Eagle, Garfield, Lake, Pitkin, and Summit) a range of land-use policies and tactics have been developed to help address the need for an adequate supply of affordable housing. Appendix A outlines some of the policies and bylaws currently used. In addition to these initiatives, other municipal and regional governments have created specific working groups and established housing committees to address some of the housing issues. Some of these initiatives include:

- At Mammoth, California, the Mammoth Lakes Housing Inc. committee works to establish creative development partnerships with local developers, foundations, and agencies. Its goal is to create housing in Mammoth Lakes.



For instance, Mammoth Lakes Housing Inc. is partnering with Intrawest Mammoth to create an additional 40 workforce housing units in 2005 ([www.mammothlakeshousing.com](http://www.mammothlakeshousing.com)).

- In Colorado, the Colorado Housing and Finance Authority (CHFA) programs are funded through the issuance of taxable or tax exempt bonds. These funds and other secured resources are used to help finance affordable housing opportunities ([www.colohfa.org](http://www.colohfa.org)).
- More specific to Colorado mountain resorts, the Summit Housing Authority ensures the continuing availability of appropriate housing for permanent residents who cannot otherwise afford a market-priced dwelling. This is done through various housing programs (e.g. Housing and Urban Development [HUD] Rental Assistance, Family Self-Sufficiency Program, Division of Housing Down Payment Assistance, Loan Colorado Mountain Housing Coalition, House to Home Ownership [H2O Loan]) ([www.co.summit.co.us/housing](http://www.co.summit.co.us/housing)).
- In Canmore, Alberta, the Canmore Community Housing Corporation (CCHC) plays a vital role in identifying key housing issues. It also works cooperatively with various agencies to overcome the problems of rapidly increasing housing prices. For example, CCHC and Mountain Haven Cooperative Homes have signed a land lease to build a 17-unit affordable housing complex in the nearby Three Sisters region (CMHC, 2004).
- In Vermont, USA, the Vermont Housing Council, Vermont Housing Awareness Campaign, and Vermont Affordable Housing Coalition are broad-based groups of public and private housing organizations. They were created to oversee the development of housing projects and to coordinate housing services programs in various ski resorts within the State. Examples include Loan and Grant Program for affordable housing developers, Single Family Assistance Program, Habitat for Humanity and Vocational Education-Built Homes, and a Purchase Subsidy Program ([www.vhcb.org](http://www.vhcb.org), [www.housingawareness.org](http://www.housingawareness.org)).

- In Whistler, B.C, the Whistler Housing Authority plays a significant role in encouraging more affordable housing developments in that community. The authority uses various bylaws and policies, as well as employee-restricted housing development programs to address housing needs. It uses an Employee Housing Fund to pay for its program ([www.whistlerhousing.ca](http://www.whistlerhousing.ca)).

These are only a handful of the many housing organizations dedicated to working with developers and various government agencies to resolve the challenge of providing resort employees with accessible and affordable housing near their place of work.

### **Corporate Access to Housing-Related Resources**

Despite the efforts of local municipal authorities to alleviate affordable housing shortages, there continues to be a deficiency of housing in many North American mountain resort communities (Personal Communication, Mike Vance, General Manager of Community Initiatives, Resort Municipality of Whistler, 2004). This deficiency persists by and large because municipalities and regional governments often lack the information or resources needed to resolve social or environmental problems that result from business activity (Stone, 1975). According to Stone (1975), corporations typically have the most ready access to resources to mitigate many adverse social or environmental impacts or economic risks. In some cases, mountain resort corporations have the advantage of being able to use their existing property investment and residential development expertise – a resource that small resort municipalities or rural regions are often lacking – to provide support for affordable housing to the community in which they operate. By working with municipal and/or regional governments, some corporations are more easily able to address housing issues than government alone can do. For instance, resort corporations can adjust their business strategies to include real estate developments

and investments in residential and commercial projects designed to achieve social and business objectives ([www.vancity.com](http://www.vancity.com)), as opposed to solely focusing on maximizing “the company's revenue streams and growth through time” (Intrawest, 2004b; also see Appendix B). Their actions might include leveraging existing property investments and residential development expertise to resolve some housing issues.

Paul Blackney is the CEO of Worldspan – a provider of worldwide electronic distribution of travel information, Internet products, and e-commerce capabilities for travel agencies, service providers, and corporations. He believes that corporate social responsibility should be a philosophy that permeates corporate organizations and a process in which everyone is involved (WTTC, 2002). Putting CSR into action, Worldspan has leveraged its human resources by partnering its employees with NGOs and municipalities in order to build five ‘Habitat for Humanity’ homes. These affordable homes benefit the communities where company employees live and work. Having corporations leverage their resources in partnership with municipal and NGO contributions helps free up scarce municipal tax revenues while continuing to fulfill the corporation’s profit mandate to shareholders; provides the firm with greater involvement in decisions related to affordable housing; and offers several benefits to the firm (refer to Section 2.3).

### **Lag Time in the Efficacy of Government Reform Regulation**

In addition to the limited information and resources that confront local governments, these institutions are frequently challenged with prolonged lags between the identification of community social problems and making the actual adjustment of related policies to address these concerns (Stone, 1975). That is, planning policies are

both anticipatory and reactive, requiring governments to anticipate and develop responses for future problems, while at the same time responding to problems demanding immediate solutions (Canadian Institute of Planners, 2004). However, such policies tend to be more often reactive in nature. This lag time is further extended, as the policies that are suggested often remain ineffective in addressing the immediate issues that exists.

For example, in the Colorado Rural Resort Region, one of the most challenging tasks of the local government is meeting the growing demand for affordable housing amongst resort employees. This situation typically is the result of effective resort corporation promotion activities and business growth strategies that fuel the market demand for many expensive real estate developments (Clifford, 2002). Despite the remedial and new development policies put in place by the various municipalities and counties in the Colorado Rural Resort Region, the lack of affordable housing continues to be an extensive problem. The momentum of the real estate market that is driven by past decades of resort development and service expansion is more powerful than the reactive municipal or regional housing policies. A prime signal that a time lag exists between the reactive policies and the affordable housing issues in the Colorado Rural Resort Region is that only 38% of Vail employees currently live in the resort community of Vail, while the rest commute from far down valley (Aspen / Pitkin County Housing Authority, 2003).

While the local governments of Colorado's Rural Resort Region have been grappling with the area's housing problems on a regional scale for years, some businesses have taken on the responsibility to seek other more immediate housing solutions for their own employees. These efforts include master leasing of apartments or condominiums; purchasing homes, mobile homes or acquiring apartment complexes; and initiating

mortgage assistance programs to help employees in purchasing their own homes (Northwest Colorado Council of Governments, 2003). Table 2 lists employer programs in place in Colorado’s Eagle County. Many mountain communities in this county are experiencing increasing housing prices and property taxes beyond the level of affordability for many residents because of the “down-valley” syndrome created by popular destination resorts throughout the region such as Vail, Aspen, Breckenridge, Copper, and Arapahoe Basin. Employer housing programs have been another method to offset the aforementioned real estate market momentum than other local government initiatives.

**Table 2: Employer Housing Programs in Eagle County, Colorado**

EMPLOYER	EMPLOYER HOUSING PROGRAMS											
	Education	Construct Or Purchase	Down Payment or Mortgage Assistance	Master Lease	Invest	Subsidize	Payroll Deduct	Deposits	Loans	Guarantee	Housing Allowance	Increase Wages
Ace Hardware				✓								
Antlers				✓		✓			✓	✓		
Austria House		✓										
Avon Pet Center		✓		✓		✓			✓			
Cascade Hotel/Club				✓		✓	✓					
City Market		✓										
Colorado Mountain News Media		✓										
Eagle Country Emergency Services			✓						✓			✓
Eagle River Water and		✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓			

EMPLOYER	EMPLOYER HOUSING PROGRAMS											
	Education	Construct Or Purchase	Down Payment or Mortgage Assistance	Master Lease	Invest	Subsidize	Payroll Deduct	Deposits	Loans	Guarantee	Housing Allowance	Increase Wages
Sanitation District												
East West Partners				✓		✓			✓			
First Bank				✓		✓						
Holy Cross Electric	✓		✓							✓		
Honeywagon		✓	✓	✓		✓						
McDonalds				✓								
R.A. Nelson & Associates			✓									
Riverwalk		✓		✓								
School District				✓								
Sonnenalp						✓						
St. Claire Catholic School		✓		✓								
Steam Master				✓		✓						
Vail Daily				✓		✓	✓	✓				
Vail Resorts Inc.		✓	✓	✓	✓					✓	✓	
Vail Valley Medical Center				✓								
West Vail Liquor Mart				✓								

Adapted from: Northwest Colorado Council of Governments, 2003, by permission.

The situation in Colorado illustrates that corporations can develop and market demand for affordable housing at a pace that is much quicker than local government's ability to react in time to respond to such issues. In this respect, the corporations are

better equipped to seek alternative solutions to employee housing problems. In contrast, local government's ability to establish responsive policies and programs are less immediate and at times not as effective.

## **2.3 Business Drivers of Corporate Social Responsibility**

Corporations tend to implement CSR principles if they will contribute to the maintenance or enhancement of business performance for their shareholders. Several business drivers have potential linkages to the provision of affordable housing. This section reviews the business drivers that are most relevant to the issue of affordable housing. These include: optimal profit, housing–profit linkages, risk/opportunity assessment and management, brand image and reputation enhancement, and supply chain forces. An explanation of these drivers is vital to understanding to what extent and why resort corporations are (or should be) involved in resolving affordable housing problems.

### **2.3.1 Optimal Profit versus Profit Maximization**

The traditional view of how businesses should operate suggests that corporations have a sole responsibility to maximize profits for shareholders. There is no mandate to embark on projects that do not directly enhance this profit-maximizing directive. In 1962, Friedman stated that the social responsibility of corporations is to increase profits, where,

Few trends would so thoroughly undermine the very foundations of our free society as the acceptance by corporate officials of a social responsibility other than to make as much money for their stockholders as they possibly can. This is a fundamentally subversive doctrine. (Friedman, 1962: 133)

Friedman's conviction that CSR is a "subversive doctrine" is based on the belief that social responsibility activities imply that the corporations must act in ways that are

not in the interest of shareholders (Pava and Krausz, 1995). If engaging in socially responsible activities does not directly maximize shareholder profits, then doing so goes against the best interests of shareholders, and ultimately the responsibility of corporations.

A growing amount of evidence indicates that socially responsible corporations perform at least as well as those that only focus on maximizing profits (Pava and Krausz, 1995; Sexty, 1995; McIntosh et al, 1998; Abe et al, 1998; Zadek, 2000, 2001; Kemp, 2002; Muirhead et al, 2002; Post et al, 2002; Baue 2003; Kemp et al, 2004). Some research shows that socially responsible activities can actually increase the financial performance of the shareholder's stock (Zadek, 2000, 2001; Kemp, 2002; Kemp et al, 2004). Where general public awareness of social issues and expectations with respect to corporate conduct are intensifying, the social repercussions of a corporation's activities increasingly become part of the bottom line (Hawkes and Williams, 1993; Wehrmeyer, 1999; Strandberg, 2002).

Studies emphasize that sustainability issues are beginning to emerge as key concerns for corporations, if only because these firms are increasingly being criticized (and penalized) for failing to adapt their behaviour and policies to meet changing societal norms (Post et al, 2002). Specifically, some firms are witnessing the expectations of some shareholders shift towards long-term performance of stocks as opposed to short-term gains (Zadek, 2000, 2001; Kemp, 2002; Kemp et al, 2004). As this occurs, the mandates of some corporations are being adapted to ensure the firm and the society within which it operates are sustainable. As society becomes more aware of the strong linkages between corporate activities and sustainability issues, there is an increasing interest from



shareholders to ensure that corporations strive for optimal as opposed to maximum profits and act in socially responsible ways (Zadek, 2000, 2001; Post et al, 2002; World Travel and Tourism Council, 2002). Once a socially responsible ethos has been established and integrated into the corporation's core values and policies, the possibilities of optimizing profits may increase (Zadek, 2000; Kemp, 2002; Kemp et al, 2004). In such cases CSR becomes an integral driver of broader long-term corporate fiscal performance.

There is still intense pressure for corporations to ensure short-term profit is maximized. However, in today's competitive global market some shareholders recognize that corporations need to balance investments between socially responsible activities that will ensure long-term value and obtaining optimum returns over the short-term (Sexty, 1995; Zadek, 2001; Business for Social Responsibility, 2003c; Personal Communication, Chris Piper, Ivey Business School, University of Western Ontario, 2004). Without this shareholder recognition of the need to make balanced socially responsible investments, the capital otherwise would have been used to drive short-term profits to the maximum level while disregarding socially responsible actions and long-term performance.

Redirecting a portion of corporate investments towards socially responsible activities that ensure long-term profitability is particularly important in mountain resort businesses.

Most corporations that own/operate resorts require a positive working relationship with local communities in order to ensure the sustainability of the area's natural and human resources. Abe et al (1998) refer to corporations that integrate CSR principles into their value system and everyday business decisions as 'visionary companies'. Profit maximization is not the primary objective:

“Yes, they seek profits, but they're equally guided by a core ideology – core values and a sense of purpose beyond just making money. Yet,

paradoxically, the visionary companies make more money than the more purely profit-driven comparison companies.” (Abe et al, 1998: 13)

A key driver in developing CSR policies and practices is the ability to achieve a balance between socially responsible activities that will ensure long-term value and obtaining optimum returns over the short-term.

### **2.3.2 The Affordable Housing–Sustainable Profit Linkage**

Providing affordable housing support for mountain resort employees can be one of the best methods for resort corporations to achieve a balance between long-term performance and short-term gains (Northwest Colorado Council of Governments, 2003; Whistler Housing Authority, 2003a). Maintaining affordable employee accommodations in the direct vicinity of the resort can help ensure that the workforce is more content and committed to the success of the destination. Satisfied employees can help create positive employee-visitor experiences, resulting in a greater chance that visitors will spread positive word-of-mouth communications and promote return visits. In *Design for Mountain Communities*, Sherry Dorward (1990) states, “a stable base of happy long-term residents both depends on and helps foster a sense of community. This, in turn, enhances a place’s ability to attract visitors and to maintain itself economically” (Dorward, 1990: 11). Success breeds success: people like to visit places that are bustling (Clifford, 2002). Having the employees live in the community makes certain the place is vibrant and exciting for visitors.

A corporate strategy that ensures employees are adequately housed is a vital component to maintaining a dedicated, content workforce, ultimately leading the corporation to more sustainable operations. This approach to managing a resort

corporation's operations is becoming increasingly appealing, as long-term investments are infrequent in today's volatile, ultra-competitive global tourism market.

### **2.3.3 CSR as a Mechanism for Risk / Opportunity Assessment and Management**

CSR principles are attractive to many leading businesses because from a shareholder's viewpoint, they are good indicators of the quality of management as well as its ability to build needed organizational competencies and effectively innovate its products and services (Banerjee, 1998; Zadek, 2000, 2001). A corporation that integrates socially responsible policies into its business strategies signals that it is listening to the changing public norms and the demands of its stakeholders. In this respect, following through on socially responsible actions offers corporations a way to build more innovative, flexible, and sensitive risk/opportunity management systems and processes into their business decisions. Conventional risk management tools predict and handle traditional sources of risk, such as product defects or large-scale hazards that may have significant political repercussions (Zadek, 2000, 2001). Socially responsible corporations are typically better able to predict and address the newer generation of political risks (i.e. social impacts), which are a direct result of the changing social norms.

The purpose of risk/opportunity management in this context is to consider which issues represent a potential source of opportunity or threat to the business. Kemp (2002: 8) asserts, "A company that ignores ethical, environmental, or social issues may limit value through missed opportunities or destroy value through inadequate control of impacts and risks". Corporations that identify socially responsible opportunities that generate additional revenue, improve cost efficiencies, or enhance a product or service are in a better position to increase value for all stakeholders. A key factor in the success

of corporations is their ability to effectively innovate and adapt their processes, products, and services on a continual basis. Incorporating the fundamentals of CSR into core business strategies, thereby encouraging this type of innovation, will help ensure that relationships between corporations and their key stakeholders are dynamic and resilient: capable of adapting to any type of risk and/or recognizing opportunities in the future.

In many North American mountain communities, resort corporations own and operate many of the products and services offered (i.e. mountain operations, ski school, equipment rentals, restaurants, clothing and outdoor gear outlets, accommodations, and transportation). Adapting business operations to reflect the changing housing demands of employees is one of the most important ways these corporations can help ensure customer satisfaction is maintained in their service operations. Failure to ensure employees are adequately housed puts resort corporations at risk of not filling job positions or having an uncommitted workforce. Such risks may lead to reduced customer satisfaction, diminished return visitations, and ultimately lower stakeholder value. These risks are particularly important in the labour-intensive operations of mountain resorts. For instance, many resorts in the Colorado Resort Region have realized this linkage between affordable housing, a committed workforce, customer satisfaction, and profitable earnings in recent years (Northwest Colorado Council of Governments, 2003).

Furthermore, by ensuring employees are housed in the community in which they work, resort corporations increase the probability that their workers spend money within that community (Clifford, 2002). Since most of today's major mountain resort corporations own or control substantial portions of the service operations in these places, the money that satisfied employees spend at these venues can be directed back to the

company. Thus, providing housing for employees acts as an indirect catalyst for increased corporate revenues. In contrast, if resort corporations focus solely on selling market-based residential developments to amenity migrants or second homeowners who visit the community infrequently, they may maximize short-term gains through the sale of the property, but will limit the long-term returns otherwise realized through employee-resident spending.

#### **2.3.4 Providing Value of Brand Image and Reputation**

Incorporating social responsibility activities into core business strategies and actions can help firms emphasize market position uniqueness and strengthen company brand image and reputation (Lai, 1999). Corporate reputation is normally derived from the 'images' stakeholders (customers, shareholders, employees, the community, and the media) form about it and its products/services (Zadek, 2000; Kemp, 2002; Kemp et al, 2004). As societal pressure increases for corporations to operate in economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable ways, it becomes critical for such companies to engage in image-enhancing activities. Some of this activity requires socially-focused actions. Favourable corporate images may not only enhance long-term performance and stakeholder value, but can also contribute to increased short-term financial gains for shareholders (McIntosh et al, 1998; Bendell, 2000).

For instance, as global competitiveness for tourist market-share intensifies, reputation is increasingly what differentiates a resort (and its corporate owner/operator) from its competitors (Sexty, 1995). In order for resort corporations to remain competitive in world tourism markets, where numerous mountain resorts are relatively homogenous in many respects, the social repercussions of corporate development activities become

increasingly important. On the global stage corporations are no longer just selling products or services, but are also marketing lifestyle experiences built around expected corporate brand values (Pine and Gilmore, 1998; Svendsen, 1998; Clifford, 2002). Failure of resort corporations to help address employee displacement issues due to limited supplies of affordable housing will ultimately erode the animated atmosphere of many mountain communities (Clifford, 2002). This can lead to a diminished reputation as a preferred place to visit and a consequential decrease in overall visitations as well as corporate revenues.

Increasingly, companies need to enact corporate social actions that make a difference to both the community and visitor experience (Waddock and Graves, 1997). One of the best methods of ensuring an enhanced image, bottom line, and community/visitor experience is to form alliances with local-government or non-governmental organizations for mutual benefit. Such strategies are referred to as “cause-related marketing” (Business for Social Responsibility, 2003b). While the value realized by cause-related marketing programs will differ among companies and industries, studies show some of the potential benefits include attracting and retaining customers/visitors, market differentiation, outreach to niche markets, motivated and loyal employees, and community support (Business for Social Responsibility, 2003b).

Representatives from mountain resort corporations such as Intrawest and Aspen Skiing Company have indicated that collaborating with local environmental groups can result in significant benefits. Developing socially responsible working relationships with the local community is perceived to benefit the environment, the community, and the corporation’s public image (Xu, 2004). For instance, Vail Resorts Development (the real

estate division of Vail Resorts Inc.) has supported Habitat for Humanity by providing an average of \$30,000 cash and its entire staff to help build houses every year since 1998 (Personal Communication, KT Gazunis, Eagle County Housing Director, 2004). Such types of ongoing support and formal linkages established with a community NGO can result in a positive outcome for community residents while boosting the reputation of the resort and helping to assure the sustainability of the corporation.

### **2.3.5 Supply Chain Forces**

Increasingly, the global marketplace is demanding that corporations and organizations manage “upstream” and “downstream” impacts associated with the products, materials, and services they produce or purchase (Society of Management Accountants of Canada, 1992; Sexty, 1995; Gibson and Peck, 2000; Zadek, 2000, 2001). In the context of this study, some influential organizations that have taken a strong CSR stance are choosing to make their purchases and contractual arrangements with only those corporations that express complementing social values to their own (Kemp, 2002; Kemp et al, 2004).

For instance, Jeff Jedras (2004) predicted that since Vancouver and Whistler are going to be hosts of the “Green Olympic Games” in 2010, the Vancouver Organizing Committee for the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games (VANOC) would put in place a Sustainability Management Plan that would inevitably include CSR principles. Every contract tendered by VANOC would be measured against these standards, ensuring it is aligned with the vision of sustainability. The provision of increased supplies of affordable housing at Whistler has already been included as an important element of the 2010 Olympic development strategy. In the strategy the “Whistler [Athletes] Village will

provide an increased supply of critically needed staff housing” and the event will “provide a lasting legacy of affordable housing” (VANOC, 2004; Saunders and Drake, 2004). Corporations like Intrawest would be well positioned to gain Olympic affordable housing development contracts if they were to establish a formal CSR policy for doing business. Such a CSR policy would complement the social values of VANOC and the Olympic Legacy committee. If Intrawest were to develop its own ‘legacy’ of affordable housing in Whistler, it would show the world it was committed to its employees and the community.

## **2.4 Stakeholder Engagement and Corporate Social Responsibility in a Mountain Resort Context**

John Kay (1993) stated that corporations that endure are those that manage their key relationships well and focus on building and reinforcing their reputations (as cited in McIntosh et al, 1998). By effectively integrating social responsibility into core business values and practices, corporations can extend their responsibility beyond traditional shareholder obligations to include a broader range of stakeholders in society. These may include employees, customers, business partners, communities, and the environment (Cragg, 1996; Business for Social Responsibility, 2003c). By including these stakeholders in their activities, corporate value is increased beyond that of shareholders to all stakeholders.

The term "stakeholders" refers to individuals or groups who can affect or are affected by a corporation's activities (Freeman, 1984). Primary stakeholders of resort corporations typically include shareholders and investors, employees, customers, suppliers, residents of the communities in which the corporation operates, the natural



environment, and nonhuman species (Svendsen, 1998). Secondary stakeholder groups consist of those who can indirectly influence a corporation or are less directly affected by its activities, including the media and NGOs (Svendsen, 1998).

There is an inextricable interdependence between resort corporations and the communities in which they operate. As a result, some resort corporations are becoming more conscious of the need to develop stronger community partnerships. This is done in order to ensure both sustainable communities and businesses (Hassan, 2000). Regarding corporations in general, Strandberg maintains

"There is increasing importance of stakeholder engagement in the future of corporate social responsibility. Not only will stakeholders be engaged in increasingly significant ways, they will gain influence, and will continue to innovate and bring forward new and challenging values."  
(2002: 5)

In order for partnerships to be effective, community stakeholders must have genuine participation in business decisions that will affect their quality of life. Being part of community activities and events was once an important aspect of being successful. However, as some businesses grew in size and power into multinational corporations the focus of profit-maximization and gaining global market share replaced traditional concerns for community partnership and trust (Svendsen, 1998; Hassan, 2000). More recently, corporations have commenced returning to the notion that relationships with the public are vital for the long-term success of the business.

