

2009 LIVCOM AWARDS

WHOLE CITY AWARDS



TOWN OF GIBSONS SUBMISSION

Submitted on behalf of the Mayor, Council and people of Gibsons by:

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Introduction to the Town of Gibsons, British Columbia, Canada



Incorporated in 1929, the naturally scenic seaside town of Gibsons lies nestled on the shores of the Pacific Ocean where Howe Sound meets the Strait of Georgia. Gibsons has a total area of 507 hectares, and is built on the hillside at the foot of the Coast Mountain Range rain forest, overlooking the waters. Gibsons, known as the jewel, or the heart and soul, of the Sunshine Coast, is accessible only by sea or air and is located a mere 10 miles (as the crow flies) west of the City of Vancouver. Gibsons is only 1.5 hours from downtown Vancouver by car or bus, which includes a scenic 40 minute cruise on BC Ferries from Horseshoe Bay in West Vancouver.

The earliest inhabitants of the area were the Squamish tribe of the Coast Salish nations that traditionally lived in communal lodges holding several related families.

In 1886, George Gibson, was one of the first Europeans to settle in the region. The Gibson family encouraged others to settle in this heavily wooded area that became known as Gibsons Landing. The Gibson family was industrious and began producing vegetables, building roads and a postal service. From 1910 onward, subdivision of the upper shore lands led to the development of the “Gibsons Landing” area. George Gibson built a dock for passengers and general freight ships in order to access the lucrative Vancouver market. By 1946, the first ferry service was established.

The community of Gibsons has traditionally relied on fishing and forestry. Early logging opened the area upland for agriculture. Over time, the economic profile has changed as tourism, real estate and manufacturing play an increasing role. Through the Town’s natural beauty and ongoing program of revitalization, the area is a magnet for tourism. There is a significant arts, culture and retirement community, drawn by Gibsons natural beauty and lifestyle. Gibsons is an attractive place to live and work.

Enhancement of the Landscape

Natural beauty is the foundation of Gibsons. With the development of the area, *Gibsons Councils’ objective* is to “*ensure future development is compatible and that growth is in harmony with the natural surroundings and ecosystems.*” Significant natural features are identified, protected and highlighted in development. The seaside location and naturally sloping terrain features naturalistic yet dramatic landscaping. There is use of all landscape elements appropriate to the area, such as various floral elements, rock, driftwood, marine artefacts, trees, hanging baskets, original hand painted banners and

electrical boxes. The landscape plant material is diverse and includes trees, shrubs, perennials, native species and mulch groundcovers. The complete landscape package is a show stopper. Many of the landscaped areas incorporate environmental, cultural and heritage features into the design.

In 2006, Gibsons was recognized provincially by Communities in Bloom for their floral displays, and in 2008, Gibsons won the overall provincial Communities in Bloom competition.

The civic grounds showcase a demonstration garden that features the use of drought tolerant native plant materials. Other publicly owned facilities such as the curling rink, aquatic facility, ice rink and community centre all feature landscaped native gardens to demonstrate how native species can be incorporated into a designed landscape, with the added benefit of encouraging water conservation.

Cultural and heritage features such as the Persephone are also incorporated into the landscape. The Persephone feature takes into account environmental, cultural and heritage factors through brownfield reclamation of an abandoned gas station while recognizing Gibsons history in film. Gibsons is known internationally for the television series *The Beachcombers*, which was filmed in Gibsons for 19 years. The Persephone was the log salvage boat, operated by the character Nick Adonidas, and a prominent feature in the television series. The Persephone is now proudly displayed as a tourist attraction at this central brownfield site, which has been revitalized through landscaping.

A roundabout, or traffic calming circle, not only provides an aesthetically pleasing landscape feature, but provides the function of storm water run off catchments and filtration.

Gibsons works in concert with the private commercial and industrial businesses by providing incentive such as the annual Blooming Business License Contest where local establishments are provided with a 20% discount from the local nurseries and landscaping companies for beautifying the exteriors of their establishments. Early in the fall, five businesses are recognized and awarded with a free business license for the following year.

A street tree well adoption program is provided by Gibsons for those who wish to adopt a street tree and plant the bed it is situated in. Recognition is provided to those which are most creative and well maintained.

Heritage Management

From a worldwide historical perspective, Gibsons is very young, and part of the challenge is to recognize and protect those features that will be of heritage value in the future. Gibsons has a Heritage Advisory Commission, and in their support *Councils' vision* is to “*reveal the authentic cultural and natural heritage of Gibsons and to advocate its conservation*”.

