

## Whistler Community Services Society Re-Build-It Centre

Resort Municipality of Whistler (RMOW)  
in the Squamish Lillooet Regional District, BC



Population: 10,448 permanent residents (2013)<sup>1</sup>  
(13,667 with visitors)<sup>2</sup>

Land Area<sup>3</sup>: 240 km<sup>2</sup>

Density<sup>3</sup>: 44.2 residents/km<sup>2</sup>  
112.6 residents and visitors/km<sup>2</sup>

Median Age<sup>3</sup>: 32.4

Housing Mix<sup>3</sup> – Single:Multi-Family – 75:25

Average persons per household<sup>3</sup>: 2.3

2012 Squamish-Lillooet Regional District disposal rate<sup>4</sup>:  
499 kg MSW per capita (all sources)

### Program Highlights / Summary

The Re-Build-It Centre is operated by the Whistler Community Services Society (WCSS). At the Re-Build-It-Centre, the community donates unwanted building supplies, as well as furniture and appliances, and then sells them through a retail outlet. The revenue from the Re-Build-It Centre provides funding for key community support programs like the food bank, community kitchens, and other outreach and assistance programs for those in need (low income, seniors, immigrants, new workers, parents, etc.). The centre builds on the success of the Re-Use-It Centre which is a thrift shop located on land leased from the municipality, with all profits going to social programs in the town.

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hIUW842PuyI>

The Re-Build-It Centre supports four main goals of Whistler 2020, the Resort Municipality of Whistler's Sustainability Plan. Specifically, the Re-Build-It Centre meets objectives identified by the Materials & Solid Waste Strategy, Resident Affordability Strategy, Health & Social Strategy and the Economic Strategy; all part of the sustainability plan.

<sup>1</sup> BC Stats 2013 population

(<http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/StatisticsBySubject/Demography/PopulationEstimates.aspx>)

<sup>2</sup> Whistler 2020 website stat for 2011 ([http://www.whistler2020.ca/monitoring/population\\_and\\_demographics](http://www.whistler2020.ca/monitoring/population_and_demographics))

<sup>3</sup> Statistics Canada census data (<http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E&MM>)

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/soe/indicators/waste/municipal\\_solid\\_waste.html?WT.ac=LU\\_Municipal-Waste](http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/soe/indicators/waste/municipal_solid_waste.html?WT.ac=LU_Municipal-Waste). Note that the SLRD density calculation incorporates Whistler's "population equivalent" – a population number established by the municipality to reflect that the high tourist population of the area has an impact on local and regional waste generation data.

## CR&D Case Study 1: Waste Reduction, Voluntary Mechanism

The Re-Build-It Centre opened in 2011 offering drop off and pick up services for used or unwanted building supplies. In 2013, 362,000 lbs. or 164.2 tonnes<sup>5</sup> of building materials, furniture and appliances were reused through the Centre and therefore diverted from landfill. By negotiating a nominal land lease from the local municipality, the operation could become more efficient in the future, generating additional funds for community services.

### Program Details

The Re-Build-It Centre opened in 2011 offering drop off and pick up services for building supplies. There is a \$35 fee for pick up and/or delivery services. The types of items collected include flooring, lighting supplies, electrical supplies, mirrors, lumber, doors, cabinets, countertops, toilets, sinks, tubs, hardware, tools, paving stones, appliances, large paintings/pictures, and furniture. In addition, the outlet has a small area that is referred to as the 'Boutique', which is set up to showcase antiques, rugs, art, and higher valued items which help to increase foot traffic. The Centre utilizes a customer 'wish list' to contact customers as items come in. This level of customer service has helped to increase sales. The store is located in the community, not far from the Re-Use-It Centre (a similar operation that handles clothing, housewares and sporting equipment) and is open seven days a week, 10 am to 5 pm.

The key drivers for the Re-Build-It Centre which support the Whistler 2020 Sustainability Plan are:

- To divert a significant amount of material from the waste stream and help Whistler achieve its goal of Zero Waste (Materials & Solid Waste strategy)
- To provide lower-cost resources that will make home remodelling and repair more affordable (Resident Affordability strategy)
- To expand the capacity of WCSO to provide social service programs (Health & Social strategy)
- To support and diversify the local economy, create local jobs and provide job training in the emerging green economy (Economic strategy)

### Program Results

#### Financial Data

##### Capital Costs

Minor. Basic items like shelving. Truck used by the Centre is owned by the Re-Use It Centre.