#### **2.4.1 Stakeholder Management**

Stakeholder engagement can be assessed or categorized according to varying degrees of involvement. Traditionally, community participation in the decision-making

processes of corporations has been regarded as stakeholder management. In this respect, mountain resort corporations have limited engagement of stakeholders to attitude surveys, neighbourhood meetings, and public hearings, which offer no assurance that their ideas and concerns heard would be taken into account. From a management perspective, the corporate responsibility should be used to buffer the firm from the negative impacts of stakeholder scrutiny and activities, defend the corporation from excessive and unreasonable stakeholder demands and expectations, and address negative public relations in order to maintain market share competitiveness (Waddock and Graves, 1997; Svendsen, 1998). However, this approach of stakeholder engagement simply means shielding the company from the external community, not forming meaningful relationships.

For years during its development of expensive residences, Vail Resorts Inc. heard the concerns of employees about the loss of affordable housing in Vail and witnessed first-hand the gradual displacement of the workforce from the immediate local community out to surrounding rural towns. Until recently, the corporation was successful in protecting itself from stakeholder demands and expectations while maintaining a positive image. However, as a result of Vail Resorts Inc. failure to address the community's limited affordable housing supply issue, the destination is now left with expensive visitor accommodations, condominiums, and single-family homes. The vibrancy of Vail has largely vanished with the displaced employees and consequent homogenous socio-economic community structure, resulting in drastically declining values for shareholders (Clifford, 2002). Thus, in simply trying to manage rather than engage stakeholders, not only has Vail Resorts Inc. wasted valuable resources defending

its development activities from scrutiny by the community, but it has not effectively managed its risks and opportunities. As a result of not forming meaningful working relationships with employees in Vail, the vibrant community has disintegrated with only 38% of employees able to live in town, ultimately threatening long-term shareholder value. Simply shielding the corporation from the external community is not an effective long-term management strategy.

#### **2.4.2 Stakeholder Inclusiveness**

Recently, some corporations have taken more collaborative approaches to ensuring stakeholder inclusiveness (Clarkson, 1995; Waddock and Graves, 1997; Svendsen, 1998). Stakeholder engagement has gradually become ingrained in their business operations. It tends to focus on building reciprocal and evolving relationships with key community stakeholders (Svendsen, 1998). In best cases, the power of decision-making is equally distributed amongst all stakeholders and the corporation must agree to consensus-based decisions (Wang, 2002). Corporations can “build on the synergies that occur when positive relationships with one stakeholder group, such as a local community, start to have a beneficial impact on another stakeholder group, such as customers” (Svendsen, 1998: 4). In building better, more meaningful partnerships with stakeholders, such as employees, communities, local governments, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), value to all stakeholders can be augmented. This can translate into greater shareholder value, by helping the corporation develop intangible yet valuable relationships that can be sources of competitive advantage (Waddock and Graves, 1997).

In the relatively few instances where affordable housing has been the focus of these collaborations, some corporations in resort areas have applied their expertise in

working with local housing authorities, municipal/regional governments, NGOs, and/or local residents. In these partnerships, resort corporations have used their resources effectively to determine housing needs and begin developing strategies to resolve the problem. For example, in Mammoth Lakes, California, Intrawest was required by regional law to build 24 units of affordable housing because of their commercial hotel development plan. The law requires that commercial development plans must also include a percentage of affordable housing. The site for the affordable housing was next to land owned by Mammoth Lakes Housing, Inc. (MLH) – a private, not-for-profit organization established in 2003 by the Town of Mammoth Lakes to ensure the creation of workforce housing for a viable and sustainable community (Mammoth Lakes Housing, Inc., 2004). MLH approached Intrawest to see if the corporation would plan affordable housing for MLH on their site at the same time as the firm developed a plan for its own. When Intrawest agreed, MLH further proposed that it build an additional 16 units (for a total of 40 units) on the land owned by MLH. Moreover, since there was a strong demand for moderate to upper-moderate housing from residents, MLH proposed that the affordable housing could be sold at various prices that reflected the different levels of resident household incomes, as opposed to solely bottom-end affordable rates. Intrawest and MLH completed an economic analysis of the firm's initial plan and compared it to that proposed by the MLH, which included an extra 16 units of affordable housing and a variable sale pricing scheme. It was determined Intrawest would save close to \$1 million by building the extra affordable housing units on free MLH land and selling the units at variable rates, instead of losing over \$700,000 and having to pass on those costs to the commercial hotel client (Personal Communication, L. Andrea Clark, Executive Director,

Mammoth Lakes Housing Inc., April, 2005). Ultimately, this partnership between Intrawest and MLH saved the corporation a significant amount of money while helping the community by supplying more affordable housing.

The few partnerships developed to resolve the affordable housing challenge in mountain resorts, such as the example given, support the hypothesized benefits espoused in theories of stakeholder engagement. These corporate-community relationships are an important component of CSR strategies, which focuses on shifting towards a more systems-based theory of corporations in society (Svendsen, 1998). James Moore (1996) coined the term "business ecosystem" to represent the corporation that is rooted in a system of interdependent stakeholder collaborations that are constantly evolving and mutually defined. In this system of multiple stakeholder relationships, corporations and stakeholders "cooperate, compete and co-evolve as each develops new capabilities and forces others to grow and change" (Svendsen, 1998: 50). In this sense, stakeholders are not managed, as traditionally taught, but human relationships are formed with the corporation. As described in the next section, through these community relationships, corporations are better able to anticipate and respond more quickly to changes to the "external" environment, as opposed to strictly managing for internal stakeholders. In this way, corporations can manage risk and opportunity more effectively.

As societal values change, corporations face enormous public pressure to find a balance between the financial bottom-line interests of their shareholders and broader social responsibilities. This is especially important for mountain resort corporations because the influence of their development activities and business decisions have profound, direct effects on the community in which they operate (and visa versa).

Maintaining a balance between profit-seeking activities and acting in socially responsible ways, such as full stakeholder inclusiveness, is vital to the sustainability of both the corporation and the community.

### **2.4.3 Human and Social Capital**

Coleman (1988) describes human and social capital as the aggregate of skills and knowledge of people working together and their ability to associate with each other to fulfill common purposes in groups and organizations. When communities and corporations are able to build meaningful working relationships through sharing norms and values, trust is built between the groups. Human capital can have a large and measurable direct economic value and is critical for sustainable development (Fukuyama, 1996; Grootaert et al, 2003). Clarkson (1995) asserts that the continued profitability of corporations depends on how well they fulfill their economic as well as their social purposes. This is impacted by the extent to which all stakeholders contribute to achieving the corporation's goals. Maintaining relationships and engaging stakeholders in development decisions that impact them is a good method for ensuring success of their positive contributions to the company. An enduring positive corporate reputation depends on establishing a lasting trust with stakeholders (Waddock and Graves, 1997).

A destination community that is trusting and respectful in its relationships with resort corporations will not only help ensure sustainable businesses, but also will respond to visitors more positively. This may result in better visitor experiences and stronger visitor loyalty (Whistler Housing Authority, 2002; Northwest Colorado Council of Governments, 2003). By being involved in the development of policies and practices affecting the provision of affordable housing, the synergy created between the resort

corporation and community stakeholders may ultimately benefit the company's customers. Through the process of engaging in such activities, the corporations can extend far beyond their responsibility to maximizing shareholder profit and create more inclusive and co-dependent political entities suited to more sustainable business performance.

## **2.5 External Evaluation Standards and Reporting Measures of Corporate Social Responsibility**

### **2.5.1 Reporting Socially Responsible Corporate Policies and Activities**

Increasingly, companies are expected to provide access to information concerning the impacts of their operations on society. In some cases this is extended to being responsive to stakeholder concerns not covered in standard reporting and accounting practices (Business for Social Responsibility, 2003). Corporate social reporting is "a systematic assessment that identifies, measures, evaluates, reports, and monitors the effects an enterprise has on society that are not covered in the traditional financial reports" (Sexty, 1995: 183). In a resort corporation context, this can include information concerning the company's impacts on the community. Such reporting can be a key to making a useful contribution to building human/social capital both within and beyond the corporation.

However, the complexities of consistently measuring social performance can be daunting. Perhaps this is why Sexty (1995) states that although the concept of social reporting is often referred to in the literature, there are relatively few concrete examples that can be identified in general business. Nonetheless, a few mountain resort corporations that have become more aware of the important concern of CSR are in the

beginning stages of integrating such reporting into their core business activities. In Whistler, B.C., Whistler-Blackcomb (WB – the mountain operations group operating under the Intrawest umbrella) have signed on as Early Adopters in the Whistler Sustainability Initiative. This program uses the Natural Step Framework as a benchmarking tool to analyze current environmental, social, and economic practices (Holmberg, 1998). Vail Resorts Inc. recently developed a corporate citizenship policy. In this policy, the company considers CSR as “an integral part of every decision we make and every action we take. It is reflected in how we conduct our business, how we contribute to our local communities, how we take care of our employees, and how we interact with our natural surroundings” (Vail Resorts, 2005). The American Skiing Company follows a Code of Ethics in its business practices, but there is no mention of sustainability or responsibilities to community stakeholders.

Many mountain resorts in North America have also integrated the Sustainable Slopes Charter as well as varying environmental and social initiatives into their daily mountain operations (Clifford, 2002). However, annual reports of the three major North American mountain resort corporations – Intrawest, Vail Resorts Inc., and American Skiing Company – fail to mention any sustainable projects they have undertaken related to affordability or any other initiatives of this type.

Several corporate accountability and reporting standards exist to help increase transparency and trust for stakeholders and provide benchmarks which companies can refer to for guidance (Appendix C). These standards address a broad spectrum of corporate social responsibility issues including the environment, human rights, and business ethics. Typically, some standards are more relevant to a company's operations



than others. Each standard has specific indices to measure the performance of the corporation. These indices measure a variety of impacts that span the full economic, social, and environmental sustainability spectrum. While this type of comprehensive reporting can satisfy stakeholders' informational needs, there remains considerable debate as to whether it leads to actual changes in corporate behaviour (Business for Social Responsibility, 2003). So, while social reporting is an important first step in ensuring accountability of corporate activities, CSR proponents are now looking at whether or not the process creates actual change in corporate values, policies, and practices (Kemp, 2002; Kemp et al, 2004).

### **2.5.2 Socially Responsible Investing and Affordable Housing**

By incorporating CSR principles into mainstream investment practices, corporations can attach a financial incentive to their actions. That is, if a corporation engages in socially responsible activities, it can be included in socially responsible investment (SRI) indices, which expands their investor potential. This incentive encourages corporations to ensure that the principles are followed. SRIs focus on supporting businesses that provide substantive positive social and economic performance (Sexty, 1995). The criteria used in SRI investments vary in their social orientation. For instance, in the context of affordable housing, the Domini 400 Social Index (DSI) invests in corporations based on the extent to which the company supports housing initiatives for the disadvantaged population (OECD, 2001). Many mountain resort corporations facing employee-housing challenges and looking for alternative methods of subsidizing such projects, may find that providing affordable housing solutions for their employees and/or to the community in general will open up new avenues for funding of these projects

(Northwest Colorado Council of Governments, 2003). Such investment funds are a potential additional source of scarce capital for resort development activities. Conversely, corporations using such funding options become increasingly aware of their responsibility to report their social and environmental performance.

Canada's financial community responded to the growing demand for SRIs by creating several investment vehicles suited to use by corporations (Appendix D). On an international scale, SRI funds appear to be performing as well as, if not better than the non-SRI funds. For example, the total SRI assets in Europe increased by 36% between 1999 and the end of 2001 (Sustainable Investment Research International and CSR Europe, 2002 as cited in Kemp et al, 2004). In an affordable housing-specific case, the California Public Employees' Retirement System (CalPERS), which is the U.S.A's largest pension fund, announced that its Single Family Housing Program has been its single highest returning investment category over the last decade. The program has earned more than 20% annually since inception (Baue, 2003). Furthermore, the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits of the United Methodist Church revealed their affordable housing program "has fared particularly well in the past three years, generating total returns (including income as well as capital appreciation) of 16.8% in 2000, 8.1% in 2001, and 12.8% in 2002" while its "return since inception was calculated at 7.5%" (Baue, 2003). These returns are significantly better than the returns shareholders have seen throughout the life of mountain resort corporations that are showing "less-than-stellar performance" (Clifford, 2002).

It is difficult to substantiate that socially responsible development activities, such as providing affordable housing for resort employees, will result in higher shareholder

returns for mountain resorts corporations. There are so many other factors that determine how much profit corporations earn. However, the positive SRI returns mentioned above suggest that socially responsible development activities may help nourish stronger long-term performance for shareholders while encouraging greater sustainability of mountain communities. Affordable housing programs serve not only to diversify assets and shield against economic downturns in traditional equity markets, but also to generate attractive returns, either directly or indirectly, in their own right (Baue, 2003).

The emergence of SRI funds represents a significant change in values of the public and the expectations of stakeholders. Strandberg (2002) anticipates that shareholders and investors will become increasingly interested in longer-term performance that assures sustainability rather than short-term profit that leads to inevitable environmental, social, and economic collapse. In the context of affordable housing in mountain resorts, enhanced reporting mechanisms will help the corporations monitor and evaluate those operations that either degrade or improve the affordability of housing for residents. As the business activities of resort corporations are significantly contributing to the displacement of communities through high-cost real estate development and gentrification, external evaluation standards and reporting measures of socially responsible activities will continue to increase in importance to the overall success of the community and the resort corporation.

## **2.6 Summary**

There has been a growing demand amongst some community and NGO stakeholders in mountain resorts to persuade resort corporations to adopt environmental and social strategies. To ensure long-term sustainability, there is a need for mountain

resort corporations to ask 'how does our business balance the profit-making mandate with the larger environmental and social needs of the resort community upon which it depends'?

The literature suggests that there are five key business drivers that encourage corporations to balance socially responsible activities with profitability. The first driver (optimal profit) is that businesses must be attentive to societal norms that are demanding greater corporate responsibility to society. Evidence suggests that companies and shareholders are becoming more favourable to receiving long-term benefits as opposed to simply maximizing short-term earnings. The second driver (housing-profit linkages) considers the linkages between affordable housing, a committed workforce, visitor satisfaction, and profitability to illustrate how this optimum profit is attainable and adequate housing for resort employees is necessary for long-term business performance.

The third driver (risk / opportunity management) ensures this long-term perspective is further substantiated. A company that ignores community issues that are a result of their developments and operations in order to maximize short-term gains, may limit or destroy value. Those firms that address the ethical, environmental, or social impacts they have, are in a better position to be adaptable and conserve or create value for all stakeholders.

In terms of the fourth driver (brand image and reputation enhancement), corporate value is also augmented via the corporation's brand image and reputation. As society increasingly sees corporations as institutions having responsibilities to operate in economically, environmentally, and socially sustainable ways, it becomes critical for such companies to engage in socially-focused activities. Moreover, resort corporations

that help address affordable housing issues can ultimately maintain the animated atmosphere. This can maintain or enhance the image/reputation as a preferred place to visit.

The fifth driver (supply chain forces) considers that resort corporations like Intrawest would be in the best position to secure Olympic development contractual arrangements if they were to establish a formal CSR framework for doing business that would complement the social values of influential organizations. The global marketplace is demanding that organizations take a socially responsible approach to managing "upstream" and "downstream" impacts associated with the products, materials, and services they purchase. In a competitive tourism industry, it is increasingly imperative that resort corporations ensure their business strategies are aligned with this socially responsible supply chain management. Affordable housing for employees can be an important criterion for ensuring a resort corporation is acting socially responsible.

To complement these five key business drivers to encourage balancing sustainable activities with profitability, corporate-community interactions have also evolved in some instances from stakeholder management to the development of more inclusive stakeholder relationships. These relationships are a key source of managing risk, ensuring efficient use of resources, and maintaining sustainable corporate value and community success. In this context, mountain resort corporations are able to realize the benefits of developing affordable housing partnerships, while fulfilling its business goals and values.

Mountain resort corporations are increasingly aware of their reliance on the communities within which they operate. Because of the inextricable interdependence between resort corporations and destination communities, the former are becoming more

cognizant of the need to develop stronger working partnerships with community stakeholders. Traditional accounting systems that only monitor financial measures of performance make it difficult to assess the impact of intangibles like effective relationships or enhanced reputation (Svendsen, 1998). A more progressive CSR approach that measures the success of the company against environmental and social indicators, in addition to financial standards, is needed.

Resort corporations should enact social reporting as part of their communication to stakeholders. Measuring and presenting the performance of affordable housing initiatives would be an important component of this report. Such reporting provides information to stakeholders regarding the impacts of the corporation's activities on the community, thereby showing corporate accountability and transparency of their business activities and nurturing trust from those stakeholders. While social reporting is an important first step in ensuring accountability of corporate activities, SRI investment screening can help encourage corporations to follow through on what they report they are doing. That is, if a corporation engages in socially responsible activities, it can be included in socially responsible investment (SRI) indices, which expands their investor potential. Certain investment firms devote funds in corporations based on the extent to which they support housing initiatives. Qualifying for inclusion in SRI fund portfolios may also help resort corporations access alternative sources of capital, which could be used to subsidize further affordable housing for employees and other community residents. Integrating corporate social responsibility and meaningful stakeholder engagement with their overall business strategies and activities could be useful to the

long-term sustainability of the corporation, shareholder value, and the mountain community.

## 2.7 Assessment Framework

Table 3 lists themes and criteria for assessing to what extent resort corporations implement CSR principles in addressing affordable housing issues in mountain communities. The assessment framework uses the CSR construct described in this chapter as a guide for the form and content of an interview instrument used to determine the case study findings presented in Chapter Four. These themes and criteria are derived either directly or through inference from the literature reviewed in this chapter.

**Table 3: Assessment Framework for CSR Policies in Mitigating Affordable Housing**

<b>OBJECTIVE</b>	
Apply the fundamentals of CSR and stakeholder engagement to examine the extent to which resort corporations are shaping socially responsible management policies and practices to address affordable housing issues.	
<b>THEMES</b>	<b>ASSESSMENT CRITERIA<sup>1</sup></b>
What are current trends in affordable housing issues in mountain resort communities, and how do resort corporations contribute to these trends?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Percent of permanent residents able to afford buying housing adequate to their needs.</li> <li>• Ratio of median house value to average household income.</li> <li>• Percent of income paid for housing.</li> <li>• Annual loss of rental accommodation.</li> <li>• Supply and demand of affordable housing.</li> </ul>
What are the social and economic impacts of a deficiency of affordable housing in mountain resort communities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual percent of employee shortages due to inadequate housing supply.</li> <li>• Rates of staff turnover due to inadequate housing supply.</li> <li>• Weakening of brand image/reputation due to inadequate housing supply.</li> <li>• Rates of diminished visitor experience</li> </ul>

	<p>due to poor service.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rates of residents moving to surrounding towns for affordable housing.</li> <li>• Homogenization of community socio-economic structure.</li> <li>• Rate of loss of volunteers.</li> </ul>
THEMES	ASSESSMENT CRITERIA <sup>1</sup>
<p>What are the demands and interventions on resort corporations regarding affordable housing?</p> <p>What will the demands and interventions on resort corporations regarding affordable housing in the future?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number and type of government initiatives that encourage corporate affordable housing development.</li> <li>• Public perception of corporate responsibility to address affordable housing issues.</li> <li>• Number, type, and effectiveness of corporate-community affordable housing partnerships in place.</li> </ul>
<p>Why should resort corporations be involved in determining solutions to affordable housing issues?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stakeholder perception of corporate responsibility to address affordable housing issues.</li> <li>• Stakeholder perception of corporate influence on housing affordability.</li> <li>• Stakeholder perception of potential for resort corporations to alleviate affordable housing issues.</li> <li>• Corporate value creation in terms of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Leadership</li> <li>○ Communication</li> <li>○ Transparency</li> <li>○ Brand Equity</li> <li>○ Reputation</li> <li>○ Alliances and Networks</li> <li>○ Human / Intellectual Capital</li> <li>○ Workplace Organization and Culture</li> <li>○ Adaptability</li> <li>○ Employee Incentive / Retention</li> <li>○ Reduction in Turnover Costs</li> <li>○ Competitive Advantage</li> <li>○ Shareholder value</li> <li>○ Inclusion in SRI indices,</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p>How can resort corporations best use CSR principles to guide it in responding to challenges of affordable housing?</p> <p>What corporate CSR policies or practices exist to promote the provision of affordable housing?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of CSR policies in place to promote affordable housing.</li> <li>• Number and type of corporate affordable housing practices implemented.</li> <li>• Number and type of corporate-community affordable housing partnerships.</li> <li>• Number and types of benefits to resort corporation by addressing affordable housing.</li> </ul>



THEMES	ASSESSMENT CRITERIA <sup>1</sup>
<p>To what extent do resort corporations measure, monitor, and report the effectiveness of CSR in terms of affordable housing policies and practices, and how do those measures impact their bottom line?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Number, type, and stakeholder perceptions of effectiveness of internal corporate affordable housing evaluation tools.</li> <li>● Number, type, and stakeholder perceptions of effectiveness of external corporate reporting practices of affordable housing.</li> </ul>

Sources: <sup>1</sup>Assessment Criteria are developed using the researcher's prior experience of developing assessment frameworks as well as using *The Practical Guide for Policy Analysis* (Bardach, 2000).

## **3 Methods**

In addition to building on information derived from the preceding literature review, this research uses a case study to explore the research questions to answer the central objective (Note: The research questions are formulated into Assessment Themes in the Assessment Framework presented in Chapter Two). In the case study a variety of qualitative research techniques are used to gather and analyze the data. The research objectives, questions, and study methods are outlined in the following sections of this chapter.

### **3.1 Research Objectives and Questions**

#### **3.1.1 Central Objective**

The overall objective of this research is to apply the fundamentals of CSR and stakeholder engagement to examine the extent to which resort corporations are shaping socially responsible management policies and practices to address affordable housing issues.

#### **3.1.2 Key Research Questions**

In the context of a case study of Intrawest and the Resort Municipality of Whistler, the more applied research questions are:

1. What are current trends in affordable housing issues in Whistler, and how does Intrawest Corporation contribute to these trends?

1. What are the social and economic impacts of a deficiency of affordable housing within Whistler?
2. Who are the critical stakeholders that are needed to address the deficiencies of affordable housing?
3. What are the demands and interventions on Intrawest Corporation regarding affordable housing?
4. What will be the demands and interventions on Intrawest Corporation regarding affordable housing in the future?
5. Why should Intrawest Corporation be involved in determining solutions to affordable housing issues in Whistler?
6. How can Intrawest Corporation best use CSR principles to guide it in responding to challenges of affordable housing?
7. What corporate CSR policies or practices exist to promote the provision of affordable housing?
8. How does the Resort Municipality of Whistler best encourage Intrawest Corporation to act in a socially responsible manner to address affordable housing issues?
9. To what extent does Intrawest Corporation measure, monitor, and report the effectiveness of CSR in terms of affordable housing policies and practices, and how do those measures impact their bottom line?