Gibsons has developed a Heritage Inventory and Register that will grow over the years as the Town matures. Of significance, is the heritage rooted in the traditions and sacred places of the aboriginal Squamish Nation, the trails and logging flumes cut by the first lumbermen and the remaining structures and plantings of the first settlers, which gave rise to our current development and unique viewsapes.

A focal point in Gibsons is the head of the original Landing, which is in the very core of the tourist and business section overlooking the harbour. Standing in the very centre of town, one can be amidst the original dock, the pioneer cemetery where the Gibson family is buried, home and surgery of Doc Inglis, a heritage lifeboat, the Beachcombers' Persephone and heritage garden bed.

The restored Doc Inglis House, known as Stonehurst, was originally constructed in 1912 and consisted of home, office, surgery and pharmacy for the area. This house is historically important as it was the birth place of the Canadian Commonwealth Federation (CCF) party – a democratic-socialist hybrid of capitalism and socialism that was later named the New Democratic Party, which is still prominent in Canadian politics to this day to this day.

Doc Inglis was known as a hospitable and devout man, his faith and inherent pacifism was challenged by the events of the First World War. A community of socialist Finns had settled in the area, which greatly influenced his thinking. Doc Inglis debated their points of view with the local Methodist minister, James Shaver Woodsworth. The minister's pacifist views eventually conflicted with the pro-war activists of the Methodist Church led by William Winn. Refusing to bend to public opinion, in 1917 Woodsworth was forced to leave the church, and shelter was offered to the Woodsworth family at Stonehurst.

During the Woodworth stay with the Inglis,' the debates of socialist and pacifist theories at the kitchen table evolved to form the basis of the humanist principles on which Woodsworth founded the CCF political party. Stonehurst is where Canadian history was made.

The popular Beachcomber's television series log salvage boat is located kitty corner from the historic Inglis house. The Persephone is part of modern history in that it was the main feature in the internationally renowned, and longest running Canadian Broadcasting Corporation drama. From 1971 to 1990 the television series was viewed in 57 countries. The restoration of the Persephone not only reminds viewers of the television series, but also reinforces that long standing link with the water. Located beside the Persephone is the famous Molly's Reach restaurant that was viewed by the millions who watched the show. Molly's Reach was restored and is in full operation today, hosting the thousands of tourists who come to view and visit this area.

Other aging structures have been restored for the enjoyment of the community and its' visitors. Of importance is St. Bartholomew's Anglican Church constructed in 1892 and

the Howe Sound School constructed in 1911, which are both restored and functioning in the same capacity today. The Howe Sound Women's Institute, constructed in 1929, was restored and converted to a live performance theatre in 1990 by the Gibsons Heritage Society.

Environmentally Sensitive Practises

Gibsons is defined by the community it serves and this community has a strong desire for land use and development practises that enhance the quality of life in the community - and preserve the natural environment. It is *Gibsons Councils' objective* to “*incorporate and integrate the three pillars of sustainability: ecological sustainability, social sustainability and economic stability.*” Councils' policies reflect the community of Gibsons' principles and overall philosophy of sustainable development and ensures that:

- the long-term integrity of the local ecosystem is protected through practises that minimize damage to the natural environment;
- the community of Gibsons is a safe, healthy and viable setting for human interaction, education, recreation and cultural development;
- the production and distribution of wealth is done in a manner that provides access to the goods and services necessary for a good quality of life for both present and future generations.

Examples of Gibsons successes in the environmentally sensitive practises are distinguished by:

2005 Winner of the Berkeley Springs International Water Tasting Competition - a major achievement for tiny Gibsons. Gibsons is situated on, and draws its water from a subterranean aquifer. The water is so pure it requires no additional chemical or ultraviolet treatments. The water is carefully monitored and routinely tested for possible contaminants including herbicides and pesticides – which have been banned in the community. Gibsons has implemented an Aquifer Protection Plan that ensures the residents that the water will continue to remain pure for years to come. Subsurface mapping is currently underway to determine capacity and dimensions of this precious renewable resource. Individuals from neighbouring communities – and from far and wide – come to Gibsons to partake in the water that many say has healing qualities. Gibsons always suspected they had good water, and winning the World's Best Water competition, the longest running water tasting competition in the world, confirmed Gibsons suspicions. *Mayor Barry Janyk* commented that “*people have been asking me for years what makes Gibsons such a great place to live, I have always suggested that it must be something in the water*”.

