

# OurSquamish

Placemaking Society

Case Study: Turn Knowledge into Practice  
Location: Skwxwú7mesh/Squamish, British Columbia

Located in Squamish/Skw̓xwú7mesh, British Columbia, OurSquamish is a community non-profit dedicated to enhancing Squamish's urban public spaces for a lively, inclusive, sustainable, safe, and healthy Squamish. Through people-driven projects, education, and advocacy, community members employ placemaking strategies to build equitable public spaces that support the diversity of their community. Squamish is a district municipality in British Columbia on the north end of Howe Sound on the Sea to Sky Highway, with a population of 19,893 people, including the Squamish First Nation.

"A part of OurSquamish is to inspire and educate people to take ownership over our public spaces and to feel that they too can impact them and improve them and really feel that they belong in Squamish and that our public spaces are there to serve them"

— Constance Cope, OurSquamish Board Member



In a pilot test of the *Neighbourhood Tactical Guide*, OurSquamish used the seven Tactics to provide ideas for potential placemaking activities. They created a Pocket Park for the community to gather in public space. From a simple bench to bike valets, parklets, walking tours, and garden planters, the group achieves their goals by focusing on strategic partnerships within the community and district.

OurSquamish Bike Valet Project during the Squamish Open Street Day Event, 2022



OurSquamish partnered with Howe Sound Secondary School to paint transit benches now located at transit stops that didn't have a place to sit, featured in the Squamish Chief by Jennifer Thuncher, 2022



OurSquamish Walking Tour and Parklette project location, featured in the Squamish Chief, by Andrew Hughes, 2022



An OurSquamish project, planters with sayings, OurSquamish, 2023

To realize their goals, OurSquamish followed the steps outlined in [How to Go from Ideation to Creation](#).

## 01 Use the Tactical Guide to review the seven Tactics and activities



OurSquamish held a workshop where we introduced the seven tactics (e.g., Naturalize, Activate), the related activities and photos in the Tactical Guide and asked the public what ideas they would like to pursue. Participants discussed the tactics and used them to inspire ideas that would work well in their neighbourhoods. For example, having rain covers or being able to implement specific activities in the rain was important as it rains a lot in Squamish. There are also many trails in Squamish, and activating trails with local knowledge and history gave these tactics a local touch.

OurSquamish Workshop Meet-up held at Westwinds senior living village, photograph by Nina LaFlamme, 2023

## 02 Think Like a Tactical Placemaker

By meeting as a community, OurSquamish was able to engage with the locals and gather their perspectives (different ages, cultures, abilities, etc.), and take them into account while planning our activities.

## 03 Determine the feasibility and impact of the activity(ies) on the community

It was important for OurSquamish to determine the practicality and impact of the activities to have the most positive impact in the community. Taking into consideration the need to create spaces for the community to chat with one another and decrease social isolation within a car-centric neighbourhood, we decided to use the information gathered at the workshop to create a “Pocket Park” at a local plaza as there are limited public spaces near shops for people to sit and gather in the neighbourhood.