### **3.2 Case Study Selection**

When "how" and "why" questions are posed in social science research, the case study method is an effective research technique to employ in answering them (Yin, 1994). The case study method is argued by Schoenberger (1991) to be a valuable tool in periods of economic and social change. This situation exists in Whistler. As a result, a case study of Intrawest Corporation in Whistler, British Columbia is used to answer the research objective. Intrawest's activities in Whistler were chosen as a desirable case study because the community is facing significant and on-going affordable housing challenges. These housing challenges are also impacting the surrounding communities

throughout the “Sea-to-Sky Corridor” – an approximately 160km stretch of highway between Vancouver and Pemberton. The need to address the housing issue is greatly exacerbated by the expected increase in resort development and growth in employees needed to successfully deliver the upcoming 2010 Olympics. As a major employer and developer in Whistler, Intrawest will be intimately involved with setting the stage and delivering the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Intrawest has considerable influence in the shaping of the Whistler community. There is also an inextricable interdependence between the success of the resort corporation and the quality of life for residents of and visitors in the community of Whistler. As such, Intrawest incurs social responsibilities, which extend beyond the mandate of profit maximization to its shareholders. One of the social responsibilities that is central to the region’s sustainability involves addressing affordable housing issues in the community of Whistler.

### **3.3 Qualitative Interviews**

#### **3.3.1 Interview Instrument**

The study’s primary data collection method was a semi-structured interviewing process. This method was used to collect qualitative data from corporate representatives and key community stakeholders associated with the case study area. The purpose of the corporate interviews was to: a) understand the forces behind corporate social responsibility policies/practices, particularly as they related to affordable housing; and b) identify the linkages between these policies and the effects they have had on the community. The purpose of the interviews with the various community stakeholders and

other relevant organizations was to explore the nature of the relationship between Intrawest Corporation and the community with respect to examining the extent that Intrawest has addressed current and future affordable housing needs.

The qualitative interviews with both groups were intended to be flexible and adaptive. Although they needed to be structured with specific questions focused on the researcher's main objective, they were designed to allow for a friendly, conversational style of dialogue between the interviewer and the respondents. The goal was to ensure that the respondents were comfortable, interested, and responsive (Martin, 1986). Moreover, the flexibility of the interview format made it easy for the interviewer to freely probe for clarification and elaboration of responses (Patton 1990). The interview questions (Appendix E) were similar and consistently organized for all respondents. However, a few distinctive questions for key informants who played unique roles relative to the study's focus within Intrawest Corporation, the Whistler Housing Authority, and the community were also included.

### **3.3.2 Interview Process**

Fourteen semi-structured interviews were conducted between July and September 2004 at various locations in Whistler, B.C. and at the Intrawest Corporation headquarters in downtown Vancouver, B.C. Based on the number of questions and details that were covered, the average duration of the interviews was approximately 60 minutes. At the start of each interview, the participants received a consent form (Appendix F), in compliance with Simon Fraser University's Research Ethics Regulations. The purpose of the consent form was to: (1) inform the participants of the nature of their involvement; (2) obtain their written permission to be interviewed; and (3) allow them to determine

how they wanted to be identified in the study. With approval of the respondents, the interviews were audio-recorded in order to accurately capture complex and detailed information for subsequent data analysis (Patton, 1990).

### **3.3.3 Sampling and Recruitment Process**

It is generally accepted amongst researchers that the best interview candidate selection strategy is to deliberately seek out the widest possible range of opinions and experience, a technique called "maximum variation sampling" (Patton, 1990). This method of sampling is essential so the study cannot be criticized for only interviewing people whose thoughts conform to the researcher's expectations. It helps ensure that any bias related to interviewee selection is minimized. The following criteria were used to select potential interview respondents:

- Is the candidate a leader of a key stakeholder group regarding this research objective?
- Does the candidate have a willingness to engage in dialogue?
- Are all potential perspectives represented in this sampling population to ensure unbiased results?

Within this sampling framework, interview candidates were defined as any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of an organization's objectives (Freeman, 1984). Key stakeholder groups defined were Whistler Housing Authority, Intrawest Corporation (downtown headquarters), Whistler-Blackcomb (Whistler arm of Intrawest), Resort Municipality of Whistler planners, managers, and councillors, Whistler community members, and Pique Newsmagazine editors/journalists. Many interview respondents take on multiple roles and positions in the community. For

instance, one WB executive also participated on the Whistler Housing Authority Board, while another RMOW councillor was previously the Director of the WHA. As such, it is difficult to distinguish which stakeholder group the respondent belongs to. The list of interview candidates was confirmed following discussions with key contacts of the Whistler Housing Authority and the RMOW. They provided recommendations as to the candidates' relevance to the research objectives, as well as any potential additional informants who could provide insights about the research topic. A total of fourteen interview respondents were selected, as illustrated in Table 4.

**Table 4: Distribution of Stakeholder Groups Interviewed**

STAKEHOLDER GROUP	# OF INTERVIEW RESPONDENTS
WB / Inrawest	4
Whistler Housing Authority	3
Resort Municipality of Whistler	3
Community of Whistler	2
Media Representatives	2

Prior to the interview, each respondent was sent a brief description of the research (Appendix G) and the Interview Instrument in an electronic email. It familiarized respondents with the issues that were to be explored. This information was provided in compliance with Simon Fraser University's Research Ethics Regulations. There did not seem to be any adverse consequences associated with the use of a tape recorder in any of the interviews. All candidates indicated they had prior interview experiences of a similar type and were comfortable in such environments.

### **3.3.4 Interview Data Analysis**

Following the interviews, each recorded session was transcribed and typed verbatim. The transcription process helped the researcher to sort the relevant information associated with each open-ended interview question. This information was then categorized into key themes. It was analyzed using quantitative and/or qualitative methods where appropriate. The Likert scale and dichotomous close-ended questions generalized discrete data that were coded and entered into SPSS 11.0. These data were analyzed using frequency techniques and described through summary percentage distribution and mean response statistics. Other responses were grouped and reported collectively based on similarities and/or internal consistencies in the data. The researcher made comparisons across the interviews. This required a review of the responses looking for similarities, differences, patterns, and thematic connections in the data, which helped form an overall depiction of the case study findings.

### **3.4 Secondary Data Analysis**

Another source of information for answering the research questions related to the case study involved the use of secondary data. It provided alternative and/or complementary perspectives on answers to the original objective and questions (Hinds, Vogel and Clarke-Steffen, 1997). This analysis also offered a context for understanding the management strategies of the Resort Municipality of Whistler and Intrawest Corporation that pertained to affordable housing initiatives.

The key secondary data sources that contributed to the overall study's findings included:



- Corporate and community reports (i.e. Whistler Housing Needs Assessment Surveys, Whistler Official Community Plan, Resort Community Monitoring Reports)
- Newspaper articles in local publications (e.g. Pique Newsmagazine, Whistler Question)
- Government policy documents (e.g. Employee Housing Service Charge Bylaw)
- Existing academic literature (e.g. research papers, graduate theses, collaborative reports)
- Canada Census data (e.g. Incomes, population)
- Whistler Real Estate data (e.g. Housing statistics)

As with the analysis of interview information, the secondary analysis made comparisons across the literature, looking for thematic connections in the data as they pertained to the research questions.

### **3.5 Potential Study Limitations**

Research interviews can be powerful techniques in gathering primary qualitative data, yet there may be limitations to the use of these methods. As a qualitative study, this research was affected by all inherent assumptions associated with this type of research.

#### **3.5.1 Limitations of the Interview Approach**

This study employed a semi-structured interview approach. Mittelstaedt (1996) outlined four general potential limitations of this interview method that can affect the quality of the data including:

1. Some topic or issue was not covered during the interview that should have been discussed, in order to understand the interviewees' perspectives.

1. Certain information may be over-emphasized by the researcher.
2. Information may be misinterpreted by the researcher.
3. Individuals may have difficulty expressing their thoughts, may be nervous, may dislike the physical presence of a tape recorder, or may have difficulty with memory and recall. This could result in misinterpreted or absent data.

Any of these limitations may result in inaccurate, incomplete and/or biased data collection. Fortunately, by soliciting the views and advice of other researchers at the University during the questionnaire design process, the researcher identified potential biases prior to writing the surveys to increase the study's objectivity. The researcher was acutely aware of the potential impediments (as above) prior to the interviewing process. These potential impediments and/or biases were also minimized as the standardized interview survey instrument allowed for a systematic cross-examination of responses to help ensure their accuracy. As a result, the author believes that many of these limitations were substantially mitigated.

### **3.5.2 Limitations of the Case Study Approach**

The depth of information collected and the degree of interpretation of such data is one of the greatest benefits to the case study approach. However, a common criticism is that it may not be generalizable beyond the immediate study area. Consequently, such procedures run the risk of making too many inferences from what may be unique to the specific place. Therefore, it could be difficult to test the findings for validity in other mountain resort communities. Although all mountain resorts are different to some degree, they do share fundamental tourism elements and similar development problems. This situation may increase the ability to generalize the results of this research. Nonetheless, each case study will have its own idiosyncrasies. The next chapter will present the case

study findings and demonstrate the extent to which this study was able to answer the research assessment themes directing this project.

## **4 Findings and Analysis**

### **4.1 Introduction**

The following sections in this chapter describe the findings emanating from this case study research. The first two sections contain a brief description of the community of Whistler, IntraWest Corporation, and Whistler-Blackcomb as a subsidiary of the corporation. This information sets the administration context of the research. Using the assessment framework, presented at the end of Chapter Two, the Interview Results sections answers the assessment themes suggested by the research in the literature review. Ultimately, it describes the extent to which IntraWest is shaping socially responsible management policies and practices as well as engaging key community stakeholders to address affordable housing issues in Whistler.

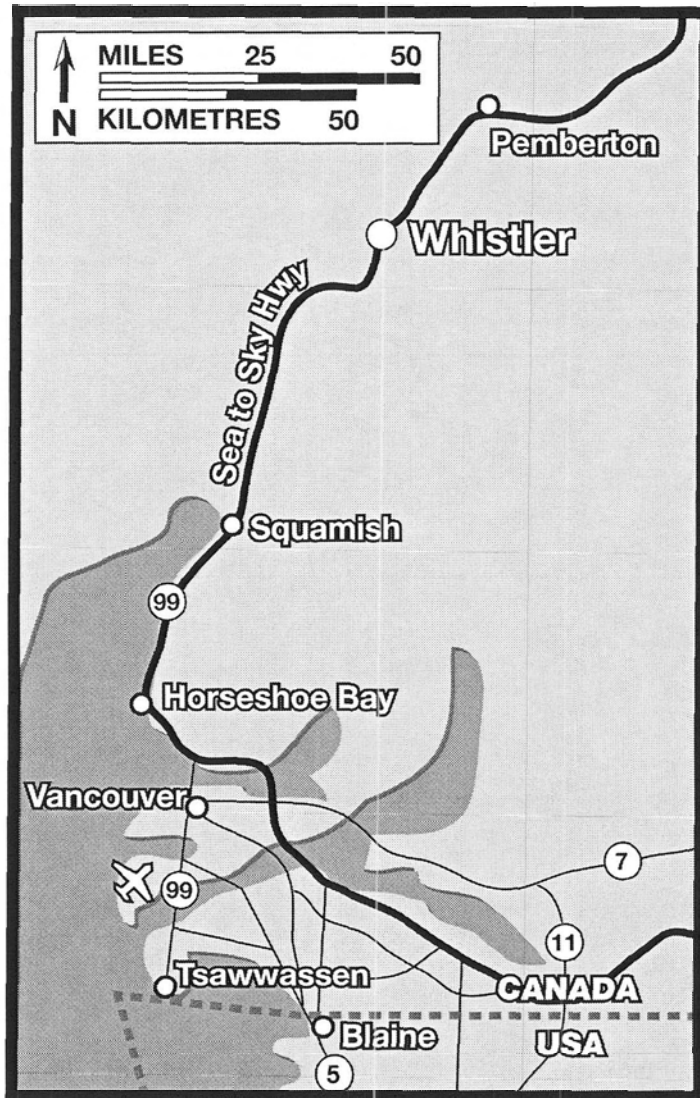
### **4.2 Whistler, British Columbia**

The opening of the railway brought settlers to the area of Whistler in 1914 and led to the development of Rainbow Lodge into one of the most popular resorts west of Jasper, Alberta. While tourism maintained a small foothold here in the ensuing years, the era of industrial-scale logging resulted in the majority of the forests in the region being harvested. As the pace of logging slowed in the 1970s, a wave of resort development began. Like many western mountain resort towns, Whistler's initial development in the late 1960s and early 1970s was fuelled primarily by its ability to meet the demands of skiers seeking extraordinary mountain terrain and outstanding snow conditions. Whistler

was formally created as a planned resort in 1975 and was the first legislated Resort Municipality in Canada (Government of British Columbia, 1996; Resort Municipality of Whistler, 2002a). As its popularity as a skiing destination increased through the 1980s, its developmental activities became inextricably intertwined with the broader demands of being a ski town with its own unique set of social, economic and environmental issues. Over the past decade and a half, the demands of a maturing ski and travel marketplace have driven Whistler to use skiing as a lever to become a more complex and economically diverse resort community (Moore et al, in press). What began as a collection of guest services for primarily skiers has gradually been transformed into a complex resort town that is rapidly becoming a lifestyle community. Whistler has become an experience more than simply a 'nice place to live'. People choose to live in Whistler, not only for its location, but because it is a way of life offering 'world-class' 4-season recreational, cultural, and service-oriented amenity opportunities (Moore et al, in press).

Today, Whistler showcases an urbanized four-season recreation resort community located in the Coast Mountains of British Columbia, Canada, approximately 120 kilometers North of Vancouver along the Sea-to-Sky Highway (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Map of Sea-to-Sky Region.



Source: Moore et al, in press.

The community rests at an elevation of approximately 652 metres (2,140 feet) above sea level with the peaks of Whistler and Blackcomb mountains towering overhead. It is a place recognized as one of the top skiing and mountain biking destinations in the world. Some of its accolades in 2004 included:

- *Skiing Magazine* – #1 Overall Ski Resort in North America
- *Transworld Snowboarding Magazine* – #1 Overall Resort for Snowboarding

- *Men's Journal*, December 2004 – #1 Top Snow Spots in North America
- *Daily Mail* (London, UK), November 6, 2004 – #1 for Experts
- *Sunday Telegraph* (Sydney, Australia), November 7, 2004 – #2 Top Ten Skiing Spots in North America (WB, 2004)

The height of its accomplishments is being selected to host the Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games in 2010 with Vancouver. A key developer and deliverer of tourism facilities and services is Whistler and Intrawest Corporation.

The destination of Whistler has undergone a planning process that involved all community stakeholders to develop the Comprehensive Sustainability Plan. This plan addresses many of the challenges that the community is facing as a result of such dramatic growth and changes. The plan outlines key goals, strategies, and actions required to mitigate the community challenges as it continues to change and adapt to its increasing popularity as a world-renowned resort destination. In addition, Whistler has adopted The Natural Step (TNS) framework. The TNS framework and the CSP together provide a practical tool for assessing decisions and describe core guiding principles for moving toward sustainability.

### **4.3 Intrawest Corporation: Whistler-Blackcomb**

Intrawest Corporation is one of the principal developers and operators of village-centred resorts across North America (Intrawest, 2003). The corporation owns, develops or manages 15 mountain resorts in North America and Europe and many other beach and golf resorts in the United States and Canada. Based in Vancouver, British Columbia, Intrawest is a public company whose shares are listed on the New York (IDR) and Toronto (ITW) stock exchanges. Intrawest Corporation has several business ventures and

partnerships. In the context of this study, the two resort destination entities of central importance include the Leisure and Travel Group and a recently-formed limited partnership, Leisura Developments<sup>1</sup>. Under the Leisure and Travel Group, it is the Whistler Blackcomb (WB) Resort Operations Group that has been and continues to be intimately involved in the development of Whistler (WB respondent interviews, 2004). Interviewees did not indicate how this involvement of the Resort Operations Group in Whistler might change with Leisura Developments taking over the real estate component of Intrawest's business activities. As such, Leisura Developments is not considered in the scope of this study.

Intrawest Corporation has been responsible for developing and managing much of the land use on and at the mountain base of Whistler and Blackcomb mountains. This includes developments associated with lifts, vacation homes, visitor accommodations and services, and trails. In doing so, Intrawest has required approval from the Resort Municipality of Whistler for all of its development activities in the community.

Community residents and visitors use the names 'Whistler-Blackcomb' (WB) and 'Intrawest' interchangeably when referring to Intrawest's operations at Whistler. However, they have been differentiated in this research, primarily because the two entities have noticeably different management styles and responsibilities in terms of interaction with the Whistler community. Since the head office of Intrawest Corporation is physically removed from Whistler, it generally makes broader business decisions about Whistler activities based on input and direction from the WB Resort Operations Group.

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<sup>1</sup> Leisura Developments will buy land from Intrawest and take over the production of real estate units from construction to sale. Intrawest, through a wholly owned subsidiary, will hold a minority equity investment in Leisura Developments. Intrawest's total investment will be about 11% of the total capital of Leisura Developments (36% of capital excluding bank debt). ([www.intrawest.com](http://www.intrawest.com))



In contrast, the management team at WB makes recommendations for changes in their Whistler operations based on first-hand experiences. These suggestions then get passed onto Intrawest corporate executives, who, in turn, make final decisions on how WB proposals should be implemented, and what budgetary allowances can be arranged to support the initiatives (WB respondent interviews, 2004). From the Vancouver head office, Intrawest executives focus on broader global leisure and travel industry trends and the impacts of such patterns on the corporation. Conversely, the WB executive team in Whistler is more focused on those issues and developments that directly affect their operations and related impacts on the community and guest experiences. Frei (2002) aptly described the business perceptions of WB employees, providing evidence of why these different management styles exist:

“Being able to see and experience daily the results of their efforts was a tremendous source of joy and personal satisfaction. In many ways, improving the village meant improving their homes... this passion for the work and the closeness of the relationships within the villages were key drivers of the company’s success.” (Frei, 2002: 5)

In addition to working in the community they live in, WB’s executive team attributes its success and competitive advantage in the resort business to product diversification, quality facilities and services, the sustainability of Whistler’s natural environment, as well its ability to present an animated four-season experience that stems from a vibrant resident community (Interviews, 2004).

## 4.4 Interview Results

The following section examines stakeholder responses to the research assessment themes (see Table 3 in Section 2.7) driving this study. In particular, the responses address the research objective.

### 4.4.1 Current Trends in Affordable Housing Issues

#### The Threat of High Priced Housing to the Animated Resort Community

As with many other North American ski towns, the traditional winter-based ski-culture of Whistler is gradually giving way to a broader and more urban lifestyle set of values and activities linked to soft adventure, retail service consumption and "*people-watching*" – where simply being part of the "*Whistler Experience*" is epitomized:

The [Whistler] Experience is the ease with which we jump on our skis or boards or bike, grab our clubs or racquet or swimsuit, lace up our boots or blades and go. Or not go, but sit back and order another latte. It's in the nature of the Village, in the funkiness of Creekside, and in the rugged mountain terrain everywhere else. It's the synergy of the people. (Resort Municipality of Whistler, 2002a: 9)

Walking through the main village of Whistler, one can witness first-hand this synergy of visitors and amenity migrants mingling with resident employees throughout the day and night. As indicated by one Resort Municipality of Whistler respondent, it is this "*creation of places that Intrawest builds and relies on to maintain a profit. In this creation of place, you need animation to maintain high energy levels for visitors to enjoy*". Given the on-going contributions that service-oriented employees make to the social and economic fabric of the area, retaining a stable resident workforce within its boundaries is considered essential to this high energy level. A recurring notion emerging

from the research interviews is that *“the long-term success of Whistler as a vibrant resort community is dependent on the employees living in town, not commuting for an hour from Squamish then leaving as soon as their shift is done to socialize back in their own town”*. All interview respondents believed that since the guest experience is directly connected to the community, as is the energy that emanates from the resident workforce, the long-term success of Whistler-Blackcomb (WB) ultimately depends on housing the employees within Whistler.

Despite the importance of maintaining a vibrant community, Whistler's growing popularity as a destination for amenity-seeking migrants and real estate investors is resulting in the displacement of the resident workforce. In 2001, the RMOW Community Monitoring Report stated that there was an increasing percentage of non-Canadians buying Whistler real estate (Resort Municipality of Whistler, 2001). Three years later, the 2004 RMOW Community Monitoring Report stated that only an estimated 28% of Whistler property owners were full-time permanent residents, while 72% live outside of Whistler (Resort Municipality of Whistler, 2004b). As a growing awareness of Whistler as a ‘world-class’ resort and a place for favourable international investment conditions, the trend towards greater external ownership of housing in Whistler is not likely to abate soon. This trend is likely to increase because of the anticipated global market exposure that the community will receive through its hosting of the 2010 Olympic Winter Games. In addition, Intrawest’s marketing initiatives of its Whistler developments will also contribute to attracting this global real estate investment market, such as its “At Nature’s Door” luxury homes where there exists “unmatched, worry free, second-home ownership

with all the exclusive privileges of a private community including a Resident Innkeeper to look after your every need” (Intrawest, 2005).

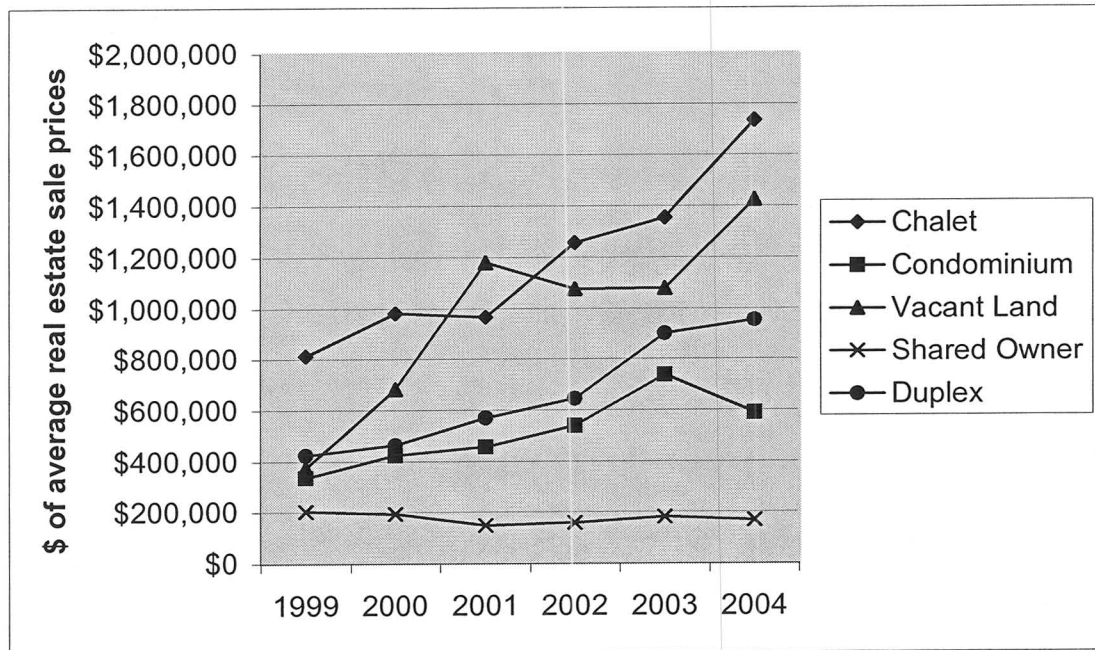
As indicated by one Resort Municipality of Whistler respondent, through their purchasing power, investors and vacation-homeowners are gradually gentrifying Whistler by “*pushing the costs of living in the community beyond the affordability of the original residents and employees*”. A Whistler Housing Authority respondent stated that, motivated by Intrawest’s marketing allure of “*owning a piece of property in a world-class Olympic resort*” and by the “*considerable return-on-investment seen in Whistler real estate*”, the demand of investors and vacation-homeowners has driven the average prices of accommodation steadily upward. For example, Table 5 and the associated Figure 2 show the average cost of chalets changing from \$813,222 in 1999 to \$1,737,460 in 2004. This was approximately a 113% increase. Similarly, the average cost of condominiums escalated from \$335,511 in 1999 to \$588,467 in 2004 – a 75% increase during this period. Table 6 shows the number of each type of housing sold during this time frame. A large part of the price increase is linked to the cost of acquiring vacant land in Whistler, also indicated in Table 5.