2006 – Gibsons was **recognized by the National Research Council of Canada** for the Franklin Road upgrade. Following significant controversy and broad public consultation, Gibsons proceeded with the Franklin Road redesign incorporating several innovative – and money saving – environmentally wise features. The features included bio-swales to minimize the quantity of drainage run-off and improved run-off quality, reduced road

widths to slow vehicle traffic, and used ‘pockets’ to accommodate parking requirements. The upgrade was completed with the installation of a gravel pedestrian walkway, boulevard landscaping and protective rock work. Gravel was selected as the pathway material to maintain the area’s rural character and promote more sustainable drainage management through rainwater infiltration. Roadside rockwork was integrated with the landscaping features to protect the drainage bio-swales from damage by parked vehicles.

2006 World Planners Congress, Award of Excellence in recognition of the Gibsons Official Community SmartPlan - which is the result of extensive public consultation, and outlines measures that will ensure sustainable development in lifestyle concerns for the near and distant future.

2007 Communities in Bloom awarded special recognition for Environmental Awareness.

2008 Communities in Bloom winner - which included an Environmental Awareness Category.

Wastewater is treated by a recent \$5MN renovation – a tertiary treatment plant concluding in ultraviolet exposure – that has put Gibsons far ahead of most communities. This plant was upgraded in 2007 and has the capacity to provide for another generation of growth.

A Green Waste Station where residents can dispose of their trees, shrubs and garden debris is provided free to residents. This has eliminated archaic burning and illegal dumping. An annual pick up for unwanted residential items is provided, and the materials such as old washing machines, fridges, stoves, and furniture are picked up, sorted and recycled. This is a much anticipated community “swap meet” in which everyone participates! Two recycling facilities are available for community use, too.

A Watercourse Environmental Classification study was undertaken in 2003. This study identifies the environmental significance and sensitivity of Gibsons water courses, and provides direction for Gibsons when assessing development applications within the various watersheds, and preparation of maintenance programs for the drainage infrastructure.

Gibsons has many policies and plans in place that ensure the environmental sustainability of the community: Backyard Burning Bylaws, Riparian Area Regulations, Tree Cutting Policy, Drought Management Plan, Pesticide Bylaws, Anti-Vehicle Idling policies and the Trail and Cycle Network Plan, which promotes walking and cycling. Much has been accomplished in Gibsons through arduous work. The need to maintain the world’s best water has resulted in public acceptance and desire to ensure environmental concerns remain a priority.

Community Sustainability

Community involvement is truly the heart and soul of Gibsons. Like any large family, there is a diversity of opinion and spirited debate. However, it is this spirit and depth of commitment that provides the small population of 4200 with the primary resource to undertake daunting tasks and overcome obstacles. Every facet of life in Gibsons is community driven.

Gibsons is an inclusive community with participants from the general public, and organizations, who are actively engaged in the planning, development and management of the community through the following functions:

- Gibsons Planning Committee.
- Parks and Community Services Committee.
- Infrastructure Committee.
- Corporate Services Committee.
- Board of Zoning Variance.
- Gibsons Landing Harbour Authority.
- Advisory Heritage Committee.
- Public Advisory Committee.
- Monthly Gibsons Dialogue Sessions.
- Public Open Houses on every matter that may affect the community.
- Gibsons Chamber of Commerce.
- Gibsons and District Public Library.
- Recreational Facilities Committee.
- Rotary, Kinsmen and Lions Clubs.
- Community Policing Consultative Group.
- Gibsons Landing Business Association.
- Gibsons Garden Club.
- Citizens on Patrol.
- Communities in Bloom.
- Sunshine Coast Museum and Archives Society.
- Gibsons Landing Fibre Arts Festival.
- Canada Day Committee.
- Salmon Fest Committee.
- New Moon Festival Committee.
- Sea Cavalcade Committee
- Seniors Network and Advisory Group.
- Royal Canadian Mounted Police Auxilliary.
- Upper Gibsons Neighbourhood Plan Committee.
- Arts and Culture Committee.
- Restructuring Committee.
- Gospel Rock Neighbourhood Plan Committee.
- Municipal and School District Joint Use Committee.

- Coast Guard Auxilliary.
- Athletic Associations.
- Gibsons Economic Development Partnership
- Old Age Pensioners Organization.
- Royal Canadian Legion.
- Gibsons and Area Community Centre Society.

Gibsons inclusive volunteer human resources makes Gibsons vibrantly alive, and provides for the needs of the community and its' visitors alike, on a grand scale. Gibsons is a "we can do it" kind of place.

Healthy Lifestyles

Gibsons Councils' objectives are to:

- *Maintain and build upon the sense of community which exists in Gibsons by encouraging and supporting volunteer "not for profit" social, recreational, cultural and civic groups.*
- *Provide park, recreational and cultural facilities and services for the use and enjoyment of citizens of all age groups appropriate for the size of the Town and within its funding means.*
- *Work towards providing a safer community based on mutual respect, acceptance and valuing of everyone.*

These objectives combined with the provisions of healthy lifestyle services, environmental practises that sustain clean air and water, and the added benefit of a relaxed lifestyle, is a major contribution to the health and welfare of the community of Gibsons.

