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Smart Growth BC Unveils Sea-to-Sky Greenbelt Maps

Vancouver - Smart Growth BC will be giving the public a first peek at the potential Sea-to-Sky Greenbelt boundary, later this month when it unveils the results of months of mapping work at a series of information sessions held throughout the corridor. The Greenbelt will include land and water resources that are either already protected or have the potential to be protected from urban and rural development in the future.

"The Sea-to-Sky Greenbelt will help to connect and protect green spaces from West Vancouver to D'Arcy. Once implemented, it will be a world-renowned example of what can be accomplished by respecting our natural resources while enhancing community livability," says Lone Smith, Project Coordinator at Smart Growth BC. "These first maps give a visual representation of what is already protected but also serve to identify gaps in land use connectivity to determine where critical linkages can still be made."

Over the next 20 years, the population in the Sea-to-Sky corridor is expected to double to nearly 70,000 people. The widening of Highway 99 and impending 2010 Olympic Games have created a perfect storm of development pressure in the region. The premise of smart growth principles is that enough land currently exists in previously identified settlement areas to accommodate the forecasted growth. The Sea-to-Sky Greenbelt would ensure that development will be directed towards town centres and villages, outside of which will remain pristine recreational lands, productive farming and forestry lands, and protected wilderness areas. The coalition of Greenbelt supporters includes a dozen local and provincial organizations and is growing rapidly.

"Land use plans throughout the corridor, whether they be local, regional, First Nation, or otherwise, all tout green space protection as one of their main goals," explains Tamsin Baker, Regional Manager at TLC The Land Conservancy. "We are hoping that the Greenbelt initiative can act as an umbrella to leverage these land use conservation objectives in a concerted effort."

The initial round of Sea-to-Sky Greenbelt maps include areas already designated as park, conservation, riparian, or other protected areas in existing land use plans and makes the additional step of identifying unprotected green space outside of settlement areas that may be added in the future. The next phase in the Greenbelt initiative is to develop an implementation strategy to be presented to decision-makers in 2009. The goal is to have the Sea-to-Sky Greenbelt adopted by 2010 as a long-lasting landscape legacy for the corridor.

The Greenbelt information sessions will be held from 6:30pm to 9:00pm on Tuesday October 21st at the Howe Sound Inn in Squamish, Wednesday October 22nd at Millennium Place, and Thursday October 23rd at the Pemberton Community Centre. RSVPs are encouraged.

Smart Growth BC is the leading non-governmental organization working towards creating more livable communities in British Columbia.

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