**Table 5: Average real estate prices in Whistler by type, 1999-2004**

	CHALET	CONDOMINIUM	VACANT LOTS	SHARED OWNER	DUPLEX
1999	\$813,222	\$335,511	\$375,045	\$203,040	\$423,518
2000	\$980,851	\$423,308	\$682,065	\$194,469	\$464,123
2001	\$966,796	\$455,809	\$1,179,423	\$147,968	\$569,423
2002	\$1,256,423	\$538,569	\$1,077,528	\$157,660	\$644,955
2003	\$1,353,864	\$738,011	\$1,078,545	\$179,634	\$901,992
2004	\$1,737,460	\$588,467	\$1,425,750	\$167,020	\$953,500

Source: Whistler Listings, RE/MAX of Whistler, 2005

**Figure 2: Average Whistler real estate sale prices, 1999-2004**



Source: Whistler Listings, RE/MAX of Whistler, 2005

**Table 6: Real estate sales in Whistler by type, 1999-2004**

	CHALET	CONDOMINIUM	VACANT LOTS	SHARED OWNER	DUPLEX
1999	139	495	47	82	17
2000	175	647	46	81	21
2001	124	661	27	37	26
2002	139	985	54	95	22
2003	93	537	11	73	13
2004	64	545	20	58	6

Source: Whistler Listings, RE/MAX of Whistler, 2005

Whistler real estate brokers believe that the market housing prices in the resort will continue to increase up to and well after the 2010 Olympics (Taylor, 2005). From Intrawest's perspective, this is good news. Intrawest revenues from new real estate sales, such as the recent Creekside development and many other smaller- and medium-scale projects in Whistler, went up approximately 72% between 2003 and 2004. This made real estate development the corporation's largest source of revenue in 2004. It represented about 57% of the corporation's total revenue (Intrawest, 2004a).

At the same time that Intrawest has capitalized on its lucrative real estate activity, and in fuelling this growing demand for land and property ownership, one Whistler Housing Authority respondent stated that *"many ordinary people in this community are finding the home they bought 10 years ago for \$400,000 is now worth \$1.6-1.8 million."* This is leading to an increasing number of people *"cashing out"* of Whistler and moving to surrounding communities. These places include Squamish, Pemberton, and other places outside the Sea-To-Sky Corridor. Although the community of Whistler and vibrancy of the resort continue to remain strong and energetic relative to other large

mountain resorts, one Whistler Housing Authority respondent and two Resort Municipality of Whistler respondents felt that the fabric of the community is being lost to some extent. This high-priced real estate activity is gradually reshaping the community into a resort exclusively for the affluent, threatening the affordability for resort employees.

Table 7 presents housing affordability statistics for Whistler, British Columbia, and Canada from the 2001 Canadian Census – the most recent period for which housing and income data was published. An analysis of the data shows that the cost of housing, in absolute terms and relative to income, is more expensive in Whistler than in the rest of British Columbia or Canada. The ratio of median house value to average household income reveals that in 2001 the purchase price of a house in Whistler cost 9.7 times the average household income in that same community, while the average value of a house in British Columbia cost only 4.9 times the average B.C. household income (49% less than Whistler) and only 3.5 times the average Canadian household income in Canada (64% less than Whistler).

**Table 7: Housing Affordability in Whistler vs. British Columbia vs. Canada**

	<b>WHISTLER</b>	<b>BRITISH COLUMBIA</b>	<b>CANADA</b>
Median Household Income	\$58,906	\$46,802	\$46,752
Average House Value	\$568,664	\$230,645	\$162,709
Ratio of Median House Value to Average Household Income	9.7	4.9	3.5
Available Monthly Funds for Housing (based on 30% of Median Household Income)	\$1,473	\$1,170	\$1,169
Average monthly payments for owner-occupied dwellings	\$1,528	\$904	\$835
<b>Excess Income / (Income Gap) of Housing Owners</b>	<b>(\$55)</b>	<b>\$266</b>	<b>\$334</b>
Average gross monthly payments for rented dwellings	\$1,169	\$751	\$648

Source: 2001 Canada Census Statistics

Table 7 also shows how much a typical household can afford for lodging each month. Affordability is determined using the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) standard of 30% of income expenditure for housing. This amount of available monthly funds for housing (based on 30% of median household income) is compared to the actual average monthly payments that were made in 2001 for owner-occupied dwellings. The statistics show that the average Whistler household cannot afford to purchase the average priced house in the community, whereas the average family in British Columbia and Canada can afford to purchase the average house in their respective locales. Looking at the average gross monthly payments for rented dwellings, it is apparent that the cost of rental housing in Whistler (\$1,169) is also significantly greater than in B.C. (\$751) or Canada (\$648).



As mentioned, the operational definition of affordable housing used by CMHC is accommodation costing no more than 30% of gross annual income. By factoring in this 30% into the average gross monthly payments for rented dwellings of \$1,169 that was paid in 2001 (Table 7), we can determine the wage an individual must earn for this to be considered affordable (Table 8):

**Table 8: Calculations to determine wage required to meet affordable housing costs**

Cost of renting per month per person:	$\$1,169 / 2 \text{ persons} = \$585 \text{ per month}$
Income required per month per person <sup>1</sup> :	$\$585 \times 12 \text{ months} = \$7,020$ $\$7,020 \times 3.333 = \$23,398 \text{ annual income needed}$ $\$23,398 / 52 \text{ weeks} = \$450 \text{ salary per week}$ $\$450 / 35 \text{ hrs/week} = \mathbf{\$12.86/hr}$

<sup>1</sup>Based on 30% of gross annual income, assuming two-person occupancy paying equal amounts.

Thus, a person needs to earn about \$13/hour in order to afford an average rented dwelling (\$1,169/month rental charge), assuming a minimum two-person occupancy with both paying equal amounts towards the rent to a maximum of 30% of gross annual income. Likewise, according to the 2004 Whistler Community Monitoring Report, a family renting a single-family home in Whistler would need to earn an annual income of approximately \$115,000 to live at an affordable level (Resort Municipality of Whistler, 2004a). This last figure is significantly greater than the actual 2001 median household income of \$58,906. This being said, it is understandable why almost 50% of Whistler resident employees spent more than 30% of their gross income on rent in 2001 (Resort Municipality of Whistler, 2004a).

Furthermore, while the median household income for Whistler employees provides some indication of earnings, they tend to distort the true picture of affordability in Whistler. The median income does not reflect the significant range in incomes and it only accounts for those families who have been able to remain in Whistler instead of moving to other communities along the Sea-to-Sky Corridor. The census does not capture the large number of seasonal workers who do not have a permanent address (Resort Municipality of Whistler, 2004a). One Whistler Housing Authority respondent stated that as *“incomes are not keeping pace with the [housing] market in Whistler, there is an increasing disparity between income levels and the cost of housing.”* This respondent further noted that this is particularly a problem in Whistler where *“young people starting out in their career do not appreciate the implications of their low-wage level.”* This is especially the case when *“businesses in Whistler like WB can get away with paying lower wages than the employees would see in other places... because Whistler is in an attractive location”* (WHA respondent, 2004). Understanding the affordability of the low-income population is important, especially considering that approximately 75% of Whistler employees work in service, retail, food, accommodation, and cleaning industries that are known to pay wages that are at or close to the minimum provincial requirement of \$8/hour (Resort Municipality of Whistler, 2004a).

As more Whistler amenities and attractions are developed and marketed globally by Intrawest, the real estate market is expected to reach more exorbitant prices. Consequently, the Resort Municipality of Whistler is approaching a crossroad with respect to housing: It can work with community stakeholders to try and maintain a diverse, vibrant community in which people of assorted socio-economic backgrounds can

reside; Conversely, it can allow the real estate market to continue its path towards ever-higher prices that inevitably push more employees further and further away from the town of Whistler. The very ‘sense of place’ – the vibrant, animated, high-energy resort community, which is a direct result of maintaining a high employee resident population that Intrawest has tried to nurture and market – will be affected by how the RMOW and its corporate partners respond to this challenge.

### **Leakage of Rental Accommodation**

Interview respondents identified three primary groups of people looking for affordable housing in Whistler. The first group consists of young seasonal transient employees who just want inexpensive and convenient basic rental shelter to sleep in. The second group includes somewhat older, more established year-round employees who are renting long-term and may be considering purchasing a dwelling. The third group is comprised of permanent residents who have been working/living in Whistler for at least five years, also typically renting long-term, and are looking to purchase dwellings large enough to accommodate their family. The challenge Whistler is facing is that there is not an adequate supply of affordable housing to purchase, while the stock of rental units is declining.

Since 1997 when the Whistler Housing Authority (WHA) was created, there has been an attempt to alleviate some of the affordable housing challenges by developing and maintaining resident-restricted housing. The WHA currently manages 3,984 beds – 1,969 rental and 2,015 owned. The WHA also controls and maintains a resident housing waitlist (an inventory of both rental and for purchase units that are price restricted and are only available to employees who have been working full-time in Whistler for at least one

year). Through this waitlist, it attempts to equitably distribute rental and ownership housing opportunities to Whistler's active and retired workforce (Resort Municipality of Whistler, 2004a). The WHA closely monitors the resident housing supply and demand and is constantly striving to match the available inventory with the actual demand for housing. This housing stock is designed to meet the needs of the three groups as best as possible.

However, both the rental and ownership demands in Whistler have exceeded the supply in recent years. The high demand for real estate is stimulating housing stock 'leakages.' This is viewed as a leading contributor to the challenge of providing sufficient employee housing – particularly rental accommodation. Leakage in this context refers to the loss of market-housing stock that would normally be available to accommodate Whistler workers through rental and lease agreements. Leakage occurs under two sets of circumstances which accelerates the loss of affordable housing options:

1. When existing accommodation owners no longer rent their suites or duplex units to employees because the monthly rental prices attainable are no longer commensurate with what they can earn by chartering the suites to destination visitors; and
2. When amenity-seeking migrants or investors purchase existing housing and are not interested in renting out the dwelling to community workers or simply tear down the old structure to build an over-sized chalet, which does not include an affordable secondary suite (rental units built typically as part of a single-family detached home that the home-owner leases to local employees) (Whistler Question, 2004).

Between 1996 and 2001, Whistler's supply of secondary suites dropped by 16% (Resort Municipality of Whistler, 2004a). At estimated leakage rates, by 2020 Whistler may experience a loss of 4,240 beds of market suites currently housing resident

employees (Resort Municipality of Whistler, 2004a). As such, Whistler may only be able to house 46% of employees by 2020 (Resort Municipality of Whistler, 2004a). The WHA is currently undergoing a study to determine exactly what these leakage rates are and how much market rental dwellings exist. Furthermore, in the 2004 WHA Housing Needs Assessment Study, 20% of Whistler employers indicated that they were not able to achieve optimum staffing levels for the 2003-2004 winter season. Employers in this study also specified that the number of unfilled positions had increased by 60% (182 to 300) from the previous season (Whistler Housing Authority, 2004a). Employers further stated that one of the key reasons for such dramatic staff shortages was a lack of affordable housing opportunities (Whistler Housing Authority, 2004a). Leakage of affordable housing for employees can place a significant strain on the availability of qualified staff of companies and municipal service departments.

The leakage of rental housing also indirectly threatens the overall vibrancy of the resort. Every interview respondent perceived that the youthful, transient, seasonal employees who work and live in town are the main source of the 'joie de vivre' that attracts such a large segment of WB's target market. As access to a supply of rental accommodation declines via processes like leakage, and as businesses continue to find it harder to attract young staff, WB executives and RMOW staff are concerned that the energetic nightlife of Whistler is in danger. One WB respondent stated that they did not want Whistler to "*become just like so many downtowns and other ski resorts that are completely lifeless after five when all the workers leave for their suburban homes*". The paradox is that Intrawest is an indirect contributor to this leakage issue as the company continues to aggressively market Whistler's amenities and updated resort services to

investors and affluent amenity-migrants around the world. As previously mentioned, this marketing fuels the demand for property, increasing market prices, ultimately leading existing residents to ‘cash in’ on the equity of their homes (Resort Municipality of Whistler respondent, 2004).

### **Increasing Income-Housing Disparity**

Concurrent with the more urbanized lifestyle that is associated with mountain resort destinations, there is a demand for different services and a full range of new jobs to be generated. Walking around Whistler, one can observe the businesses and services associated with supporting this lifestyle that are emerging (e.g. health, education, communications and technology, finance, culture, housekeeping, gardening), along with a demand for higher quality traditional services (e.g. recreation, accommodation, transportation, hospitality). Meeting the facility and labour requirements of this demand can be problematic.

The community of Whistler and IntraWest have attempted to address the facility component of this demand by creating a broad range of high quality public and private sector amenity developments (e.g. cultural and community centres, medical centres, libraries, museums, spas, specialty retailing facilities). However, the destination has been challenged to supply the needed labour to operate these new facilities as well as deliver its ongoing set of traditional services. As the price of housing increases, so does the spectrum of employees who are unable to find adequate, affordable housing. What was once a problem mainly for seasonal or low-wage tourism workers now extends up to more moderate-income employees. One Whistler Housing Authority respondent stated that “*housing is becoming increasingly unaffordable for the middle-class.*” Many of

Whistler's new services require non-stereotypical service workers such as artists, health care professionals, teachers, librarians, fire protection officials, local police officers, and entrepreneurs who themselves demand quality working and living conditions. This group is represented in the growing WHA employee housing purchase waitlist. Eligible Whistler residents can register with WHA to purchase a studio, one- two- or three-bedroom, or duplex/single family home at rates based on Vancouver's housing market. This is said to be more affordable than the market rates in Whistler. To be eligible, residents must be of legal age, a Canadian citizen or landed immigrant and working an average of at least 20 hours per week for the past 12 months for a business located within the municipal boundaries, and must be pre-approved for a mortgage that corresponds to the price range of the type of unit that the resident is interested in buying ([www.whistlerhousing.ca](http://www.whistlerhousing.ca)). The employee housing purchase waitlist topped 481 in April, 2005, which is an approximate 298% increase from the January 2003 number of 121 applicants (Personal Communication, Marla Zucht, Whistler Housing Authority, Resort Municipality of Whistler, 2005).

Ten of the fourteen interview respondents mentioned that the increasing income-housing disparity that is expanding across a larger set of demographics contributes significantly to the challenge of employee shortages. What was once purely a social inequity which the municipality has attempted to resolve has now become a challenge for businesses trying to effectively run their operations. As such, one WB interview respondent acknowledged that the company has *“a responsibility to make sure their employees are properly housed, if only to ensure the sustainability of their business.”*

## **Senior Housing**

Recent affordable housing concerns have also extended to retirees who have lived and worked in Whistler for years. Due mainly to inflated property taxes (again, fuelled by the chain of connectivity between Intrawest's business activities and the rising market value of Whistler real estate), but also to a general high cost of living in Whistler and a lack of senior services, many retirees are being forced to cash in on the equity in their home to relocate to larger urban centres like Vancouver. There they hope to find affordable housing and acquire access to living assistance or health services that are not offered in Whistler (Taylor, 2001; Ashton-Haiste, 2004; Eberle and MacPherson, 2004). In 2001, people aged 65 and over made up less than 3% of the population in Whistler, compared to 14% in British Columbia (Canada Census, 2001). Though this number is relatively small, the 2001 Canada Census shows that the largest percentage increase between 1996 and 2001 occurred in the 65+ age category (125%). These statistics, in combination with the establishment of the Whistler Seniors Housing Task Force (2003), suggest that Whistler may be experiencing a growing housing issue for its seniors population. There are two dimensions to this issue.

One side of the challenge is that the number of affluent people choosing Whistler as a retirement option is expected to grow. As such, this aging populace will require more services such as specialized health care and at-home assistance. This exacerbates the housing issue because these services, in turn, require more specialized employees with affordable housing needs.

The other concern is that Whistler may lose many older and valuable community members due to the rising property taxes. One WB respondent stated that many of these



long-standing residents “*have a great deal of knowledge of the area and volunteer a lot of hours for WB and the community.*” This is a community concern because losing senior residents diminishes the diversity of the socio-economic structure of the community. Their efforts also help ensure that guest experiences exceed expectations. These residents can only contribute fully to their community and its local businesses if they live locally. This is important in maintaining a vibrant place. The displacement of retirees due to housing becoming increasingly unaffordable also indirectly affects businesses including those associated with Intrawest (see ‘Loss of Volunteers’ in Section 4.4.2).

Intrawest does not have any direct provisions for housing assistance to WB retirees or to WB volunteers. One WB executive respondent stated that WB is looking to provide senior volunteers with a free seasons pass. In doing so, WB is indirectly helping to alleviate the issue of housing affordability for seniors by addressing the overall affordability problem, which considers housing, food, services, and recreation.

#### **4.4.2 Impacts from a Lack of Affordable Housing**

This section highlights interviewee responses concerning the critical economic and social impacts that result from a lack of affordable housing in Whistler.

##### **Economic Impacts**

It is difficult to separate the economic impacts of declining affordable housing on WB and the community of Whistler because the success of one depends on the other. As one Whistler community respondent indicated, “*not being able to attract and retain qualified personnel*” creates a range of direct and indirect economic costs for both WB and the community.

### *Uncommitted Workforce*

Employees who must commute an hour each way from Squamish are “going to be more tired, less enthusiastic about work, and not willing to go that extra step to make sure the guest is happy” (WB respondent, 2004). If they don’t live in the town, they will have no sense of ownership and will not be committed to the success of the place.

RMOW and community interview respondents stated that many employers in Whistler have experienced first-hand the challenges of this lengthy and sometime treacherous commute for employees. One media stakeholder respondent stated that employees who have to commute from Squamish “often show up late at work due to poor road conditions and/or traffic congestion” and are “not as pleasant as they could be to customers, compared to what they might be if they did not have to commute for an hour or more.” A dissatisfied and uncommitted workforce that presents itself in a negative manner to clients and the broader resort community can create less-than-satisfied guests who are unlikely to return to or recommend Whistler to friends or family members. As one Intrawest respondent stated, while “a vibrant community is not a quantifiable asset on Intrawest’s balance sheet” the monetary value of such intangible benefits is potentially considerable.

The recent decision by the RMOW to offer public transit service to/from Squamish and Pemberton at peak work shift times may lessen some of the challenges associated with the commute itself. WB contributed to this initiative by subsidizing the public bus line for the first two years to make it economically feasible (WB respondent, 2004). Although the initiative may alleviate some of the affordable housing demands, the associated commuting adversities, and economic impacts on businesses like WB, it will only amplify the problem of weakening Whistler’s vibrant community by encouraging

more employees to move to Squamish where housing is currently less expensive. Thus, about 85% of interview respondents felt efforts by the RMOW and WB, such as increasing transit options, were simply ‘band-aid solutions’ that do not really address the principal housing issue in Whistler.

*Loss of Competitive Advantage of Affordable Housing*

Interview respondents from all stakeholder groups mentioned that businesses that are able to offer some form of housing assistance have a ‘competitive advantage’ both within Whistler and when trying to attract skilled personnel from elsewhere. In Whistler where businesses are all vying for a considerably limited supply of skilled employees, compensation in the form of “*clean, affordable accommodation for staff is vital to attracting a more committed and exceptional employee*” (WB respondent, 2004). Such employees are invaluable in ensuring a strong, economically sustainable business. This advantage is well recognized within the Whistler business community. The 2004 Housing Needs Assessment Study revealed that approximately 60% of businesses indicated they were interested in leasing studio units for their employees; particularly during the peak winter season (Whistler Housing Authority, 2004a). Without affordable housing available for employees, many businesses are finding it difficult to attract qualified committed staff.

WB interview respondents stated that they have no problems attracting people for first-year seasonal positions because the company has sufficient staff housing to accommodate all new employees. These respondents explained that WB’s approach to affordable housing is generally to take care of the first-year employees. One WB respondent stated that the company assumes those returning to the community to work

*“know the challenges that exist and are better equipped to go and find their own accommodations.”* Other interview respondents acknowledged that the problem with this approach is that WB, as the largest employer in Whistler, is creating a rental housing demand that is too substantial for the WHA to resolve on its own. In addition, Intrawest is not providing an adequate amount of housing to alleviate this demand they helped create (see Section 4.4.3). This is making it difficult for the smaller ‘mom-and-pop’ stores to fulfill their employee requirements as those employees cannot find housing. Moreover, the competitive advantage of using employee housing to attract skilled employees was seen as unfair because only the large corporations, such as Intrawest, can afford to develop housing for their employees.

Though WB had been able to attract first-year employees easily, one company executive interview respondent stated that,

“At the manager level of employees, for us to recruit outside of Whistler becomes a near impossibility for anybody who has an expectation to own a home. And at this level of employment, you’re typically looking at someone who is 30-40 years old with a family who tends to value their own space in that point in their lives.”

This being said, other than 894 first-year seasonal employee beds Intrawest has only developed 258 beds for employees and their family members (see Section 4.4.3). As the above quote indicates, even the larger corporations like Intrawest are experiencing challenges associated with affordable housing from a competitive advantage standpoint. Yet, interview respondents from all stakeholder groups noted that Intrawest is simply relying on the Resort Municipality of Whistler, the involvement of WB executives in the Comprehensive Sustainability Plan process, and the less expensive housing market in Squamish and Pemberton to resolve the issues. One WB respondent felt the best solution

at this point is “*promoting from within those people who have spent some time in the community and have had time to get their names on the WHA waiting list.*”

#### ***Staff Turnover***

In addition to the challenge of attracting people to fill employment positions, two WB respondents mentioned another challenge for the company now is retaining permanent qualified staff. Many of the mature employees are reaching the stage in their lives where they want to purchase a dwelling of some kind in Whistler, but cannot afford to pay Whistler market rates and are not willing to commute from Squamish or Pemberton. As well, the WHA employee housing purchase waitlist is long (481 applicants as of April 2005) due to the increasing demand for affordable housing. About 92% of respondents indicated that there is a general feeling among Whistler residents on the employee housing purchase waitlist that they will never get a chance to buy an affordable dwelling through the WHA housing program because it is so long. As such, employees are faced with the decision to continue waiting for their name to come up on the list so they can buy an affordable unit, or they can find employment elsewhere. As many decide on the latter, staff turnover costs created by these challenging housing circumstances can be excessive and disruptive for resort operators such as WB.