The mild seaside climate is perfect for those who would find winter conditions difficult for outdoor activities. The sporting and gardening season is extended well into winter. Facilities for recreational pursuits are located in Gibsons and consist of an aquatic facility, curling rink, ice rink, fitness facilities, tennis court, skate park, 4 baseball diamonds, soccer pitch, rugby pitch, indoor equestrian arena and community centre. Smaller facilities for seniors, parent and tots, and service clubs are readily accessible. Winter sports such as cross country skiing, snowmobiling, snowshoeing and tobogganing are but minutes away in the Coastal Range Mountains.

Gibsons is a hive of activity and the host to many festivals and events drawing crowds from near and afar. The festivals and events are organized through volunteerism and the active participation of the community. Many of the events are for the purpose of fundraising for local and national charities. Many of the events blend the interests of the arts, sports and culture for all ages within a single venue. Gibsons events spark everyone's attention, or imagination, and has lead to a creative community living and working with each other. Keeping things light provides for a most enjoyable atmosphere, it is this positive outlook that keeps the community cohesive and healthy.

The following is an example of the annually scheduled events held in Gibsons:

- Gibsons Open Tennis Tournament.
- Baseball Tournaments for each kind of league with age groups ranging from 4 year olds to seniors. One of Gibsons major benefactors in the provision of baseball field infrastructure and youth development is Ryan Dempster, one of the local boys who has made it to the major leagues playing in the United States for the Chicago Cubs. Ryan will be donating \$275,000 in 2009 to see the installation of lighting and other amenities to extend the playing season.
- Soccer Tournaments, Gibsons hosts the region for soccer as Gibsons has the best fields.
- Hockey Tournaments, Gibsons has a National League size ice rink that provides the venue for 7 aside, minor, men, ladies, mixed and old timer league tournaments.
- Skateboarding Competitions are held on Go Skateboarding Day.
- April Fool's Run (or walk).
- Outrigger Canoe Races, this event draws out the local community for fun races and visitors from as far away as Hawaii to compete.
- Fiddlehead Farmers' Market is held every Saturday June through October. Local produce and entertainment is featured each week.
- Sunday Market is held every Sunday June through October. Local artisans and musical entertainment is featured at the waterfront.
- Music in the Landing Program. June through September, Fridays through Sunday, musical entertainment is featured in the parks and the Landing boutique area. A variety of buskers, duos, trios, quartets, bands and story tellers are located in the business and tourist area near the waterfront.
- Gibsons Jazz Fest, is held for one week in June, and has been successfully operating for 14 years. All restaurants feature entertainers and two parks hold concerts.
- Sea Cavalcade is the big festival that is a celebration of the water, fishing, logging and film history which has been the pride of Gibsons for over 40 years. Sea Calvade draws thousands to participate and watch. Firework displays, dances, music, logger sports competitions, water sports, live entertainment and a parade are featured at this festival.
- Fibre Arts Festival is a week long festival featuring fibre arts and draws participants and tourists from abroad. Workshops, markets, displays and juried competitions complete the venue.
- Gibsons Artists' Workshop is held in the summer months, and every week features a well known artist that provides a workshop for those interested in the arts.
- The New Moon Festival celebrates the Asian culture and provides Asian entertainment, dance, cuisine, games and children's activities.
- Salmon Festival held every September celebrates the arts in conjunction with the salmon for which we are famous for. The restaurants feature salmon and other

seafood dishes and the community's artists and celebrities artistically decorate wooden salmon to be auctioned for a fundraiser for the Landing business district.

- Spirit of B.C. is a celebration of the Province of B.C. for which we are a part.
- Canada Day celebration is a celebration of becoming Nation. Entertainment, cake cutting, dignitary speeches, flag raising, native tree giveaway, arts and entertainment are a part of the celebration.
- World Knitting Day is held every June in the park, and participants come to the park to knit, sell their knitted goods, teach and promote knitting.
- Sunshine Coast Labour Day picnic is an event for all labourers of the region to have a picnic in Gibsons.
- Duck Pluck is the children's event that is held to raise funds for children's programs and services and the Sunshine Coast.
- Royal Astronomical Society Public Telescope Viewing Evening.
- Gibsons Regatta is a friendly competition sail boat race that all enjoy watching.
- Polar Boar Swim is the annual January 1st swim held at the waterfront every year and is sponsored by the Gibsons Pigs Rugby and Athletic Club.
- Keats Island Swim is the annual one mile swimming race where participants swim to Keats Island and back to Gibsons.
- Otesha Project, Gibsons hosts university students studying environmental sciences from across North America. The students travel by bicycle and provide the community with education on environmental issues.
- Canada World Youth, Gibsons hosts youth from all over the world, between the ages of 18 and 24 for a period of 3 months each year. The youth stay in the community and volunteer for civic projects and education.
- Fundraising Walks, Gibsons hosts organizations in the raising of funds by holding walkathons. The Canadian Heart and Stroke Foundation, British Columbia Cancer Society and other organizations enjoy the waterfront, shops, parks and the trailed natural areas for this type of activity.