Garibaldi Pocket Park location pre-installation, 2021

# 04

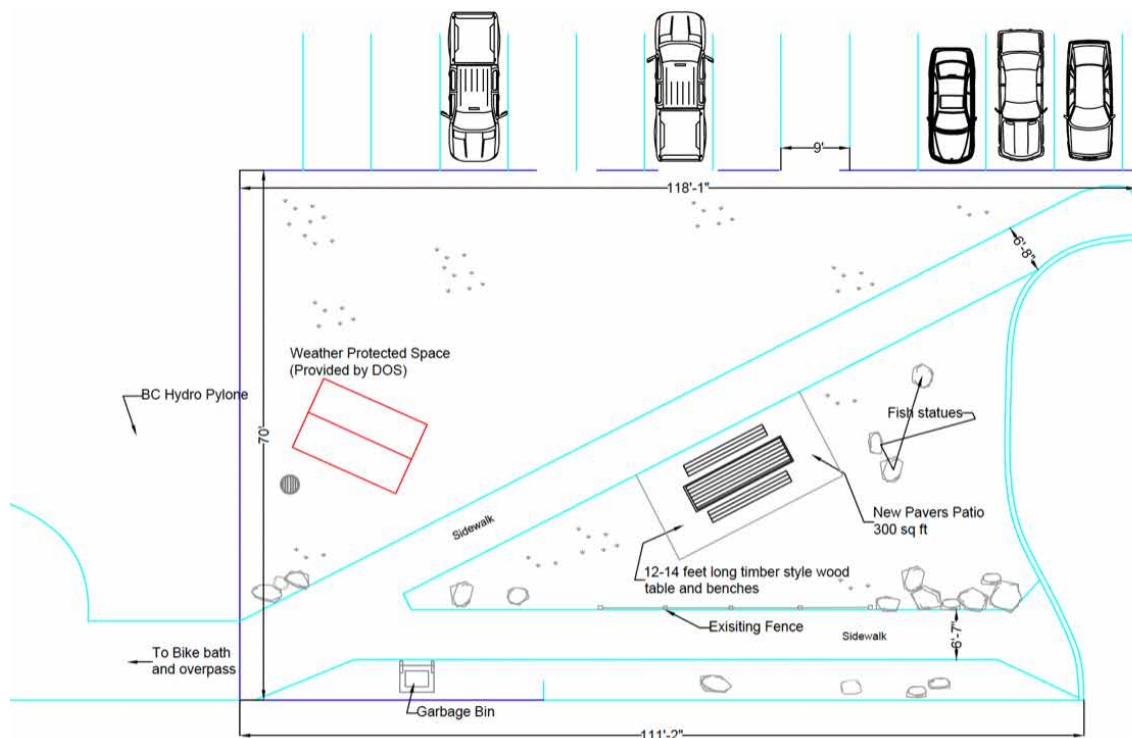
## Engage with neighbours and other community members (e.g., local business) to brainstorm their own ideas further

Hosting a workshop where the public could use the Tactical Guide as a basis to further brainstorm their ideas and then collectively decide on what to implement was incredibly empowering to all parties. Community members, in this case, became part of the design, planning, implementation, and ongoing users of the space in which they worked hard to create.

# 05

## Plan the Activity

With the help of volunteer community members such as landscapers, construction workers, and others, OurSquamish created a final project design, as well as a detailed budget and timeline. They also worked with the district to discuss the future maintenance of the Pocket Park and advertised the need for volunteers to help complete the project.



Diamond Road New Public Place  
Diamond Road, Garibaldi Estates



Proposed Complete design in 2 phases

Drawing : Marc-André Gagnon | DATE : Jan 7th, 2023  
Scale: 1/16" = 1'-0"

Garibaldi Pocket Park Design, by Marc-Andres Gagnon

# 06

## Oh yes ... the issue of by-laws

OurSquamish, while planning the creation of the Pocket Park, coordinated its efforts with the municipality to determine the most appropriate location of the park, given it would be on public land. The ongoing input from the District of Squamish was integral for the project's success. Their guidance helped the OurSquamish members think about things they may not have considered, and the partnership is a good example of two like-minded organizations working together.

# 07

## Deliver the activity

By coordinating with other volunteers and the District of Squamish staff, OurSquamish was able to deliver the project, which will be a landmark in the community and a place for daily engagement.