Interview respondents from all stakeholder groups suggested that businesses in resort destinations like Whistler generally tend to incur a disproportionate degree of staff turnover. Part of the reason is because service-oriented jobs tend to attract younger, transient people. As one WHA respondent noted, many employees simply tire of “*taking an economic hit to enjoy the lifestyle in Whistler*” and decide to move/work in a place that is less expensive. All respondents noted affordable housing is one of the key drivers

behind this employee turnover. All WB respondents stated this holds true for the Intrawest subsidiary. An exceptional guest experience may not be attained because there is a gap of service provided while new employees are trained and gain knowledge of the positions and unique requirements in Whistler. Since WB is not effectively addressing the affordable housing issue for their employees, it is not able to reduce much of its turnover costs. This was of most concern regarding the more permanent positions, since interview respondents stated that short-term seasonal positions will always require a transient employee base.

#### ***Staff Shortages***

The reduction of affordable accommodation for staff ultimately results in staff shortages for local businesses. It becomes difficult for businesses to run their operations effectively with sub-optimal staffing. RMOW and community stakeholders suggested that understaffing not only directly decreases profit for the 'mom-and-pop shop', but also indirectly diminishes the overall 'Whistler Experience' that Intrawest is trying to market to visitors. Similar to turnover costs, in all the annual Whistler Housing Needs Assessment surveys, one of the main reasons cited for employee shortages in Whistler is a limited supply of affordable housing. Along the same line, executives interviewed at both WB and Intrawest understand that resident affordability can be a significant challenge to running the Whistler mountain operations effectively. One WB respondent indicated that *"if you don't have the ability for people to have someplace to live, you don't have a business."* Furthermore, this respondent stated, *"[WB] had a bit of a struggle filling the positions this summer... I have to tell you, I get pretty nervous sometimes thinking about the winter season."*

### *Diminished Brand Image/Reputation*

Related to the issue of the lack of affordable housing is the potential weakening of image/reputation for both Whistler and WB. The threat to the WB image can occur on two levels. On the first level, WB executives are becoming concerned that “*perhaps the perception out there [is] that Whistler has become too expensive and people are going to other resorts to work.*” All interview respondents believed that there is a perceived link between the image/reputation of the destination of Whistler and the success of WB. If the town of Whistler gains a reputation as a place where it is too difficult for employees to find suitable lodging, then WB may experience greater employee shortages.

At least some of the founders of Intrawest have always recognized that a lack of accommodation for employees is a potential threat to the destination’s reputation as a place to go to ski and work (Intrawest and WB respondents, 2004). As previously indicated, they also realize that the reputation of being able to offer employees affordable housing is a competitive advantage over other resorts. Successfully running their resort business operations depends on attracting both a seasonal and more permanent workforce. As one WHA respondent stated, this was “*the main incentive for them to develop accommodations in Whistler in ‘88 with enough capacity to house all their first-year employees for the season.*” Intrawest is commended by respondents for recognizing, early on, the importance of housing their employees and addressing this need through their own actions. However, the current challenges for them today lie in the fact that WB’s human resource needs have expanded considerably in terms of both overall manpower and year-round requirements. Section 4.4.3 shows in detail that the employee beds WB offers is not sufficient to accommodate a significant percentage of their

workforce. As such, a common theme heard throughout the interviews was that the reputation of Whistler being an unaffordable place to live was becoming more prevalent.

On the second level, the community of Whistler's image/reputation as a vibrant, diverse community is indirectly threatened with the lack of affordable housing. If Whistler is perceived as a less energetic and dynamic place to be with deteriorating levels of service, fewer visitors will come to Whistler. Since the community and the corporation are interconnected, this diminished community structure will impair Intrawest's financial success. As market-share competitiveness intensifies, the destination's reputation as an animated, diverse community will be at least partially what differentiates it from its competitors.

### **Community Social Impacts**

A lack of affordable employee housing may lead to a diverse range of adverse social impacts that affect both the community and Whistler businesses. These potential effects are tightly interrelated with the economic issues previously discussed.

#### ***Deterioration of a Diverse Community***

Whistler's draft Comprehensive Sustainability Plan (CSP) identifies building a stronger community as a key to the destination's long-term sustainability. This includes having a stable resident workforce living within the community (Resort Municipality of Whistler, 2004a). To date, the community has been successful at maintaining its reputation as an animated resort. Indeed it has been rated as North America's top ski resort on numerous occasions. However, approximately 65% of the interview respondents feel that the growing displacement of resident employees is gradually leading to a deterioration of the community. One Resort Municipality of Whistler respondent, one



media respondent, and one Whistler community respondent claimed to have witnessed this deterioration over the past five years. They felt that the once-diverse community that welcomed people from all socio-economic backgrounds is now being transformed into an exclusive lifestyle resort for the affluent populace who can afford to 'buy their way in' as growing numbers of long-time residents have been 'cashing out.'

### *Down-valley Syndrome*

The Down-valley syndrome discussed in Chapter Two exists at Whistler. It not only creates a range of additional economic, social, and environmental problems in the region, but WB executive respondents believe it also can devastate the youthful vibrancy and nightlife of the resorts. According to the 2004 Housing Needs Assessment Study (Whistler Housing Authority, 2004a), 76% of Whistler's workers lived in Whistler during the 2003-2004 winter season. However, all interview respondents were concerned that if action is not taken soon by both RMOW and Intrawest to alleviate the rapidly rising housing costs and address the inadequate supply of affordable housing in Whistler, this percentage is likely to decline considerably. Forcing employees into lengthy, expensive, and sometimes treacherous commutes to work and away from Whistler's amenities defeats the very reasons why they opted to seek employment in Whistler from the outset. The lack of affordable housing puts significant economic and social strains on the community, thereby threatening to subdue Whistler's attractive vibrancy, exceptional service levels, and ultimately Intrawest's financial bottom line.

Two Resort Municipality of Whistler respondents noted that the increased vehicle use that is a consequence of this down-valley syndrome contributes to CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. This, in turn can influence climate change, increased temperatures, and eventually the

melting of mountain glaciers that Intrawest depends on for much of their revenue.

Though the amount of traffic increase in the context of this study is likely not significant on a global climate change scale, this notion presents the important point that local issues like affordable housing can have regional and global impacts, which, in turn, affect local conditions.

### *Loss of Volunteers*

Approximately 65% of the interview respondents suggested in some way that many people who decide to try and remain in Whistler, with the hopes that something will be done soon to fix the housing problems, are compelled to undertake an additional source of income to meet the increased cost of living. In order to do this, they must make trade-offs with other aspects in their life. In Whistler, where many residents are highly involved in their community, it is typically the volunteer time that is dropped in order to make ends meet. Businesses and resort municipality council members alike are concerned that the number of people volunteering appears to be declining as these people are forced to take on more work hours to be able to afford to live in Whistler. The concern is that volunteers are directly affected by rising housing costs. At the same time, it is these dedicated community members who personify the fundamental 'Whistler Experience.' Intrawest tries to capture and market this special feeling that surrounds Whistler in efforts to increase visitation rates. It is often one of the 800 volunteers on the mountain playing the role of a complimentary ski guide for WB who makes a guest's ordinary ski day an exceptional one (WB respondent, 2004). Without affordable housing options for employees and retirees, this exceptional experience for WB guests is threatened.

### **4.4.3 Roles of Intrawest in Addressing Affordable Housing**

#### **Extent of Intrawest Addressing Affordable Housing Issues**

When asked to rate the extent that Intrawest is involved in shaping policies and practices to resolve the affordable housing issue, all of interview respondents rated Intrawest to be at least *'somewhat involved.'* The average score, where 1=Not Involved and 5=Highly Involved, was 4.33. However, based on interview respondent comments associated with this question, this degree of involvement was interpreted differently. About one third of this study's respondents perceived Intrawest to have, as one Whistler-Blackcomb (WB) respondent stated, *"taken a strong CSR stance regarding the affordable housing issue."* Respondents perceived this primarily because 1) a WB executive volunteered to participate on the WHA Board that was formed to develop policy recommendations to address affordable housing challenges, and 2) two WB executives have been involved in the Comprehensive Sustainability Plan process as a community stakeholder in which making policies to address affordable housing was a component. In addition to WB executives working with the community to help develop policies to mitigate housing issues, an analysis of the inventory of resident-restricted housing in Whistler (Table 9) demonstrates Intrawest has contributed to this stock by supplying affordable housing for some of their own employees.

**Table 9: Intrawest resident-restricted housing developments**

HOUSING PROJECT	YEAR BUILT	NUMBER OF BEDS
4802 Glacier Lane (First-year seasonal staff housing)	1989	894
3100 Panorama Ridge	1992	86
1301 Alta Lake Road	2001	172
<b>TOTAL NUMBER OF BEDS</b>		<b>1,152</b>

Source: Chronological Inventory of Resident Restricted Housing (Whistler Housing Authority, 2003c)

These respondents noted the 1,152 beds (29% of the total WHA inventory of resident-restricted beds; 30% of the 3,800 WB employees) that have been built by Intrawest for the use of its own WB employees is another reason why they felt the resort corporation was at least *'somewhat involved'* in addressing affordable housing issues.

On the other hand, about 58% of this study's respondents interpreted the extent of Intrawest's involvement in resolving the housing issues as significant only when compared to the involvement of other North American mountain resort corporations, such as Vail Resorts Inc. In other words, as one Resort Municipality of Whistler respondent indicated, WB may be *"doing very little in the way of concrete actions to resolve the issue [for the broader community]"*, but they are still *"probably leaders in the field"* in terms of meeting its own employee housing needs. Upon further investigation, Table 10 demonstrates that in the 2004-2005 peak winter season Vail Resorts Inc. provides housing for approximately 42% of its Vail / Beaver Creek resort employees, about 20% of its Breckenridge resort employees, and about 31% of its Keystone resort employees.

**Table 10: Percentages of employee housing offered by Vail Resorts Inc.**

DESTINATION	# OF PEAK WINTER SEASON EMPLOYEES (2004-2005)	# OF EMPLOYEE HOUSING BEDS	% OF EMPLOYEES OFFERED HOUSING
Vail / Beaver Creek	2,500 <sup>1</sup>	1,047 <sup>2</sup>	42%
Breckenridge	1,500 <sup>3</sup>	296 <sup>4</sup>	20%
Keystone	2,590 <sup>5</sup>	802 <sup>6</sup>	31%

**Sources:**

<sup>1</sup> Personal Communication, Erin Rausch, Human Resources Specialist, Vail/ Beaver Creek – Vail Resorts Inc., 26 April 2005

<sup>2</sup> Personal Communication, Chris Farrington, Director of Seasonal Housing, Vail/ Beaver Creek – Vail Resorts Inc., 26 April 2005

<sup>3</sup> Personal Communication, Sandi Griffon, Human Resources Manager, Breckenridge – Vail Resorts Inc., 26 April 2005

<sup>4</sup> Personal Communication, Ricardo Ochoa, Property Manager, Breckenridge – Vail Resorts Inc., 26 April 2005

<sup>5</sup> Personal Communication, Barbara Brandt, Director of Human Resources, Keystone – Vail Resorts Inc., 26 April 2005

<sup>6</sup> Personal Communication, Sharon Peavy, Property Manager, Keystone – Vail Resorts Inc., 26 April 2005

Furthermore, the Northwest Colorado Council of Governments (2003) showed that Vail Resorts had also initiated other programs in an attempt to alleviate its own employee housing problems, such as Down Payments or Mortgage Assistance, Master Lease, Investing, Guarantees, and Housing Allowances (See Table 2, Section 2.2.2). Contacts made in Vail Resorts Inc. were uncertain as to how many additional employees these other programs provide housing assistance for. All this information fails to support the perception that Intrawest is a ‘leader’ in socially responsible activity in terms of addressing affordable housing issues in the community of Whistler. Intrawest has simply addressed its own employee housing needs in Whistler to a similar extent that other resort corporations, such as Vail Resorts Inc., have done in some destinations.

It is also important to note that Intrawest has contributed to the Whistler Housing Fund via its market developments since 1996. The amount of Intrawest's contributions is uncertain as it has not been tracked by the RMOW (Personal Communication, Chris Bishop, Planner, Resort Municipality of Whistler, 26 April 2005). This is because the Resort Municipality of Whistler enacted the Employee Housing Service Charge Bylaw (Resort Municipality of Whistler, 1996). However, these contributions do not demonstrate that the corporation has acted in a proactive socially responsible manner beyond what is required by law. Intrawest was simply adhering to a municipal regulation whereby an owner of land that was issued a permit to develop commercial or industrial structures had to pay an employee housing charge.

### **Stakeholder Relationships**

As described in Chapter Two, the term "stakeholders" refers to individuals or groups who can affect or are affected by a corporation's activities. Since, as one Resort Municipality of Whistler respondent noted, "*their quality of life is influenced by the business operations of Intrawest*", Whistler residents are, in fact, stakeholders in the business decisions of Intrawest which affect the Whistler community. About 58% of respondents specifically noted that residents must rely at least partially on the corporation to help them make the cost of living more affordable. This partial dependence exists because a) many people are employed with the company; b) the community relies on the company for many local discounts on products and services; and/or c) Intrawest, through its development and operating strategies, has considerable influence on the extent to which adverse social impacts in the area are mitigated.

Conversely, Intrawest relies on residents to run its WB operations and services as well as to sell its products. It depends on residents to provide a positive guest experience regardless of whether they work for the corporation or not. The “Whistler Experience” comes not just from the accommodations visitors have booked, but also the quality of the food, goods, and service associated with the restaurants, retail outlets, activities, as well as their encounters around the village interacting with other visitors and local residents.

Therefore, residents are stakeholders in the business activities of Intrawest because they indirectly affect the corporation’s bottom line through their inevitable involvement in creating the ‘Whistler Experience.’ On the flipside, Intrawest is a stakeholder in the community, as its operations, development, marketing efforts, and relationships directly impact the quality of life of the residents.

‘Increased communication’ and ‘leveraging of real estate and development expertise’ through community stakeholder relationships were noted by about 92% of interview respondents as two of the most valuable socially responsible ways in which Intrawest could contribute to resolving the challenges of affordable housing in Whistler. That is, by partnering with the RMOW and/or WHA, Intrawest could offer its real estate and development expertise to help determine cost-efficient and effective affordable housing initiatives (see Section 2.4.2 to see how Intrawest did this with Mammoth Lakes Housing Inc.).

An analysis of responses regarding the strength of the relationship between Intrawest and the WHA shows that there are generally two perspectives (groups). The first group consisted of about ¾ of stakeholder respondents. In this group, all WB / Intrawest respondents believed this relationship was strong, often considering it a

*“partnership”*. Three other respondents felt this relationship was simply an understanding of each other’s affordable housing needs and issues. These respondents also felt that since WB executives live and work in Whistler, they are more cognizant of the need to develop stronger relationships with community stakeholders than perhaps their Intrust corporate counterparts who reside elsewhere. The second group that included the remaining ¼ of stakeholder respondents (other than WB / Intrust) felt that the relationship between Intrust and WHA was generally weak. Within this group, descriptions of the relationship ranged from non-existent to simply a ‘mutual respect’ for each other’s perspective on housing demands.

A key theme surrounding stakeholder relationships between Intrust and the community was that one of WB’s executive staff was a board member of the WHA. This participation on the WHA Board was a personal choice of the employee as opposed to a corporate initiative. Some interview respondents suggested that if the individual did not live in Whistler and was not interested in the housing issue, Intrust would likely not be involved at this level. WB interview respondents stated the company’s executive team continues to be highly supportive of this endeavour. WB interview respondents noted that the company provided moral support for the employee’s involvement on the WHA Board. Given the primarily personal motivation behind this involvement, it is difficult to deduce that the relationship between WB and the WHA is really a corporate-driven CSR initiative.

Nonetheless, WB executives and the community mutually benefit from this participation because it encourages dialogue between WB, the Whistler Housing Authority, and other WHA Board members from the community. As one Resort



Municipality of Whistler respondent determined, this involvement may ultimately lead to “*more creative solutions*” through the “*leveraging of skills, experience, and knowledge that would otherwise not be available.*” An example of the type of creative solutions that come from the Board meetings is a proposal for the use of vacant land within existing built-up areas (infill) for the construction of affordable housing. This project would blend the supply of affordable housing into existing neighbourhoods that already have housing infrastructure and services in place. This approach would dramatically reduce development costs. At the time of this research, there was no indication whether Intrawest would be involved in developing affordable housing in these infill locations. The role of Intrawest in this respect has been limited to workshop dialogue participation.

Similar to perceptions associated with WB’s participation on the WHA Board, all interview respondents stated that WB has been a stakeholder in the CSP process. Perhaps this is why, when asked to rate the extent that Intrawest is involved in shaping policies and practices to resolve the current affordable housing issue in Whistler, 100% of respondents considered the corporation to be at least ‘*somewhat involved*’.

However, about 78% of respondents also suggested that Intrawest should be more proactive in developing actions to contend with the affordable housing problems. That is, there is an expectation that Intrawest should move beyond participation in community workshops and the WHA Board (stakeholder relationships), towards more direct mitigative actions. A more enhanced *partnership* model between WB, Resort Municipality of Whistler, and WHA needs to be developed to help ensure sufficient affordable housing for employees in Whistler is provided and maintained.

On the other hand, all WB / Intrawest respondents believed that Intrawest has done a significant amount in terms of working with the WHA and RMOW to ensure the corporation's WB employees have access to affordable housing. Ultimately, this analysis shows there is a difference between the extent to which WB / Intrawest respondents perceive their involvement in working with stakeholders to address affordable housing and how other stakeholder respondents perceive this.

### **The Need for Corporate Social Responsibility**

Interview respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they believed Intrawest exacerbates affordable housing challenges in Whistler. On a scale where 1=Not Responsible to 5=Completely Responsible, the average rating was 3.42. This number falls between somewhat and highly responsible. Expanding on this response, one WB executive respondent expressed that,

“[Intrawest is] highly responsible because obviously the growth of this community has been largely as a response to the expansion of the ski area, our international marketing efforts and appeal, and growth of skier visits. So it's the business success, the way the village was designed, the way we have leveraged the natural environment here...is how we ended up where we are today.”

Respondents were also asked how they rated Intrawest's responsibility to provide support for affordable housing solutions in Whistler. This responsibility was assessed with respect to WB employees and Whistler employees in general. Table 11 shows that on a scale where 1=Not Responsible to 5=Completely Responsible, the average rating to provide support for their own employees was 3.67 and the average rating for Whistler employees in general was 3.17.

**Table 11: Perspectives concerning Intrawest’s responsibility to provide support for affordable housing solutions in Whistler**

EMPLOYEE TYPE	AVERAGE RATING <sup>1</sup>
WB Employees	3.67
Whistler employees in general	3.17

<sup>1</sup> Rating is on a scale of 1-5 where 1=Not Responsible to 5=Completely Responsible.

Both these averages fall between somewhat and highly responsible. However, about 85% of respondents clarified that this separation was not necessary since employees, regardless of who they worked for, influenced the satisfaction of service levels of Intrawest customers. Furthermore, respondents were asked how they felt about the following statement as it pertains to Intrawest in the context of affordable housing:

"Corporations possess the power to control and influence the quality of life of employees, customers, shareholders, and residents of local communities in which they operate... Power necessarily entails responsibility." (Pava and Krausz, 1995: 1)

Overall, twelve out of fourteen respondents (about 85%) strongly agreed with this position.

In addition, Table 12 shows that 100% of the respondents stated that all community stakeholders including businesses such as Intrawest were responsible for addressing affordable housing challenges in Whistler. This suggested that affordable housing is an issue that the community, as a whole, must resolve. Likewise, Table 12 further demonstrates that in another question, 11 out of 14 respondents also felt Intrawest could play a stronger role in directly addressing affordable housing problems.

**Table 12: Intrawest’s responsibility to address affordable housing in Whistler**

QUESTION	RESPONSE THEMES	# OF RESPONDENTS (n=14)
Who do you believe is responsible for resolving the affordable housing challenges in Whistler?	All community stakeholders	12
What will be the future directions or demands of this relationship [between WHA and Intrawest]?	Intrawest play a stronger role in directly addressing affordable housing	11
	Relationship stays the same	1

The analysis of these responses demonstrates that stakeholders perceive Intrawest to have a somewhat-to-high social responsibility to address affordable housing issues for both their own WB employees as well as for the Whistler workforce in general.

Interestingly, nine out of ten respondents not affiliated with WB or Intrawest felt that the corporation had been reluctant to provide affordable housing solutions. One Resort Municipality of Whistler respondent stated that this hesitancy may be attributed to *“the corporate attitude that the municipality [government] is responsible for providing affordable housing, not business’ since it is a social problem”*. One Intrawest respondent, after looking at the list of resident-restricted housing that the WHA manages (Whistler Housing Authority, 2003c), admitted that *“looking at the list of affordable housing properties – it’s funny when you look at how big it is, how few projects Intrawest has actually done.”* Despite the evidence that Intrawest and WB executives recognize the importance of ensuring sufficient lodging for employees, the fact remains that, aside from the initial 1,152 employee beds developed and its involvement in the community CSP process and WHA Board, little action has been taken by the corporation to address the

affordable housing issue. One specific statement by a WB executive illustrates the corporate reasoning behind this minimal action:

“We want the [housing] market to function as it was intended to, and allow people who are really capable of purchasing their own homes to really do that on their own.”

Without acknowledging economic market failures such as that associated with the loss of affordable housing in Whistler, the negative effects of this situation on the corporation and the community of Whistler are likely to continue to intensify.

#### **4.4.4 Benefits to Intrawest by Addressing Affordable Housing**

Intrawest is more likely to treat affordable housing as a mainstream business concern if executives can see how such actions can create additional value or conserve existing value for the corporation by addressing this issue. Table 13 illustrates how interview respondents felt in terms of the potential for Intrawest to conserve or create value by playing a stronger role in responding to the challenges of affordable housing in Whistler.

**Table 13: Summary of ratings regarding how Intrawest might create corporate value by addressing affordable housing problems**

BENEFITS TO INTRAWEST	MEAN RATING SCORE (1-5)	% OF INTERVIEW RESPONDENTS THAT SOMEWHAT AGREE OR STRONGLY AGREE (n=14)	PROBABILITY INTRAWEST WILL ACHIEVE BENEFIT BY ADDRESSING AFFORDABLE HOUSING ISSUE <sup>1</sup>
Create a competitive advantage over the many other world-class ski resorts that are struggling with the same issue.	4.92	100	High
Enhance visitor satisfaction and increase return visitation by ensuring a more content and committed personnel.	4.92	100	High
Develop trust and enhance relationships in the community.	4.67	100	High
Strengthen a company's brand image and reputation.	4.58	92	High
Ensure greater long-term performance of the company.	4.67	92	High
Better evaluate and monitor their business strategies in response to employee housing demand.	4.08	83	High
Directly reduce employee turnover costs.	4.08	83	High
Indirectly "Generate cash, support growth and drive shareholder value."	4.08	83	High
Develop trust and enhance relationships with the 2010 Olympic Committee.	3.92	67	Medium
Identify new business opportunities that generate additional revenue.	3.92	67	Medium
Have a greater voice in affordable housing decisions in Whistler.	3.83	67	Medium
Attract a less transient type of employees applicants.	3.67	58	Low
Expand the firm's shareholder investment potential by highlighting socially responsible activities (e.g. being included in Socially Responsible Investment Funds).	3.33	42	Low

<sup>1</sup> **High** = Mean Rating Score of at least 4 and 80% or more of respondents that somewhat agree or strongly agree; **Medium** = Mean Rating Score of at least 3.8 and 60% or more of respondents that somewhat agree or strongly agree; **Low** = Mean Rating Score below 3.8 and less than 60% of respondents that somewhat agree or strongly agree.