Gibsons scenic surroundings, local colour and casual atmosphere provide the perfect setting for numerous occasions.

Planning for the Future

Studies have been undertaken, and plans implemented to prepare for Gibsons future. It is estimated that Gibsons will grow from its' current 4,200 residents to a projected 7,200 residents by 2026, based on the observed annual growth pattern of 2.5%. Within in its' current boundaries, Gibsons will be "built out" at a population of 10,000.

A concerted effort has been made to ensure plans for Gibsons future will be sustainable. All capital projects are developed with a view to provide for at least 10,000 people. Plans pertaining to:

- Economic development and attracting sustainable businesses is complete and forms part of the mandate of the Economic Development Office of Gibsons.

- Planning and development is guided by the Official Community Plan which ties all other plans together by reference in one document. The Official Community Plan is a forward thinking plan that has anticipated future needs and methods of response.
- Infrastructure has a development, replacement and maintenance plan to ensure adequacy of roads, water and sewage needs are met.
- Community Services such as policing, social needs and affordable housing plans are in place.

Gibsons continuously monitors these plans to measure for effectiveness, and reviews and renews the plans approximately every 5 years.

Through public consultation, Gibsons is in the midst of developing a new Parks Master Plan targeted to see the community's needs through into the future, to 2020. This plan will include strategies for acquiring new parks, maintaining and investing in Gibsons current parks and further development of activity programs for the parks system. The plan will address how Gibsons' parks will respond to changes in community needs, demographics and social trends, and how limited financial resources can be best used to implement a strategic direction.

Gibsons has received federal funding in 2009 to study and implement a plan for a District Energy System that will provide for the energy needs of the community through geothermal methods, which will alleviate the pressure on other natural resource energy sources.

Gibsons has implemented in 2009 a Harbour Master Plan study that will provide a strategy for increasing the capacity of the busy harbour and increase the revenues to the community, while ensuring the environmental integrity of the shoreline and harbour.

A restructuring committee is in place and restructuring studies have been completed. Gibsons is working closely with the provincial government to incorporate some of the outlying rural area through boundary expansion to increase the size of Gibsons in the future.

One of Gibsons biggest challenges comes from the desire of the portion of the population that sees development as progress, and pushes for rapid development. The other segment is content with slow growth and the maintenance of the relaxed lifestyle it provides. Gibsons is fortunate in that it is surrounded by water and mountains. Access is by water only, which tends to hold back the tide of migration other areas in coastal British Columbia have experienced. This physical barrier has provided Gibsons with the opportunity to examine other communities who have experienced rapid growth, and the opportunity to develop wisely, and not make the same mistakes.

Conclusion:

Gibsons is a resourceful community, its' greatest resource being the people who live and visit the town. Come visit Gibsons and become part of our world, it is well worth the trip.

GIBSONS IN PICTURES



Canada World Youth from Banda Aceh, Sumatra installing Native Species Drought Tolerant Demonstration Garden in Holland Park, September 2005. Many of these youth had lost family in the tsunami months before.

Cast and Crew of the Beachcombers stay in touch.





Artist Greta Guzek prepares to paint the electrical kiosk box in the Landing Summer 2006.

Handpainted electrical kiosk boxes.





Stormwater catchment traffic calming circle. Photo from 2009.



Tree Well Adoption 2009 – replica of actual Tibetan Temple.



2005 tulips presented to Gibsons from the Netherlands in appreciation of assistance provided to Holland during WW2. Red tulips planted in the Canadian Flag design.



2006 Houseboat Gardens



View from the water 2006



Recreation for everyone, Agility Competition 2007



Squamish Nation Canoes arrive at waterfront 2006.



Statue of George Gibsons overlooking the harbour, 2005.



Gibsons Music in the Landing Program 2006



Miss Sea Cavalcade 1968 (aka Mayor Barry Janyk)



Historic lifeboat with Stonehurst in the background, and the Persephone 2009.