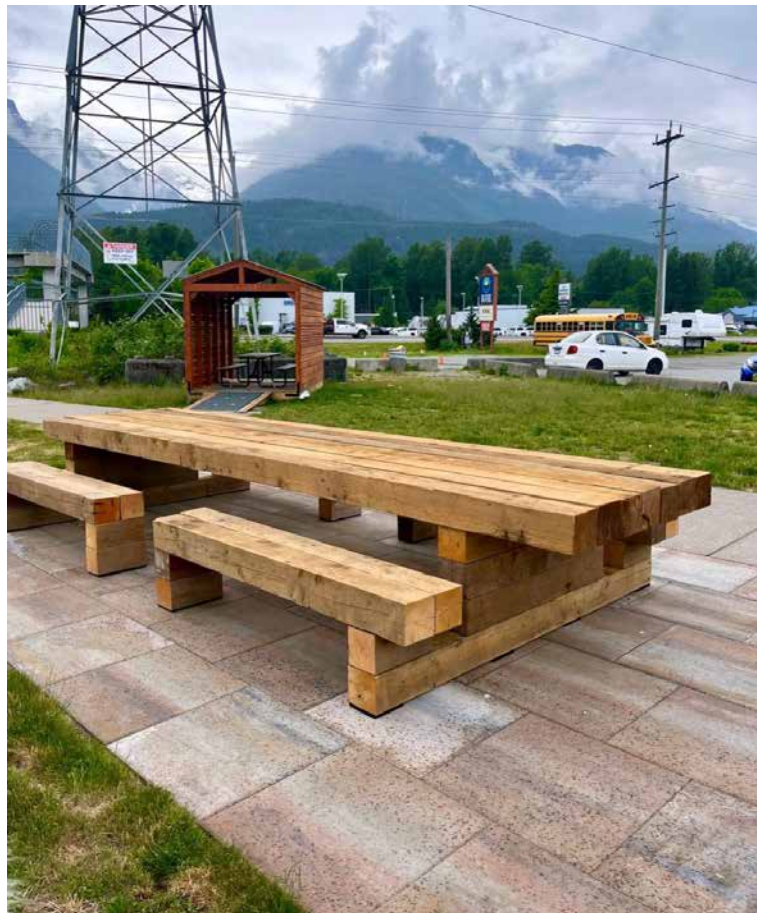


Garibaldi pocket park installation, photograph by Rebecca Mayers, 2023

# 08

## Record your progress

As seen in this case study, OurSquamish took photos to record the progress of the project and its future use. Photos were a good method of advertising the project and were used as inspiration for others to join the non-profit mailing list as well as gain more support from the local community.



Garibaldi Pocket Park Post-installation, Photograph by Rebecca Mayers, 2023

# 09

## Evaluate the success of the activity

Before the Pocket Park was implemented, OurSquamish recorded information about the area, such as how many car spaces in the area were being used, how many pedestrians and cyclists passed through the space, and how many people lingered or sat down in the area to meet up with one another. After the Pocket Park implementation, they re-recorded the same information and were able to gather data on how the Pocket Park changed the area.

# 10

## Communicate the ongoing involvement, development, and success of the activity

OurSquamish has a website with its projects but found that communication and advertising through Instagram was one of the best ways to get people involved and engaged in the event. During all the meetups OurSquamish added people to a mailing list, to seek both participants and volunteers. For each event, they also create a free Eventbrite where people could sign up and be reminded of upcoming events. Further, they connected with local photographers to help build their portfolio and to advance the organization’s non-profit mission while leveraging the capacities and capabilities of the local community members.



OurSquamish Placemaking meet-up activation of the pocket park, Instagram, 2023



The Pocket Park is already being used by community members who are hosting their own meetups, such as the “Tough Stuff in Squamish Support Group” hosted by Sarah Rothenburger. Social media can be a valuable tool for connecting with community members and advertising the location itself. Photography by Sarah Rothenburger, 2023

# 11

## Plan for the next tactic and activity(ies)

OurSquamish has already planned another of the activities from the Tactical Guide - "Republic of Neighbours" – which will use the Pocket Park to bring the public out for a free community dinner. This shows how one project idea can inspire future projects!



OurSquamish event partnered with Pride Squamish Republic of Neighbours picnic, Photos by Nina LaFlamme Photography, 2023

Find out more about OurSquamish  
and their ongoing work on their website:  
<https://www.oursquamish.ca/>