As Table 13 suggests, interview respondents perceived there was a low likelihood that Intrawest would expand its shareholder investment potential by highlighting socially responsible activities in their annual financial report. Some respondents stated this was the case because shareholders were not even aware there was a housing problem in Whistler. As one WB respondents suggested, *“Intrawest shareholders are more concerned with how fast their shares will rise in value rather than what is happening on the ground to resolve social issues.”* There was also a perceived low likelihood (average rating score of 3.33/5) that WB would attract a less transient type of employee applicant by mitigating the housing issue. About 58% of respondents felt that many mountain resort jobs are, by nature, transient, requiring a temporary seasonal workforce.

However, the findings in Table 13 also show that there is a perceived medium-to-high probability that, by helping to mitigate the affordable housing problems in Whistler, Intrawest will create business value in many other ways. Based on further respondent discussion of the rating they provided in the previous table, Table 14 below summarizes exactly how respondents felt how Intrawest could create business value by actively addressing affordable housing issues.

**Table 14: Summary of benefits respondents believed Intrawest could achieve by actively addressing affordable housing issues**

<b>BENEFIT</b>	<b>HOW BENEFIT CAN CREATE OR CONSERVE CORPORATE VALUE</b>
Competitive Advantage	Enhance Employee Incentive / Retention
Shareholder Value	Linkages between Affordable Housing – Employee Commitment – Guest Experience – Shareholder Profit
Human / Intellectual Capital	Enhance trust via relationships with the community, VANOC and Olympic Legacy Committee
Brand Equity	Strengthen brand image/reputation as an affordable place for tourism employees to live and work, as well as a 'sustainable destination' for the 2010 'Green' Olympic and Paralympic Games
Sustainable Business	Provide affordable housing for employees to help ensure optimal long-term performance of the corporation
Adaptability	Evaluate and monitor employee shortages and other risks and opportunities more effectively
Cost Efficiencies	Reduce employee turnover costs

There are two diverging perspectives surrounding the actual degree of realization of these benefits. First, because of 1) the affordable housing they have built, 2) WB's participation on the WHA Board, and 3) WB's involvement in the CSP process, all WB / Intrawest respondents believed the corporation was achieving some of these benefits (mainly human / intellectual capital and competitive advantage) and creating corporate value to some extent. That is, they believed the corporation had been addressing affordable housing issues to a level where they are realizing some of these benefits 'to some degree.' Respondents did not identify how or if the corporation measured this extent. Nonetheless, 100% of WB / Intrawest respondents also recognized that the corporation could be doing some things better to improve its response to employee housing challenges. No mention was made in terms of whether they believed the



corporation could improve its record of addressing affordable housing for the community of Whistler in general (as opposed to simply its own employees).

WB / Intrawest respondents' belief that the corporation had been addressing affordable housing issues to a level where they are realizing these benefits somewhat is despite the previously mentioned finding that nine out of ten respondents not affiliated with WB or Intrawest believed that the corporation has been reluctant to provide adequate affordable housing solutions. Hence, the second perspective surrounding these benefits is from these latter respondents who were uncertain as to the extent the corporation was achieving these benefits as the result of its affordable housing initiatives. This was mainly because, as one Whistler community respondent stated, they were "*not familiar with how the corporation measures such things.*" However, two of the respondents not affiliated with WB or Intrawest speculated that Intrawest was not likely achieving these benefits to the fullest extent due to their limited action on addressing affordable housing issues. As such, there was considerable opportunity for Intrawest to benefit significantly by taking action to address affordable housing in Whistler.

#### **4.4.5 Municipal Government Impediments and Support for Corporate Affordable Housing Strategies**

All interview respondents articulated a need for a heightened degree of municipal encouragement for corporate involvement in relieving the housing dilemma. The Comprehensive Sustainability Plan (CSP) process represents a big step towards creating greater communication between stakeholders regarding the housing issues. However, the Resort Municipality of Whistler (RMOW) and the Whistler Housing Authority (WHA) respondents recognized a need for businesses to play even stronger roles in resolving the

affordable housing challenges. The increasing demand and urgency for affordable housing has compelled the RMOW and WHA to identify which procedures impede / obstruct socially responsible initiatives, as well as those that encourage such actions. These municipal procedures are part of the assessment within the research framework in this study (see Chapter Two). The following paragraphs outline the findings associated with this theme that were obtained through the interviews.

### **Impeding RMOW Planning Policies**

When questioned about what municipal policies exist that may impede or obstruct corporate development of affordable housing, respondents from all stakeholder groups cited recurring challenges. The following points suggest that the RMOW and WHA may have some leeway for improving the planning process and creating more opportunities for developers like Intrawest to come forward with affordable housing plans.

- *All respondents stated that the development approval process is too slow and expensive.* When developers are working at a discounted profit margin, which affordable housing projects necessitate, a slow, hence costly, approval process can represent a significant barrier to attracting investors to help finance such projects.
- *About 92% of respondents felt that there was a lack of profitable opportunities associated with affordable housing ventures.* These limitations were partially linked with the previous point. These and other constraints mean fewer developers will bother coming forward with such proposals. Part of the challenge with this is that respondents did not consider the long-term and/or indirect profit opportunities that developing affordable housing might create (see Table 14 in previous section). Simply focusing on short-term gains limits the potential for other opportunities.

- *About 42% of respondents acknowledged that RMOW has no standard, transparent negotiation process for coming up with affordable housing options.* Where one developer who chooses to build affordable housing in association with a market development will have to build a specific number of units of a certain size at a specific density based on a specific set of design criteria, another developer will be expected to provide something entirely different. This non-standardized negotiation process results in developers often choosing to pay the development service charge levy (and pass on the costs to the final consumer) instead of building affordable housing.
- *All respondents acknowledged that the RMOW policy limiting the number of bed units to be built in Whistler means the municipality cannot use market development as an incentive to get developers to build affordable housing.* This is particularly an issue as current build-out limits are expected to occur sometime in 2005 or 2006. Without the ability for developers to link affordable housing developments with market developments, thereby optimizing profitability, there is little incentive to come forward with affordable housing plans. However, all respondents stated that in building affordable housing, it is still possible for developers to make a “*significant profit, but one that may be less than the market rate of return.*”
- *About 78% of respondents suggested the current price cap of \$155/sq ft for affordable housing units is not realistic given today’s development costs.*
- *Approximately 78% of respondents suggested that DCCs (Development Cost Charges) and other development fees on affordable housing developments are unnecessary and act as a disincentive to corporations like Intrawest to take action in a socially responsible manner.* However, it was also noted that under the Resort Municipality of Whistler Act, RMOW planners were given the ability to impose and collect "development cost charges" for a broader range of purposes than is done in other municipalities. Normally, the development cost charges imposed on people seeking building and

subdivision approvals are used only to pay for the construction of road, sewer, water and drainage infrastructures and the acquisition and development of parkland. However, Whistler can require a developer to pay a development cost charge to cover the costs of providing affordable housing for resort staff. These respondents felt DCCs were unnecessary on affordable housing developments since the developer is already helping the community.

- *Two respondents suggested that the municipality continues to be deficient in social planning initiatives.* This lack of a social focus in development has resulted in reactive policies, such as the Housing Works and Service Charge Bylaw that is designed to mitigate the consequence of existing housing problems. In 1996, the municipality implemented a housing works and service charge on all new commercial, industrial and tourism development. This charge has helped to finance the WHA. However, as the resort community nears its cap on non-residential development, respondents professed that the RMOW needs to take a more proactive approach and include a stronger social component to reduce the occurrences of housing issues in the first place. These respondents noted that the Comprehensive Sustainability Plan process is an important start to this proactive social planning.
- *Two respondents mentioned that a lack of communication between Whistler Housing Authority, Resort Municipality of Whistler, and developers has resulted in failed affordable housing project plans in the past.* A recurring example involved a developer who was proposing a mixed-use plan that included affordable housing in the Function Junction area of Whistler. The developer spent a significant amount of money on architectural design while working with the WHA to develop a plan for employee housing. When the plan was given to the RMOW for approval, the council overturned it citing that the location that was zoned mainly for industrial use was not suitable for housing. Clearly, such a lack of communication

presents a barrier to developers in attempting to provide affordable housing.

- *One WB respondent suggested the RMOW's existing employee housing use zoning means companies providing housing for employees cannot rent such lodging to visitors if the unit is empty.* Though it is understood this policy is in place to ensure suites zoned for employee housing are not used solely for visitor accommodation, the respondent noted that this was a significant problem for some companies. For instance, WB's first-year employee housing program typically has extremely high vacancy rates (typically around 75% vacancy) during the spring, summer, and fall seasons. Under current RMOW policy, WB must subsidize the existence of this housing as it stands almost empty during non-peak business periods. The suggestion was to allow companies to rent a percentage of housing units to visitors during non-peak periods so these companies might recover some of their costs.

#### **Progressive RMOW Planning Policies**

All respondents suggested that the RMOW and WHA were using progressive policies to enable the private sector to provide affordable housing. They cited the following activities in this regard:

- *Whistler's primary source of funding for the municipal development of resident-restricted housing is the Housing Works and Service Charge (Interviews, 2004).* When developers build on property for commercial use, they are required to either build employee housing (based on factors such as density of development, type of development) or pay an employee service charge to the Whistler Housing Authority, who deposit the money into the Housing Fund. Despite the Bylaw being reactive in nature, as of 2003, the WHA had leveraged \$6.5 million in the Housing Fund to build 144 units (331 resident-restricted beds) via the implementation of the service charge (Personal Communication, Marla Zucht, Whistler Housing Authority,

Resort Municipality of Whistler, 2005). As previously mentioned, respondents were concerned that the effectiveness of this policy might be significantly reduced as the resort community nears its cap on non-residential development.

- *The RMOW Planning Department can use “density bonusing” to allow zoning requirements to vary in new property developments in exchange for the provision of certain amenities or employee housing that benefits the community (Interviews, 2004).* Typically, developers would be allowed to build more floor area – from which they derive additional income upon selling the space. This option would be presented in return for the provision of the employee housing. For the developer the bonus system is voluntary and is an incentive rather than a compulsory requirement. Through this policy, the community of Whistler can secure critical resident-restricted housing stock without spending tax dollars or imposing fees. However, at the time of this research (2005) there had been no affordable housing developed under this “density bonusing” planning policy (Personal Communication, Bill Brown, Planning Department, Resort Municipality of Whistler, 2005).
- *The WHA manages the application and allocation of 3,984 resident-restricted beds to Whistler employees (Whistler Housing Authority, 2003c).* To qualify for living in this type of housing, applicants must currently work or reside in Whistler at the time the housing is obtained. For Whistler businesses, these bed units have helped support employees who otherwise could not afford to live and work in the resort. Approximately 92% (3,653 beds) of the resident-restricted housing has been created privately through part of commercial development negotiations with the RMOW (Personal Communication, Marla Zucht, Whistler Housing Authority, Resort Municipality of Whistler, 2005). As such, respondents argued that a positive relationship exists to some degree between a few developers and community stakeholders in terms of housing. However, respondents not

affiliated with WB or IntraWest also felt this relationship needed to be enhanced through greater communication of housing interests, leveraging of corporate expertise and resources, innovative financing options, and a larger set of progressive planning strategies.

- *The RMOW uses deed restrictions and resale price caps to control the affordability of resident-restricted housing.* Deed restrictions either expire after a period of time (i.e. 99-year lease) or are perpetual. Resale caps are based on the rate of change of the Vancouver house price index. This index is considered to be a better indicator of “true” market value than Whistler real estate prices.
- *The CSP indicates that having the capacity to house an adequate employee workforce in Whistler is required in order to ensure a “vibrant community” (Resort Municipality of Whistler, 2004a).* It is this vision of maintaining a sustainable community that will guide all future development decisions to ensure there is a sufficient supply of affordable housing in Whistler. About 92% of respondents perceived this vision and CSP process as vital to ensuring an adequate future supply of affordable housing in Whistler and assisting in encouraging partnerships to develop this supply.
- *The RMOW encourages the inclusion of price-controlled resident-restricted rental suites in all new single-family home developments and zoning in Whistler.* Although this has the potential to reduce the leakage of rental suites, it has not been a particularly effective policy as most new homes that contain these suites are not available to renters (WHA and RMOW respondents, 2004). Often, these suites are converted to storage or media rooms because owners are of sufficient wealth that they do not have to lease the units for extra income.
- *The RMOW and WHA have always encouraged strong communication between stakeholders regarding housing issues in Whistler.* Processes such as WHA Board meetings, the community CSP process, development proposal negotiations, and informal community speaker events and workshops, have

been effective in engaging WB in addressing the affordable housing issues. This communication had led to a greater understanding of WB's employee housing capabilities and interests and the general community's housing problems. It has also led to proposals for leveraging WB's real estate and development knowledge to create innovative approaches for addressing housing challenges.

This section focused on how the RMOW and WHA instil procedures that impede or obstruct the provision of affordable housing as well as those which encourage such socially responsible housing initiatives. This is important because, as previously mentioned, affordable housing problems are community challenges and, as such, each stakeholder of the community has a responsibility to actively address these challenges. Though interviews respondents acknowledge there is a need for a heightened degree of municipal encouragement for corporate involvement in relieving the housing dilemma, RMOW and WHA respondents recognized an equal need for businesses like WB to come forward with development proposals (Interviews, 2004). Relationships exist, but a partnership needs to be formed with both parties sharing responsibility for mitigating affordable housing problems.

#### **4.4.6 Affordable Housing Indicators and Reporting Practices**

##### **Internal Evaluation**

Using the Natural Step Framework as a benchmarking tool for guiding its sustainability initiatives Intrawest is able to measure the usefulness of its affordable housing practices in Whistler. However, there was never any mention of using this framework in any manner to address and attempt to resolve affordable housing issues. In fact, there was uncertainty among interview respondents as to the extent to which the

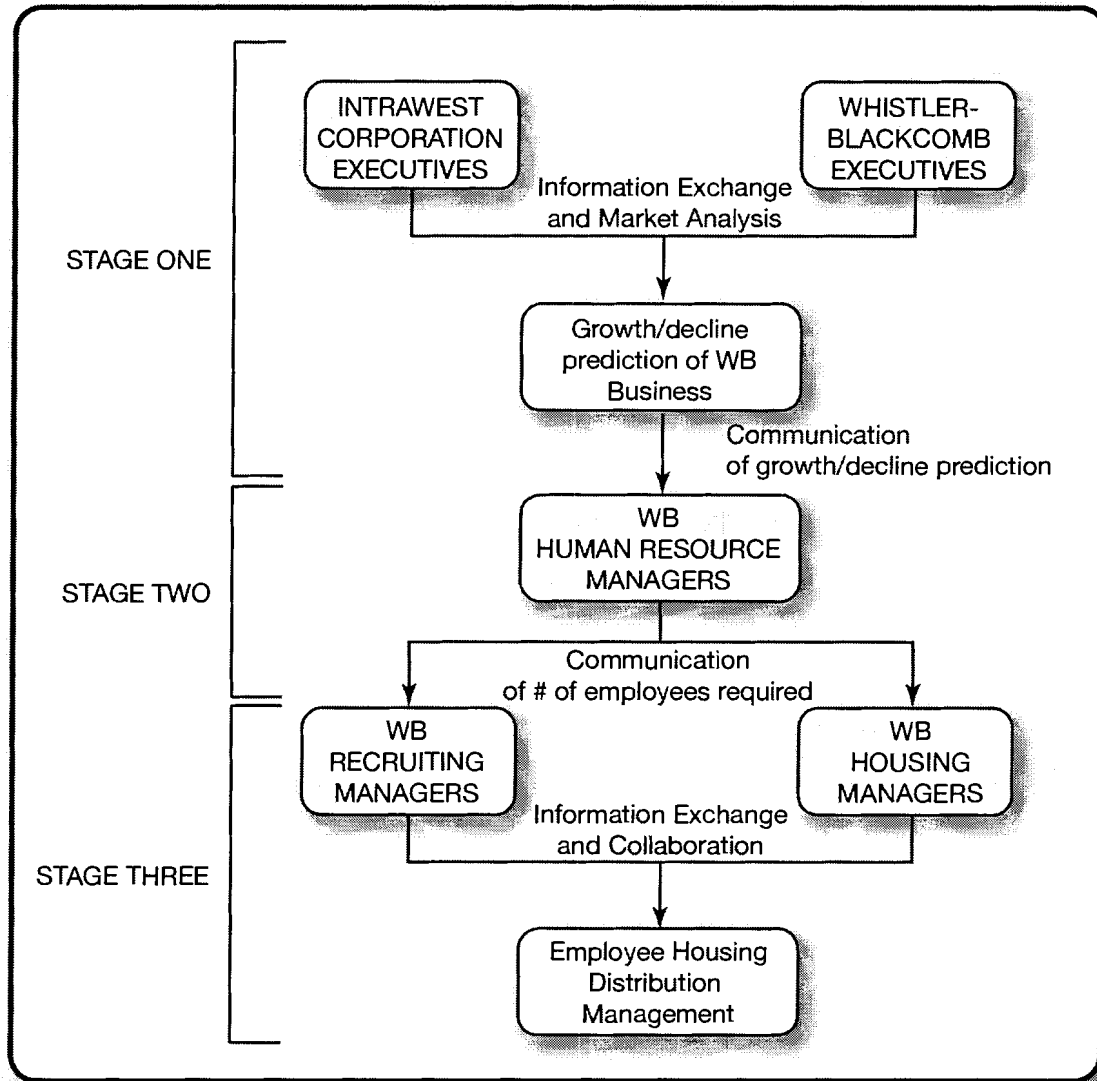


corporation is monitoring and evaluating its employee housing needs and housing support mechanisms. One WB respondent mentioned that neither Intrawest nor WB is tracking the efficacy of its employee housing programs and relating that back to the corporation's bottom line. An Intrawest respondent stated that the corporation *"use[s] Whistler as a lessons learned... as to what to avoid and the importance of having people housed in the community."* Two other WB respondents confirmed that nothing is being done to measure how employee housing impacts Intrawest's bottom line, but they *"do employee opinion surveys for those in the rental housing... to the extent that existing rental housing is meeting their needs and ask for comments."* In addition, those respondents noted that WB is *"keeping a database on what housing products people are looking for and monitoring how they feel about the [existing] housing."* It was suggested by one of the respondents that although the surveys were done, they have never been entered into an electronic database. There was no knowledge amongst respondents concerning how the surveys were specifically used. Apparently, in tandem with the problem that the data has not been electronically stored, the survey questionnaire is not standardized. This prohibits any capability for easy analysis. Furthermore, one WB respondent declared *"the link [between housing and the impact on the bottom line] is there, but I haven't been able to demonstrate it with numbers."*

WB respondents indicated that Intrawest uses its employee housing data primarily in its human resource management system. In this system housing distribution is closely aligned with the recruitment of new seasonal employees. Figure 3 illustrates this process. In the first stage of this housing needs assessment process, Intrawest and WB executive groups work together to predict growth or decline of visitations in Whistler based on

market forecasts. This information is then communicated to WB managers who estimate the number of employees required for the upcoming winter season based on the predicted growth estimates. Based on their estimates, WB's recruiting team prepares for the selection of employees at a recruitment fair in the fall. The company's employee housing managers then allocate housing opportunities based on the number of employees hired. Over the last four years all first-year employees have been given the option to live in WB residences.

**Figure 3: WB Seasonal Employee Housing Needs Assessment Process**



Source: Illustrated by Sean Moore, 2005 based on interview data

### External Reporting

IntraWest's employee housing performance and the link to the bottom line is not reported in its annual business report. According to interview respondents, WB has provided the RMOW and WHA with information regarding employee housing needs through the annual employer housing assessment survey. It is generally accepted that the

WHA is the main source of monitoring Whistler's affordable housing situation. WHA's annual housing assessment survey results are accessible online <[www.whistlerhousing.ca/references.asp](http://www.whistlerhousing.ca/references.asp)>.

#### **4.5 Summary**

Through the use of key informant interviews and secondary data sources, this case study examined Whistler's current issues in affordable housing; the economic and social impacts of limited affordable housing; the roles of Intrawest in addressing affordable housing issues; the potential benefits to Intrawest in actively addressing affordable housing; municipal government impediments and provisions for encouraging corporate involvement in the creation of affordable housing strategies; and lastly, Intrawest's affordable housing indicators and reporting practices.

Table 15 uses the Assessment Framework developed in Chapter Two to summarize the extent to which Intrawest has shaped socially responsible management policies and practices as well as worked with key community stakeholders to address affordable housing issues.

