

The Politics of 'Bed Units': Growth Control in the Resort of Whistler, British Columbia

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The objective of this paper is to consider the use of 'bed units' as a tool in the management of growth in a resort setting. 'Bed units' are used in the Resort Municipality of Whistler, British Columbia as a tool for measuring growth and capacity and are an important component in the allocation of development rights. They are also used as a negotiating tool with developers to acquire community facilities and services. The formula that allocates a certain number of 'bed units' to each type of accommodation was derived from an assessment of sewage capacity. In line with their growth management philosophy, the Resort Municipality of Whistler has for many years established a cap on the number of allowable bed units. While this cap has been raised once, 52,500 bed units have, in recent years, been established in the minds of many people as the limit to sustainable growth. The current allocation of bed units exceeds this limit, as affordable housing units are not included. In this paper examples are presented to illustrate how planners, residents and politicians perceive and use the concept of 'bed-units' in differing ways and under differing circumstances.