

# Integration – Resource Protection and Memorable Visitor Experiences in the Lake Louise Community of Banff National Park

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## Introduction

In the heart of the Canadian Rockies and Banff National Park, Lake Louise is an important international symbol of Canada and the national park system. It is part of the Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks World Heritage Site. Banff, like all national parks, is dedicated to preserving a special part of Canada's natural and cultural heritage for the benefit, education and enjoyment of present and future generations. One of the biggest questions for national parks is how to clearly state the direction national parks are taking in managing development, growth and use.

In Lake Louise, growth has been carefully controlled. However because of its remarkable combination of natural features, stunning scenery, important railway history, as well as its outstanding trail system, Lake Louise is a primary destination for many visitors to Banff National Park. This is cresting demands for expanded services, facilities and residential accommodation. The role of its plan is to guide change and ensure the national parks' mandate is supported for years to come.

## Results

The following principles and recommendations have been applied in the Lake Louise Community Plan as follows:

### 1. No Net Negative Environment Impact

The Lake Louise Community Plan enforces the principle of No Net negative Environmental Impact by reducing the hamlet boundary by approxi-

mately 37%, rehabilitating more than 40 hectares of disturbed lands inside and outside of hamlet, developing human use strategies for the area and placing rigid conditions on all implemented to gauge the health of the park in relation to the community.

The Canadian Environmental Assessment Act (CEAA) will be rigorously applied to new development proposals and any environmental issues will be mitigated to ensure the principle of No Net Negative Environmental Impact is maintained.

### 2. Appropriate Use Guidelines

The Lake Louise Community Plan identifies a Heritage Tourism Framework that reinforces national park values. It also defines principles and specific examples of basic and essential services. Only those proposals consistent with this framework will be approved. Social science data on visitor needs and expectations will guide the design and implementation of experience opportunities.

### 3. Responsible Growth Management

Fixed low growth and development guidelines for residential, visitor accommodation, institutional and commercial retail spaces have been identified in the plan. A modest increase in a range of commercial accommodation will help fill the demand for overnight services. The majority of this growth respects existing commitments. New expansion beyond these is limited and will be phased over time. Staff housing to address current problems is proceeding and must be in place prior to any commercial and institutional expansion. Infrastructure

issues and staff housing associated with commercial expansion must be addressed before occupancy permits are issued.

#### **4. Leadership in Environmental Stewardship and Heritage Conservation**

A landscape improvement strategy is a foundation of the *Lake Louise Community Plan*. This strategy will reduce non-native plant species and discourage large mammals from entering the community. A detailed environmental stewardship strategy is identified and will help the community reduce the impact of its operation.

Important heritage structures in the community have been identified. Strict architectural and redevelopment guidelines have been created to protect these structures and the heritage character of Lake Louise.

### **Conclusion**

In shaping the direction for Lake Louise, Parks Canada relied on public input and involvement of Lake Louise Advisory Board. The *Community Plan* is part of a sensitive, comprehensive and integrated management strategy for the Lake Louise area that began with the *Banff National Park Management Plan*. A transportation study, ski area guidelines and human use strategies for the park will provide additional direction.

The *Lake Louise Community Plan* is a tool that will help Parks Canada and the community makes decisions that are consistent with National Parks mandate and the vision for Banff National Park. The strategies outlined in this plan are basis for all decisions made within the community of Lake Louise ensuring the health of the park environmentally, socially and economically. By applying the principles in this plan, Lake Louise will continue to be a living example of national park values.