**Table 15: Assessment Framework – Performance of Intrawest Using CSR Policies to Address Affordable Housing Issues in Whistler**

<b>OBJECTIVE</b>	
<p>Apply the fundamentals of CSR and stakeholder engagement to examine the extent to which resort corporations are shaping socially responsible management policies and practices to address affordable housing issues.</p>	
<b>THEMES</b>	<b>KEY FINDINGS</b>
<p>What are current trends in affordable housing issues in mountain resort communities, and how do resort corporations contribute to these trends?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The increasing displacement of Whistler residents to Pemberton and Squamish is due to escalating housing and rental prices, leakage of rental units, and the increasing housing-income disparity.</li> <li>• The demographic profile of residents unable to afford housing is expanding to include seniors, as well as all resident socio-economic groups except for the extremely affluent.</li> <li>• Intrawest is contributing to the problem mainly because it is the largest employer in Whistler without adequate housing for its employees. Intrawest also creates a high demand for market housing and land in Whistler through its business activities.</li> <li>• Intrawest is addressing these issues to some extent.</li> </ul>
<p>What are the social and economic impacts of a deficiency of affordable housing in mountain resort communities?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic impacts include uncommitted workforce, loss of competitive advantage of affordable housing, staff turnover, staff shortages, and diminished brand image/reputation.</li> <li>• Social impacts include deterioration of a diverse community, down-valley syndrome, loss of volunteers.</li> <li>• Local issues like affordable housing can have regional and global impacts, which, in turn, affect local conditions (chain of connectivity between down-valley syndrome, CO2 emissions, climate change, increased temperatures, and finally the melting of mountain glaciers that Intrawest depends on for much of their revenue).</li> <li>• Intrawest is contributing to all these impacts.</li> </ul>
<p>Who are the critical stakeholders that are needed to address the deficiencies of affordable housing?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intrawest indirectly and directly reduces the supply of affordable housing, is part of the community, and has the potential to help increase the supply of affordable housing.</li> <li>• Thus, Intrawest is a key stakeholder in addressing affordable housing issues within the community.</li> <li>• Other stakeholders of Intrawest’s business strategies should include RMOW, WHA, Province of BC, other businesses, and residents.</li> </ul>

<p>What are the demands and interventions on resort corporations regarding affordable housing?</p> <p>What will be the demands and interventions on resort corporations regarding affordable housing in the future?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are several RMOW and WHA initiatives to encourage corporate involvement in developing affordable housing.</li> <li>• Stakeholder perceptions indicate Intrawest has a strong corporate social responsibility to address affordable housing issues in Whistler.</li> <li>• Corporate-community partnerships will become increasingly important to effectively address affordable housing issues.</li> </ul>
<p>Why should resort corporations be involved in determining solutions to affordable housing issues?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are a significant number of corporate benefits Intrawest might achieve by developing partnerships with stakeholders and addressing affordable housing issues including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Competitive Advantage;</li> <li>○ Shareholder value;</li> <li>○ Human / Intellectual Capital;</li> <li>○ Brand Equity;</li> <li>○ Sustainable Business;</li> <li>○ Adaptability; and</li> <li>○ Cost Efficiencies.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Stakeholder perceptions indicate there is a strong corporate social responsibility to actively address affordable housing issues in Whistler (Intrawest is a significant stakeholder in the housing issue, it contributes considerably to the problem, and it has the potential to mitigate much of the issues).</li> </ul>
<p>How can resort corporations best use CSR principles to guide it in responding to challenges of affordable housing?</p> <p>What corporate CSR policies or practices exist to promote the provision of affordable housing?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intrawest has developed housing to meet 30% of its WB employee base. Most of this is to cover first-year seasonal staff.</li> <li>• WB executives have participated on WHA Board and in the community CSP planning process.</li> <li>• WB executives have maintained a good relationship with the WHA and RMOW.</li> <li>• There is still a hesitation in Intrawest attitudes in terms of intervention in the Whistler housing market to directly address affordable housing issues.</li> <li>• WB/Intrawest respondents felt the corporation is achieving some of these benefits to some degree (though, this has not been formally measured).</li> <li>• Intrawest needs to incorporate CSR into its business strategies and engage community stakeholders in decisions that have the potential to affect the affordability of housing in Whistler.</li> <li>• Intrawest needs to do more than participate in community dialogue surrounding affordable housing policies, but also can do more to initiate actions to mitigate housing problems for both its own employees as well as the community in general.</li> </ul>

<p>How do communities best encourage resort corporations to act in a socially responsible manner to address affordable housing issues?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● There are several RMOW and WHA initiatives to encourage corporate affordable housing development. The effectiveness of these initiatives has not been formally measured.</li> <li>● There are also several RMOW and WHA planning procedures that impede/obstruct corporate initiation of affordable housing developments.</li> <li>● As such, there is room to improve the planning process and to create more opportunities for developers like Intrawest to act in a socially responsible manner and come forward with affordable housing plans.</li> <li>● Corporate-community communication on affordable housing issues has been good, but there is considerable room for improvement of relationships.</li> </ul>
<p>To what extent do resort corporations measure, monitor, and report the effectiveness of CSR in terms of affordable housing policies and practices, and how do those measures impact their bottom line?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Intrawest's internal monitoring of affordable housing demand and supply is minimal, despite WB having adopted the Natural Step Framework which could help guide its business activities towards monitoring these types of issues.</li> <li>● Intrawest's most significant effort in monitoring is its WB Seasonal Employee Housing Needs Assessment Process.</li> <li>● Intrawest does not provide external reporting of its employee/affordable housing efforts.</li> </ul>

Recommendations associated with the findings of the study are discussed in

Chapter Five – Management Recommendations.

## **5 Management Recommendations**

This chapter offers management recommendations associated with the findings of the study. The suggestions are primarily directed towards opportunities for corporate social responsibility. Suggestions for increased RMOW and WHA incentives for developers to initiate and build affordable housing are also included.

### **5.1 Recommendations**

The following recommendations for enhancing greater corporate social responsibility related to affordable housing issues follow the research findings.

#### **5.1.1 Establish a Corporate Sustainability Culture**

Currently, Intrawest does not formally recognize the business case for adopting social responsibility as a corporate priority. Given the community drive towards greater sustainability, it may be prudent for the corporation to formally establish a socially responsible management approach to running all their WB operations in a sustainable manner as well. Helping to directly mitigate affordable housing issues would be a key element of the socially sustainable component.

As an important part of the overall 2010 Olympic strategy, WB will be encouraged to follow sustainability strategies put forward by VANOC. With this incentive, WB management will be in an opportune position to encourage Intrawest to develop a formal social responsibility culture. This could be demonstrated by:



- *Fostering a formal corporate ethos* that makes meaningful connections with the communities within which they operate and help ensure full stakeholder engagement in business decisions that may impact housing affordability.
- *Amending the corporation's mission, value statements, and codes of conduct* to reflect a more socially responsible and sustainable approach to doing business while still ensuring corporate value creation.
- *Investing in training* for employees and executives to demonstrate how to effectively incorporate social responsibility and sustainability principles into their own corporate decisions as well as to how to engage community stakeholders in business decisions that may impact them.
- *Developing an adaptive management approach* that enables the company to modify business strategies to meet changing social norms and values, thereby helping to ensure long-term corporate success.
- *Implementing affordable housing strategies* that are flexible enough to complement all the corporation's other resort management plans. An effective corporate housing strategy will not only lead to a more favourable corporate reputation and resort image, but will enhance the long-term performance and market-share of the corporation.
- *Executing an Annual Sustainability Report* showing corporate social performance, which includes affordable housing. This would allow the corporation to measure the extent to which it is realizing benefits as a result of acting directly to mitigate affordable housing challenges. As well, it would allow the corporation to determine the linkages between providing affordable housing and corporate value creation. It is equally important to community stakeholders that Intrawest is able to communicate the performance of its affordable housing practices and policies to stakeholders. This can help encourage working partnerships and collaborations in areas where improvements may be achieved.

### **5.1.2 Establish a Business Case for Supplying Affordable Housing**

From a business perspective, a key imperative is to demonstrate the relevance of affordable housing actions to Intrawest's bottom line. Intrawest requires clear evidence that providing affordable housing to its own employees and that of Whistler workers in general can generate significant business benefits. The case should:

1. Identify significant environmental and social impacts;
2. Identify key social issues related to affordable housing as perceived internally and externally to WB;
3. Establish sources of potential threat and opportunity that exist due to the community affordable housing issues;
4. Identify and prioritize proposed affordable housing mitigation actions;
5. Highlight affordable housing mitigation options and assess their corporate strategic implications; and
6. Prioritize and implement those affordable housing mitigation actions that offer quantifiable business benefits or links with key financial drivers of performance.

Through these steps, WB stakeholders can demonstrate to Intrawest how a socially responsible decision to help in the provision of affordable housing may lead to opportunities to create and conserve corporate value.

### **5.1.3 Develop a Diverse Group of Working Partnerships**

A key component of any successful affordable housing strategy involves developing partnerships with stakeholders. In this respect, Intrawest and WB can develop affiliations with other businesses, NGOs, and the RMOW to provide affordable housing opportunities. The partnership opportunities Intrawest and/or WB might focus on include:

- *Working with RMOW to allow limited rentals of vacant first-year employee*

*housing suites (managed by WB) to resort visitors and other businesses during the off-season to increase capacity utilization throughout the year.* This would help to alleviate financial pressures WB faces in maintaining and managing their employee housing units.

- *Working with WHA and other businesses to ensure vacant first-year employee housing suites (managed by WB) are filled during non-peak periods.* Since there is significant interest amongst small and medium-sized businesses to lease suites for employees, and as Whistler shifts increasingly towards a four-season resort model, there seems to be greater probability that the suites could become occupied year-round.
- *Developing socially responsible supply chain linkages with VANOC and RMOW.* As part of the 2010 Olympic development strategy, the “Whistler [Athletes] Village will provide an increased supply of critically needed staff housing” and the event will “provide a lasting legacy of affordable housing” (VANOC, 2004; Saunders and Drake, 2004). Intrawest should establish a formal CSR management plan to ensure their business strategies complement the social values of VANOC and the Olympic Legacy committee. By doing this, Intrawest would be well positioned to secure Olympic development contracts to help create affordable housing. By including a ‘legacy’ of affordable housing in Whistler as a key business mandate over the next few years, Intrawest would show VANOC, the Olympic Legacy committee, and the world that a) they are committed to their employees, b) they are socially responsible, and c) they are working to make the 2010 Olympic Games more sustainable.
- *Developing an affordable housing public-private partnership between the Whistler Housing Authority, Intrawest, and RMOW.* In this alliance, RMOW would contribute the land since it has, as part of the 2010 Legacy, a 300-acre land bank that is to be used for resident housing. Intrawest and the WHA could help design the Athletes Village that will be designed for 2,200 athletes that, when the Games are finished and after the Village is fully built

out, could accommodate an additional 1,200 employees. The partnership would also involve leveraging the expertise of both WB and the WHA to resolve the community's affordable housing issues. This approach is capable of simultaneously alleviating any economic challenges associated with developing affordable housing that may affect Intrawest's profitability, as well as enhancing the long-term sustainability of the corporation's WB operations. This three-way partnership could mitigate much of the future affordable housing demand in Whistler.

- *Generating creative new minimum-cost and innovative housing development opportunities.* This might include 1) working with local and national NGOs, housing co-operatives, and academic institutions to establish targeted housing types, and/or 2) developing potential alternative sources of funding by partnering with a range of governments, such as Resort Municipality of Whistler, Province of BC, BC Housing, and/or Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.
- *Offering a “rental reward” of free season lift passes to Whistler homeowners renting a suite to WB employees.* This could help reduce the ‘leakage’ of rental accommodations.

#### **5.1.4 Increased Government Incentives for Developers to Initiate and Build Affordable Housing.**

A partnership is characterized by mutual cooperation and responsibility. Such a working relationship between the Resort Municipality of Whistler, the Whistler Housing Authority, and Intrawest requires not only a commitment to increased social responsibility from the corporation, but also progressive municipal policies for supporting corporate involvement. While this exists to some extent, there are still many options the RMOW can pursue. Some ways the RMOW and other levels of government

might encourage Intrawest and other private sector partners to engage in affordable housing initiatives include:

- Offer tax credits for developers to develop infill lots for resident-restricted housing, as determined in the WHA's Comparative Evaluation of Potential Resident Housing Sites report;
- Lobby for the appropriate authorities to give property or income tax relief for businesses that provide housing benefits to their employees (Leonard, 2003);
- Remove all development / building permit costs for affordable housing construction (e.g. Development application fees, building permit fees) (Leonard, 2003);
- Expedite the review and permitting process for affordable housing projects (Leonard, 2003);
- Use the Whistler Housing Fund to provide municipal subsidization of construction and/or lot servicing costs (development cost-sharing);
- Allow more flexible pricing of resident-restricted ownership housing in order to encourage a greater diversity of housing types. A range of housing types is necessary because of the diversity of dwelling requirements of those on the WHA waiting list. Some people are looking for single-family housing, while others are looking for less expensive condominium options. At today's high construction costs, which are likely to increase with the demand for Olympic venue developments, the inflexible price of \$155/sq ft does not allow for much opportunity for developers to build much beyond the least expensive condominium;
- Encourage multi-party contributions towards the development of hostel-style short-term accommodation for seasonal employees;
- Create alternative ownership options (e.g. co-housing/leases to businesses);

- Encourage housing that can be added on to incrementally by owners after purchase. (e.g. unfinished suite space above a garage) to bring down initial costs (Leonard, 2003);
- Establish allowances for the subdivision of large lots, as long as some of the newly created properties are designated for affordable resident-restricted housing; and
- Establish a social planner position within RMOW to help ensure social issues, such as affordable housing, are addressed as well as to help encourage a more proactive approach to developing public-private partnerships for affordable housing.

Furthermore, the Resort Municipality of Whistler might also consider strengthening development regulations to complement any voluntary corporate initiatives. One way the Municipality might do this is by replacing the existing Employee Housing Service Charge Bylaw to require all new commercial and industrial developments to include affordable housing in the development plan. This may help ensure more affordable housing is actually created by the developer as opposed to simply charging a fixed fee that does not necessarily reflect the current costs of developing low-cost housing.

## **6 Conclusions**

This chapter presents the major conclusions that have been identified from the study, and provides recommendations for further research.

### **6.1 Summary of Conclusions**

This research established a framework to apply the fundamentals of CSR and stakeholder engagement to examine the extent to which resort corporations are shaping socially responsible management policies and practices as well as working with key community stakeholders to address affordable housing issues. A literature review, a case study and subsequent analysis of respondent perceptions and secondary data sources on this issue were undertaken to achieve this paper's purpose.

This research expanded on existing literature related to corporate social responsibility and the concepts of stakeholder engagement by applying it to a recurring tourism destination community issue. In the process of doing this it has provided useful data and practical proactive management recommendations for developing and/or enhancing corporate strategic planning initiatives and directive municipal policies to mitigate affordable housing issues.

This study illustrated how the changing community structure with its shift from a small mountain ski town to a four-season luxury lifestyle resort has generated associated high market real estate prices. The exorbitant housing prices have resulted in a displacement of residents to other towns as the supply of affordable housing is

diminishing. According to interview respondents, Intrawest has played a fundamental role in contributing to this alteration of community structure, increasing market housing rates, and exacerbating affordable housing problems. That is, similar to what Clifford (2002) suggested, there is a chain of connectivity between the business activities of the resort corporation (Intrawest), affordable housing issues, and the associated social and economic impacts for both the corporation and community. Intrawest starts this chain by:

- Contributing to the creation of a high demand for housing and land by consistently developing and expanding the resort, its international marketing efforts, and its growth of skier visits and their demands of an expanding array of products and services; and
- Having the largest employee base without supplying adequate affordable housing.

The first link in the chain results in the second link, which is a series of key affordable housing issues that include:

- Creating a threat of high-priced housing to the ongoing animated character of the resort community;
- Reducing the supply of market rental accommodation;
- Creating an increasing disparity between household income and the cost of housing; and
- Creating a growing concern for adequate housing for seniors and company retirees.

The final link in this chain of connectivity initially stemming from Intrawest's contributions via its business activities is the significant adverse socio-economic impacts on the community and resort corporation. The critical impacts include:



- Increasing uncommitted workforce;
- Escalating loss of competitive advantage associated with affordable housing for employees;
- Increasing staff turnover rates and costs;
- Threatening of staff shortages;
- Diminishing brand image/reputation;
- Deteriorating community diversity;
- Developing the down-valley syndrome; and
- Losing community and corporate volunteers.

Intrawest is an influential stakeholder in the Whistler community because it indirectly and directly reduces the supply of affordable housing through the chain of connectivity. As such, there is an expectation that the resort corporation should now move to the next step beyond its participation in community planning workshops and the WHA Board that help develop policies to address affordable housing, towards more direct mitigative actions. That is, it is perceived by Whistler stakeholders that Intrawest has a social responsibility, along with the rest of the community, to provide tangible affordable housing solutions to the community beyond helping the community make housing policies. In acting in a socially responsible manner by directly helping to mitigate affordable housing issues, Intrawest would have an opportunity to achieve considerable benefits, including:

- Maintaining a Competitive Advantage (i.e. Enhance employee incentive / retention)
- Enhancing Shareholder Value (i.e. linkages between affordable housing – employee commitment – guest experience – profit)

- Promoting Human / Intellectual Capital (i.e. Enhance trust via relationships with the community)
- Strengthening Brand Equity (i.e. Strengthen brand image/reputation as an affordable place for tourism employees to live and work)
- Promoting a Sustainable Business (i.e. Provide affordable housing for employees to help ensure optimal long-term performance of the corporation)
- Increasing Adaptability (i.e. Evaluate and monitor employee shortages and other risks and opportunities more effectively)
- Improving Cost Efficiencies (i.e. Reduce employee turnover costs)

There were two diverging findings surrounding these opportunities for Intrawest. First, WB executives had an understanding of these opportunities and the importance of being involved in addressing the problems associated with the inadequate supply of affordable housing in Whistler. As such, all WB / Intrawest respondents believed the firm had achieved some these benefits (mainly human / intellectual capital and competitive advantage) and had created corporate value to some extent because of its involvement in addressing affordable housing issues. Although respondents did not identify exactly to what extent Intrawest achieved these benefits, since they were not formally measured. This study determined that Intrawest's responses to affordable housing issues (both supportive responses as well as those that demonstrate less support) include:

- Developing 1,152 employee beds in Whistler, 894 of which are for first-year seasonal staff. This fulfills the housing needs of about 30% of its 3,800 WB employees.
- Participating WB employees on the Whistler Housing Authority Board to ensure the needs and interests of WB are understood and to comprehend the

needs and interests of the RMOW and WHA. WB executives have also participated in the Whistler Comprehensive Sustainability Planning process, of which affordable housing is an important component. As such, they have developed relationships with the community to discuss the issues and help develop community-wide mitigation strategies.

- Tracking the number of staff beds required to meet new first-year seasonal employee recruitments.
- Developing internal surveys to measure the satisfaction of first-year seasonal employee housing.
- Presenting a corporate reluctance to intervene in the existing housing market to address the affordable housing issues. Interview perspectives indicate there is a strong reliance by Intrawest on leaving the Resort Municipality of Whistler and the Whistler Housing Authority to resolve affordable housing issues.

When examining the percentages of employees offered affordable housing exclusively, Intrawest has addressed its own employee housing needs in Whistler to a similar extent that other resort corporations, such as Vail Resorts Inc., have done in some destinations.

The second finding was that a significant number of respondents not affiliated with WB or Intrawest believed that the corporation has been reluctant to provide more affordable housing solutions. These respondents were uncertain as to the extent that the corporation was already achieving these benefits as the result of its existing involvement in addressing affordable housing. This was simply because the corporation did not measure (and/or make public) the extent of achieving such benefits. As such, respondents felt there was considerable opportunity for Intrawest to benefit and enhance corporate

value creation by taking greater action to proactively resolve affordable housing in Whistler.

Not only do stakeholders believe Intrawest shares a responsibility to the community of Whistler to help develop socially responsible management policies and practices that actively address affordable housing issues, but it is understood that it also must balance this with its responsibilities to shareholders to earn a substantial return on investment. Actions that might work in this regard include:

- *Developing an adequate supply of affordable housing to meet the needs of at least 75% of WB's employees.* This would ensure Intrawest is meeting the CSP goal of keeping 75% of Whistler's workforce housed in town as opposed to down-valley in Squamish and/or Pemberton. Doing so will help ensure the community is moving towards sustainability, while ensuring a more committed workforce, enhance customer service, and provide a greater chance of long-term shareholder profit.
- *Establishing partnerships* with Resort Municipality of Whistler, Whistler Housing Authority, and other businesses to mitigate affordable housing issues by leveraging financial and human capital. This can help ensure greater access to funding as well as making certain that the costs and requirements of developing affordable housing are not concentrated among one stakeholder group.
- *Developing a sustainable management framework (perhaps using the Natural Step Framework that WB adopted as a guide) to monitor WB's affordable housing demand and supply as well as measure, evaluate, monitor, and report the performance of its housing initiatives.* WB's current tracking of the number of units required to meet first-year employee recruitments is a start. However, Intrawest is best suited to move beyond this to measuring the performance (effectiveness) of its CSR initiatives, including its

affordable housing policies and practices. Essentially, this will allow Intrawest to 1) communicate the performance of its affordable housing efforts and how it creates and/or conserves corporate value, 2) provide shareholders with information on linkages between affordable housing and the corporation's financial bottom line, and 3) enhance transparency and accountability to the community of Whistler of its business activities that affect the affordability of housing.

- *Using housing as a model to develop a corporate social responsibility culture.*

This will help ensure all business strategies and actions continue to support the corporation while making certain it engages stakeholders throughout those decisions that may impact the community's housing affordability.

Ultimately, this study uses all the above critical conclusions to attempt to answer to the main research objective: to apply the fundamentals of CSR and stakeholder engagement to examine to what extent resort corporations are shaping socially responsible management policies and practices to address affordable housing issues. Overall, Intrawest has been helping the community shape policies to address affordable housing issues. The corporation does this because it realizes it is part of the community and, as such, must act as a responsible community member. However, it is perceived by community stakeholders that it has left direct actions (practices) to resolve the affordable housing issues to the RMOW and WHA. That is, Intrawest has been reluctant to take the initiative to come forward with any plans to directly resolve affordable housing issues in Whistler. Potential recommendations that may help resolve this gap in implementation are outlined above and in Chapter Five – Management Recommendations.

## 6.2 Recommendations for Further Research

This study points to several areas where additional research should be conducted. First, the research performed here could be expanded to include a greater sample size of interview respondents. This may allow for a greater quantitative analysis of the extent to which the community feel affordable housing in Whistler is an urgent issue. The study may also benefit from gaining the perspectives of Intrawest shareholders and visitors regarding the importance of using affordable housing activities as a means of maintaining a vibrant community and ensuring Whistler's employees live in the resort. Based on these perspectives, three further questions could be asked:

- To what extent does affordable housing lead to higher tourism service levels (i.e. do visitors notice a difference in service provided between employees living in town versus those commuting)?
- How do employees feel their service performance might improve if more affordable housing was available?
- To what extent do shareholders feel a need for Intrawest to integrate CSR into its management strategies and to further address affordable housing for its employees?

Second, this research would benefit from including an analysis of CSR activities in other resort communities. Though this research did use examples and secondary data sources regarding the affordable housing issues and solutions in other resort communities, a more in-depth comparison of the effectiveness of different proactive affordable housing strategies established by other resort corporations and/or municipal/regional governments would be useful. Two key questions in this respect might be:

- What are the best practices in terms of resort corporations using a CSR framework to address affordable housing problems in the destinations in which they operate?
- Of these best practices, what are the most effective proactive measures and what are the most effective reactive measures?

Third, the case study community studied in this research could be revisited on a periodic basis to determine the longitudinal effect of any CSR principles and affordable housing policies and practices that may be implemented. As part of this long-term investigation, other questions to be answered would be:

- To what extent does the availability of affordable housing in the resort impact shareholder profitability (i.e. quantitative economic analysis, multi-attribute trade-off analysis)?
- How might the movement of Intrawest's corporate real estate activities to the Leisura Developments partnership affect Intrawest and WB's ability to be socially responsible in the context of addressing affordable housing challenges?
- How might the movement of Intrawest's corporate real estate activities to the Leisura Developments partnership affect the community of Whistler's stakeholder engagement surrounding the issue of affordable housing?

Fourth, this research has recommended that Intrawest incorporate a sustainable, socially responsible approach to managing its resorts. As such, it would be useful to work with Intrawest executives and stakeholders to develop a Corporate Sustainable Management/Analysis Plan (refer to Appendix C) that includes social performance indicators (see Assessment Framework Criteria in Chapter Two) within or accompanying the corporation's Annual Financial Report. This could be developed to systematically

monitor the performance of sustainability principles and measure the effectiveness of policies that are developed and implemented using the Natural Step Framework, which WB adopted. Specifically, in the context of this study, key questions to ask might be:

- How can The Natural Step framework guide WB in developing a system to monitor, evaluate, and report on corporate affordable housing strategies and actions?
- How could Intrawest use The Natural Step framework to guide it in developing a system to monitor, evaluate, and report on corporate affordable housing strategies and actions in its other destinations?