##### Operating Costs

Total operating costs for 2013 were \$199,835. The cost for building space for \$5,088/month (note: the Centre hopes to be able to move to land owned by the municipality, which could be rented at a low cost). Operating costs include operation of the truck used for pick ups.

##### Staffing Implications

1 full-time manager position and 2-3 staff each day depending on how busy they are.

##### Cost Recovery

2013 sales at the Re-Build-It Centre were \$178,274. Additional financial support is provided through the community donations. Supported by a \$40,000 donation from the Whistler Foundation and \$10,000

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<sup>5</sup> Whistler Community Services Society Annual Report 2013  
(<http://www.mywcss.org/pages/annual-report-financial-statements>)

## CR&D Case Study 1: Waste Reduction, Voluntary Mechanism

from Ziptrek Ecotours to establish program. (Note: If the Centre is able to move to lower cost space and/or share space with the Re-Use It Centre, the operating cost deficit would be addressed.)

### Environmental

#### Reduction and Diversion

362,000 lbs. or 164.2 tonnes in 2013<sup>6</sup> of building materials, furniture and appliances

**Disposal impact / landfill space savings** – as above

#### GHG reduction

Not calculated, however deconstruction is reported to reduce greenhouse gas emissions because the re-use of building materials diminishes the need for extraction of resources, manufacturing and transport of building materials made from virgin materials.

### Social

#### Political Acceptability

The idea for the Re-Build-It Centre was generated by the Whistler 2020 Task Force on Materials and Solid Waste<sup>7</sup>. RMOW supports the Centre in principle. Currently, the Re-Use-It Centre is located on land leased from local government for a nominal rate (\$10/year lease) and provides an excellent model for collaboration. Similarly, Whistler Community Services Society pays RMOW a nominal \$10/year lease for their offices. WCSS is also seeking to partner with the Regional District in the future.

#### Community / User Acceptability

The community supports the Whistler Re-Use-It Centre and the Re-Build-It Centre as the revenue is used to run local community support programs (Food Bank, Community Kitchen, Helping Hand, Community Greenhouses and Gardens, Emergency Income Assistance, Outreach, Welcome Week and others). Anecdotally, people voice their support and demonstrate it, by donating and purchasing items. The Re-Build-It Centre welcomes volunteers to assist in store and is beginning to provide Do-It-Yourself workshops for community members.

#### Community Economic Development

3+ FTE of direct jobs, keeps spending in local community, keeps materials in local community, supports other jobs at WCSS, provides low cost items for residents to purchase

### Lessons Learned

- It is common for members of the public to help themselves to reusable discards at a building site, including materials set aside for pick up by the Re-Build-It Centre. There has been some communication in local papers requesting people to leave the donations for the Re-Build-It Centre on building sites.
- Informal sales of excess materials from construction sites is a common practice and to some degree competes with the Re-Build-It Centre.

<sup>6</sup> Whistler Community Services Society Annual Report 2013 (<http://www.mywcsc.org/pages/annual-report-financial-statements>)

<sup>7</sup> Whistler 2020 is the Resort Municipality of Whistler's sustainability plan and for many years was supported by task forces on specific topics to generate suggestions to move Whistler closer to its goals.

## CR&D Case Study 1: Waste Reduction, Voluntary Mechanism

- The Centre currently shares a truck. Owning a truck would provide more flexibility and likely increase donations, by providing additional pick-up and delivery services and help with disposal of unsellable donations at the waste transfer station.
- After hour donations can pose a problem and result in more items going to landfill if they are damaged due to rain/snow. Being open 7 days a week and clearing out extra materials regularly reduces this problem. Unsellable items are placed outside and marked 'free'. These are always brought in at night to discourage dumping.
- Building supplies are important, but appliances and furniture are some of the items that are always in demand.
- The Re-Build-It Centre is dependent on what is donated and cannot provide a consistent supply of materials/items that people want.
- One key aspect of the Re-Build-It Centre's success was that the Re-Use-It Centre was already operating and provided a successful model to build on.
- Whistler Community Services Society was in a unique position to roll out this service as they are a community-based non-profit that has the trust and support of the community because the money generated goes back to support community services. In addition, this was the first retail operation in the Whistler area for used building materials.
- People do not want to throw building materials out and like to see items reused.

### Communities with Similar Programs

- Squamish ReBuild It Centre

### Program Contact

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