# Appendices

## Appendix A: Colorado Rural Resort Region Land-use Policies and Bylaws to Encourage Affordable Housing

POLICY / BYLAW	DESCRIPTION
Deed restrictions	Ensure the property is used as affordable housing in perpetuity. E.g. placing a maximum limit on the resale amount of the affordable housing unit.
Inclusionary zoning regulations	A policy that "either ties development approval to, or creates regulatory incentives for, the provision of low- and moderate-income housing as part of the proposed development." <sup>1</sup>
Land banking	Dedication of land to be used solely for the creation of affordable housing units. By placing property within a land bank, the property is removed from the speculative market and the resultant high prices.
Linkage programs	Require developers of non-residential uses to build housing, to pay a fee in lieu of construction into a housing fund, or to make equity contributions towards a low-income housing project.
Performance zoning	Developing according to performance standards established within zoning regulations. This allows for the automatic inclusion of affordable housing units into the initial planning stages of a large-scale development by requiring the affordable units to comprise a certain percentage of the overall development.
Regulatory reform	Methods of reducing the costs associated with the development of new affordable housing projects and the redevelopment of existing units to include affordable housing units. E.g. elimination of permit fees, development cost charges, inspection fees, and property service fees.
Secondary suite development incentives	"Permit conversion of single-family houses to include a secondary suite." <sup>2</sup>

Sources: Laing, 1998; <sup>1</sup>White, 1992: 17, as cited in Laing, 1998; <sup>2</sup>Carter and McAfee, 1990: 251, as cited in Laing, 1998.

## **Appendix B: Intrawest Corporation Success Formula**

Each gear of Intrawest's revenue clock produces increased guest visits, increased revenue per visit and higher real estate values at every turn. The design's elegance is that the gears work in sync, causing a compounding effect. The result: an animated resort destination that draws visitors from across North America and around the world.

- We start with a resort and enhance the experience.
- Then build an animated village so people stay longer.
- All this attracts more visitors who come more often, spend more money and bring their friends.
- More real estate is built and attractions are added, drawing yet more people.
- More people, more often, leads to the expansion of year-round facilities, maximizing use of shops, hotels, convention facilities and restaurants.
- As occupancy and room rates climb, so does demand for resort real estate, creating a surge in real estate sales.
- All this results in a total resort experience which brings year-round destination visitors, generating financial critical mass which...
- Leads to more resorts. Network synergy results in a compounding effect on the company's revenue streams and growth through time.

**Source: Intrawest, 2004**

## Appendix C: Corporate Accountability and Reporting Standards

STANDARD	CONTENT FOCUS
AccountAbility AA1000/AA1000S Framework	AA1000 is a tool to help companies integrate stakeholder engagement into business decision-making processes and improve organizational performance. The AA1000 framework is meant to help companies engage stakeholders effectively in the development of the indicators, targets, and reporting systems needed to ensure that transparency efforts become as effective as they are well-intentioned. Also includes a series of specialized modules, each of which consists of tools that users can employ to help them develop their accountability processes over time.
Asian-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Business Code of Conduct	Promotes open trade and economic cooperation among 21 member economies around the Pacific Rim. The Code is an aspirational standard that draws significantly on a variety of other internationally recognized codes and standards. Designed to supplement and support companies' existing codes of conduct. In addition to providing recommendations for specific "company action" on a range of issues, the Code addresses policy recommendations to APEC country governments.
Business Roundtable Principles of Corporate Governance	An association of chief executive officers from large U.S. corporations issued their Principles of Corporate Governance in 2002. The principles addresses issues such as: (1) functions of the board and management, including such topics as board relationship with management, selection of board candidates, and board evaluation; (2) structure and operations of the board, including board composition, committee structure, director compensation, and audit functions; and (3) relationship to stockholders and other constituencies, including employees, communities, and government.
Caux Round Table	Promotes principled business leadership and the belief that business has a crucial role in identifying and promoting sustainable and equitable solutions to key global issues affecting the physical, social and economic environments. "Principles for Business" include the social impact of company operations on the local community, a respect for rules and ethics, support for multilateral trade agreements that promote the "judicious liberation of trade," respect for the environment and "avoidance of illicit operation", including bribery, money laundering, and other corrupt practices.
Committee on Corporate Governance - Combined Code (Turnbull Report), U.K.	Consists of the Principles of Good Governance and Code of Best Practice, organized into guidelines that pertain to companies and guidelines that pertain to institutional shareholders. Company guidelines relate to: (1) directors; (2) directors' remuneration; (3) relations with shareholder; and (4) accountability and audit.
Corporate Governance Forum Principles, Japan	A Japanese Committee comprising corporate executives, institutional investors and academics specified a set of governance principles intended to engage entrepreneurs and boards of directors in the corporate governance debate and to

STANDARD	CONTENT FOCUS
	<p>provide standards against which they can judge themselves. The Principles follow a two-step path: Step A Principles are those that should be adopted immediately, and Step B Principles are those that are more extensive and require large-scale legal reform and therefore were targeted for adoption early in the 21st Century. Broadly, the Principles address: (1) accountability and disclosure, (2) directors and the board of directors, (3) corporate auditors and the board of corporate auditors and (4) shareholders' meetings.</p>
<p>Council of Institutional Investors (CII) Core Policies and Positions</p>	<p>An organization of large pension funds that believes all publicly traded companies would benefit from the adoption of written, disclosed corporate accountability procedures and policies. CII has developed general position statements, basic policies, and more fundamental core policies intended to help corporate boards address corporate governance in the following categories: (1) shareholder voting rights, (2) shareholder meeting rights, (3) board accountability to shareholders, (4) director and management compensation, (5) board shareholder accountability, (6) board size and service (7) board meetings and operations, and (8) compensation.</p>
<p>Global Reporting Initiative (GRI)</p>	<p>Established to develop globally applicable guidelines for reporting on the economic, environmental, and social performance, initially for corporations and eventually for any business, governmental, or non-governmental organization (NGO).</p>
<p>Global Sullivan Principles of Social Responsibility</p>	<p>Based on the Sullivan Principles written in 1977 by the Reverend Leon H. Sullivan as a code of conduct for companies operating in apartheid-era South Africa to aspire to. Created in 1997, the Global Sullivan Principles consist of eight (8) single-sentence value statements that address a range of human rights-related issues.</p>
<p>Keidanren Charter for Good Corporate Behavior</p>	<p>The 10-point charter states: "Corporations, in addition to being economic entities engaged in the pursuit of profit through fair competition, must be useful to society as a whole." Keidanren members agree to follow the spirit of the charter as "the criterion of their corporate behavior." Emphasizes roles and responsibilities of corporate executives in an attempt to prevent the recurrence of corporate misconduct.</p>
<p>National Association of Corporate Directors (NACD)</p>	<p>The NACD has published several guidelines on a wide range of corporate governance issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2001-2002 Director Compensation Survey</li> <li>• 2000 Blue Ribbon Commission Report on Audit Committees</li> <li>• 1993 Blue Ribbon Commission Report on Executive Compensation</li> <li>• 1994 Blue Ribbon Commission Report on Performance Evaluation of CEOs, Boards, and Directors</li> <li>• 1996 Blue Ribbon Commission Report on Director Professionalism</li> </ul> <p>The NACD has also conducted a wide range of surveys on</p>

STANDARD	CONTENT FOCUS
	corporate governance issues and published how-to guides and toolkits for corporate directors.
OECD Principles of Corporate Governance and Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises	First conceived by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 1961 with the core mission to encourage responsible business practices, strengthen relationships between governments and multinational enterprises (MNEs), and enhance contribution of MNEs to sustainable development.
Social Accountability 8000	Specifies requirements for social accountability to enable a company to develop, maintain, and enforce policies and procedures in order to manage those issues which it can control or influence; and demonstrate to interested parties that policies, procedures and practices are in conformity with the requirements of this standard. Covers standards and monitoring programs for child labor, forced labor, disciplinary practices, nondiscrimination, wages and benefits, working hours, health and safety, freedom of association and collective bargaining, and management systems.
United Nations Global Compact	The Global Compact is not a prescriptive set of standards, but rather a values-based platform with nine core principles that cover topics in human rights, labor and environment.

**Source: Business for Social Responsibility, 2002; 2003a; 2003c.**

## Appendix D: Canadian Socially Responsible Investments

SRI	CONTENT FOCUS
Ethical Growth Fund, established by Vancouver City Savings Credit Union	These 12 funds avoid investments in serious polluters, tobacco and weapons manufacturers, and utilities that are involved in the production of nuclear energy. The fund managers also strive to invest in companies that encourage progressive industrial relations and are committed to implementing environmentally conscious practices.
Solidarity Fund QFL	A development capital fund that calls upon the solidarity and savings of Quebecers to help create and maintain jobs in Québec by investing in small and medium-sized businesses. Also promotes the economic training of workers in order to enhance their contribution to Québec's economic development.
Summa Fund, managed by Investors Group Inc., Winnipeg	Managed with a set of ethical screens that prohibits investment in companies involved in the manufacture or distribution of alcohol, pornography, weapons systems, gaming, or tobacco, or are associated with repressive regimes, or that have failed to adopt and administer effective pollution controls or protection policies.
Fonds Desjardins Environnement, Quebec	Considers investments in Canadian companies that have implemented comprehensive environmental management programs and that have a good environmental compliance record.
Acuity Funds Inc., manager of the Clean Environment family, launched two new SRI funds in November 2000 (Acuity Social Values Canadian Equity Fund and Acuity Social Values Global Equity Fund)	Screen for workplace, environmental and human rights practices as well as prohibiting investment in companies involved in nuclear power, alcohol, weapons, and tobacco.
Sustainable Development Equity Fund and Sustainable Development Bond Fund, managed by Jones Heward	Focuses on large Canadian companies that have adopted progressive environmental management systems.
Sentry Select Alternative Energy Fund	Invests in alternative energy stocks, including those companies involved with fuel cells, solar power, wind power, and hydroelectric power.

SRI	CONTENT FOCUS
Great West Life Investment Management has offered a segregated Canadian equity fund as of October 2000	Uses positive screens to invest in companies that reflect environmental awareness, progressive labour policies, and community involvement. The fund avoids companies involved in alcohol, tobacco, critical weapons systems, gaming products, and pornography.
Meritas Financial launched five SRI funds in April 2001	All of its funds screen for things such as community empowerment and corporate giving, diversity in the workplace, participatory decision-making and collective bargaining rights, transparent environmental reporting, responsible resource management practices, etc. The Meritas funds have also pledged to be active shareholders and to invest up to 2% of assets in community investments.

Source: Sexty, 1995; Zadek, 2000; Michael Jantzi Research Associates Inc, 2005

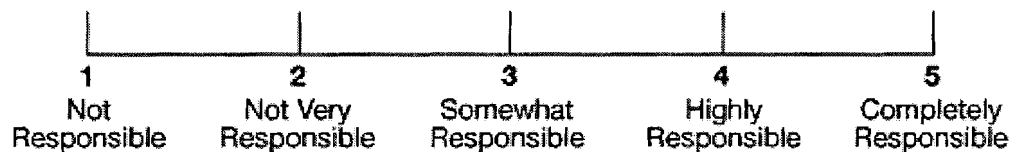
## Appendix E: Interview Survey

This survey asks questions following specific themes surrounding corporate involvement in providing affordable housing in tourism resort communities.

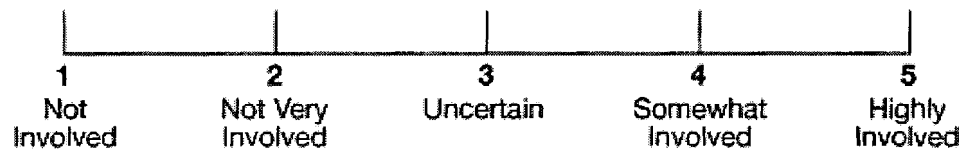
### Theme One: Current Trends in Affordable Housing in Whistler

1. What are the current trends in affordable housing policy in Whistler and how does Intrawest Corporation and its subsidiaries contribute to these trends?
2. How is "affordable housing" defined in the Whistler context (e.g. 30% of gross income)?
3. Please rate the extent that Intrawest causes the affordable housing challenges, and shapes subsequent policies and practices to resolve the issue in Whistler?

A. Causes affordable housing challenges:

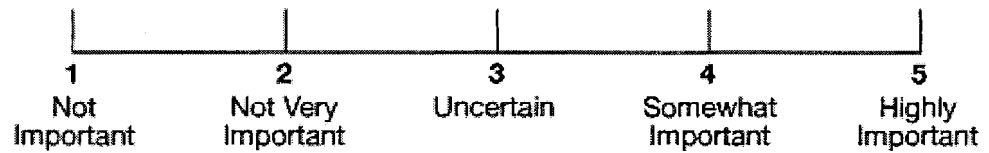


B. Involved in shaping policies/practices to resolve the issue:

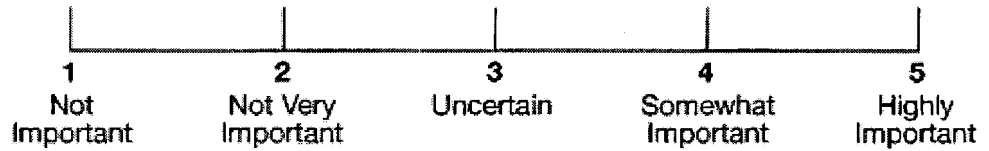


4. A. Please rate how important affordable housing for Whistler employees (in general) is with respect to the success of Intrawest:





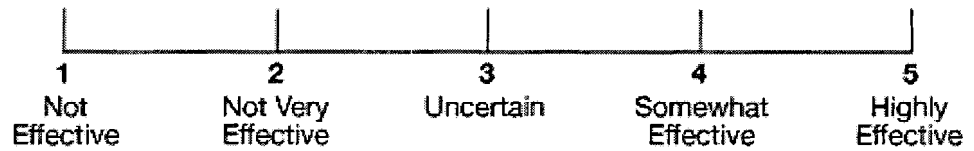
B. Please rate how important affordable housing for Intrawest employees is with respect to the success of Intrawest:



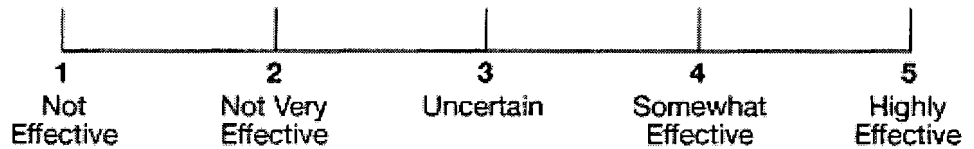
5. What are the present and foreseeable impacts to the Whistler community, and ultimately Intrawest, as a result of the current deficiency of affordable housing?

**Theme Two: The Application of Corporate Affordable Housing Strategies in Whistler**

6. Is Intrawest a critical stakeholder in addressing the deficiencies of affordable housing in Whistler? In the surrounding communities? Why or why not?
7. As affordable housing is becoming a regional challenge as a result of Whistler's displacement of employees, how is Intrawest helping to ensure affordable housing needs for Whistler employees are met?
8. How about for Intrawest employees?
9. How effective are these existing policies/practices in meeting
  - A. Intrawest employee housing needs?

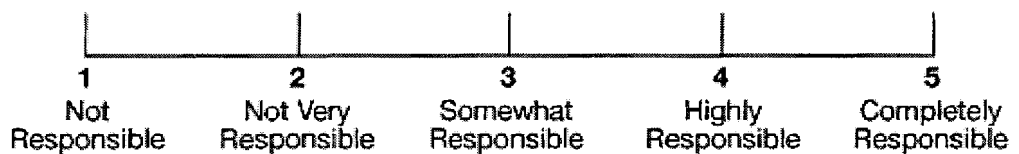


B. Whistler employee housing needs:

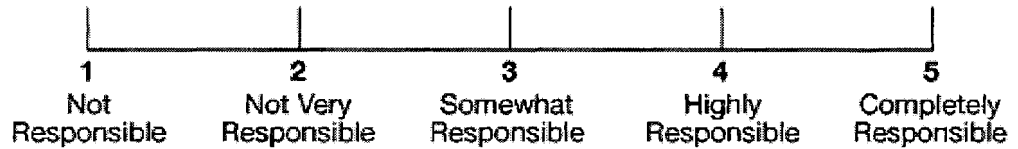


10. If they are not effective, what other initiatives are being considered to resolve this affordable housing issue?
11. How can the current relationship between WHA and Intrawest be characterized?
12. What will be the future directions or demands of this relationship?
13. What are the best ways in which the WHA can work with corporations such as Intrawest in addressing affordable housing?
14. To what extent is the WHA included in Intrawest’s decision-making process regarding any business activities that could impact affordable housing for residents in Whistler (e.g. real estate development plans)?
15. Who do you believe is responsible for resolving the affordable housing challenges in Whistler?
16. Similar to question #3, how would you rate Intrawest’s responsibility to provide support for affordable housing solutions

A. For Intrawest employees?



B. For Whistler residents in general?



17. What were Intrawest's motivations behind the initial development of affordable employee housing?

18. What motivates the company to develop more affordable housing?

19. By supporting future affordable housing initiatives in Whistler, Intrawest will (*strongly disagree = 1; somewhat disagree = 2; uncertain = 3; somewhat agree = 4; strongly agree = 5*):

\_\_\_ Identify new business opportunities that generate additional revenue.

\_\_\_ Enhance visitor satisfaction and increase return visitation by ensuring a more content and committed personnel.

\_\_\_ Strengthen a company's brand image and reputation.

\_\_\_ Develop trust and enhance relationships in the community.

\_\_\_ Develop trust and enhance relationships with the 2010 Olympic Committee.

\_\_\_ Have a greater voice in affordable housing decisions in Whistler.

\_\_\_ Better evaluate and monitor their business strategies in response to employee housing demand.

\_\_\_ Expand the firm's shareholder investment potential by highlighting socially responsible activities (e.g. being included in Socially Responsible Investment Funds).

\_\_\_ Ensure greater long-term performance of the company.

\_\_\_ Create a competitive advantage over the many other world-class ski resorts that are struggling with the same issue.

\_\_\_ Attract a less transient type of employees applicants.

\_\_\_\_\_ Directly reduce employee turnover costs.

\_\_\_\_\_ Indirectly "Generate cash, support growth and drive shareholder value".

20. What policies exist or could be created within the RMOW or WHA to promote and enforce greater corporate social responsibility in Intrawest business strategies with respect to the provision of affordable housing?
21. What municipal policies exist that impedes or obstructs corporate social responsibility regarding the provision of affordable housing?

### **Theme Three: Evaluation, Monitoring, and Reporting the Performance of Affordable Housing**

22. What differences exist in the types of Intrawest employees who need access to affordable housing support (e.g. form of tenure: rent or own; demographics)? How are these differences determined?
23. How do these differences affect the types of housing to be built or support programs to be developed?
24. What are the next steps for Intrawest in meeting future affordable housing needs?
25. What role does Intrawest play now and in the future in measuring and monitoring this affordable housing supply and demand in Whistler?
26. Question #10 asked, "how effective are the existing policies/practices in meeting Whistler employee housing needs?" How is the effectiveness of affordable housing initiatives measured?
27. In the context of affordable housing strategies, what evaluation standards and reporting practices of Intrawest have been incorporated?
28. How do you feel about the following statement as it pertains to Intrawest in the context of affordable housing (*strongly disagree = 1; somewhat disagree = 2; uncertain = 3; somewhat agree = 4; strongly agree = 5*):

\_\_\_\_\_ "Corporations possess the power to control and influence the quality of life of employees, customers, shareholders, and residents of local communities in which they operate... Power necessarily entails responsibility." (Pava and Krausz, 1995: 1)

29. In the context of affordable housing, is this responsibility of Intrawest to the company's employees and Whistler community actually being met? (Please circle one):

**YES**

**NO**

Thank you very much for your time and efforts in completing this interview questionnaire.

## Appendix F: Interview Consent Form

### SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

School of Resource and  
Environmental Management  
FACULTY OF APPLIED SCIENCES  
<http://www.rem.sfu.ca>



BURNABY, BRITISH COLUMBIA  
CANADA V5A 1S6  
Telephone: (604) 291-4659  
Fax: (604) 291-4968

#### Introduction

The University and the interviewer conducting this interview subscribe to the ethical conduct of research and to the protection at all times of the interests and safety of all research participants. This form and the information that it contains are given to you for your own protection and full understanding of the procedures we will be using in this interview. Your signature on this form will signify that:

- you have received a document which describes the interview intent, content, and procedures that we will use to report findings provided by you and the other participants; and the efforts will we will use to protect the confidentiality of your own views, as well as those of the other participants;
- you have had an adequate opportunity to consider the information in the documents provided; and
- you voluntarily agree to participate in the project.

#### Consent

Having been asked by the Centre For Tourism Policy and Research of the School of Resource and Environmental Management at Simon Fraser University to participate in this interview, I have read the procedures specified in the interview documentation.

I understand the procedures to be used in the collection of information in this interview;

I understand that I may withdraw my participation in this interview at any time;

I also understand that I may register any complaint I might have about the interview with Dr. B. Lewis, Dean of the Faculty of Applied Science of Simon Fraser University;

I may obtain copies of the results of the interview findings, upon completion by contacting Dr. Peter Williams of the Centre For Tourism Policy and Research;

I have been informed that the specific research information that I provide will be held confidential by Dr. Peter Williams, at the Centre For Tourism Policy and Research;

I agree to participate by orally providing my personal perspectives and suggestions on those issues outlined in the interview content guide provided to me.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Witness: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix G: Description of Research for Interview Respondent

### SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

School of Resource and  
Environmental Management  
FACULTY OF APPLIED SCIENCES  
<http://www.rem.sfu.ca>



BURNABY, BRITISH COLUMBIA  
CANADA V5A 1S6

Telephone:(604) 291-4659  
Fax: (604) 291-4968

Dear Respondent,

Your participation in this interview will help me (as a researcher at Simon Fraser University) assess the extent to which resort corporations are involved in the process of supplying affordable housing. This research is part of a larger initiative undertaken by Simon Fraser University that examines corporate environmental and social responsibility in mountain resort destinations. Whistler has been selected as a case study community for this research because it is currently facing significant on-going affordable housing challenges and because of its past and present efforts to address these challenges.

Following a recent meeting with Tim Wake and Marla Zucht, members of the Whistler Housing Authority, they have suggested that you are a key person to talk to concerning your perspectives on this topic, given your involvement in affordable housing activities. As such, we would appreciate your valuable perspectives and insights on various aspects of this issue. The information you provide will be combined with that of many other stakeholders in Whistler to provide possible directions on future affordable housing development options. While your individual responses will be kept completely confidential, they will be reported collectively in the research along with those of other people I intend to interview.

Would it be possible for you to share some of your time to participate in a personal interview with me in this topic? If so, I would be pleased to conduct the interview at a time and place that was convenient to you. If you have any questions regarding the intent or content of this research, feel free to contact me at (604) 985-3685, or my research supervisors Dr. Peter Williams and Dr. Alison Gill at (604) 291-3074.

Would you kindly contact me to indicate your willingness to participate, as well as to suggest the most appropriate timing for the interview? You can email me at [srmoore@sfu.ca](mailto:srmoore@sfu.ca) or call me at (604) 985-3685 to discuss alternatives.

Thank you very much for your interest in participating in this important affordable housing research project. I look forward to your reply.

Yours Sincerely,

Sean Moore

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