Ha7lh skwáyel

Welcome!

let's talk squamish

Welcome

Steep Slopes Development Permit Area

OPEN HOUSE

Learn more about the new draft Steep Slopes Development Permit Area guidelines for development on steep terrain.

The District of Squamish is located on the unceded traditional territory of the Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation). We're grateful to the Skwxwú7mesh People who have cared for these lands since time immemorial.

Visit LetsTalkSquamish.ca to learn more

Steep Slopes Development Permit Area

Project Information

Why is Squamish drafting a Steep Slopes DPA?

While many developed areas of Squamish are located on the flats of the Squamish River floodplain, an extensive area within the District of Squamish municipal boundaries is located on the hillsides above the floodplain. A significant area of land that is identified for future residential development is located in these hillside areas.

Landslides are typically caused by a combination of factors, some of which can exist for years without causing slope failure. Landslides can be triggered by a change in conditions, often weather and water-related. Typical contributing factors are the terrain, loss of trees and vegetation, fill placement, concentrated drainage and removal of the base or toe of the slope.

In addition, the design of development on steep slope areas can have significant visual and environmental impacts. DPA guidelines aim to limit the negative visual and environmental impacts in these steep slope areas.



Steep Slopes Development Permit Area

Project Information

What is a Steep Slopes DPA?

A Steep Slopes Development Permit Area (DPA) is a planning tool used to guide development in areas where steep slopes may create hazardous conditions. Development Permit Areas are designated within the District of Squamish Official Community Plan (OCP) Bylaw, persuant to the Local Government Act of B.C.

The DPA includes guidelines that set out the requirements for development, helping ensure that risks such as slope instability, erosion, and drainage impacts are properly managed.

The draft Steep Slopes DPA was prepared with the guidance and input of qualified professionals with experience working in Squamish, and informed by Steep Slope guidelines and best practices in B.C. municipalities.

When is a DPA required?

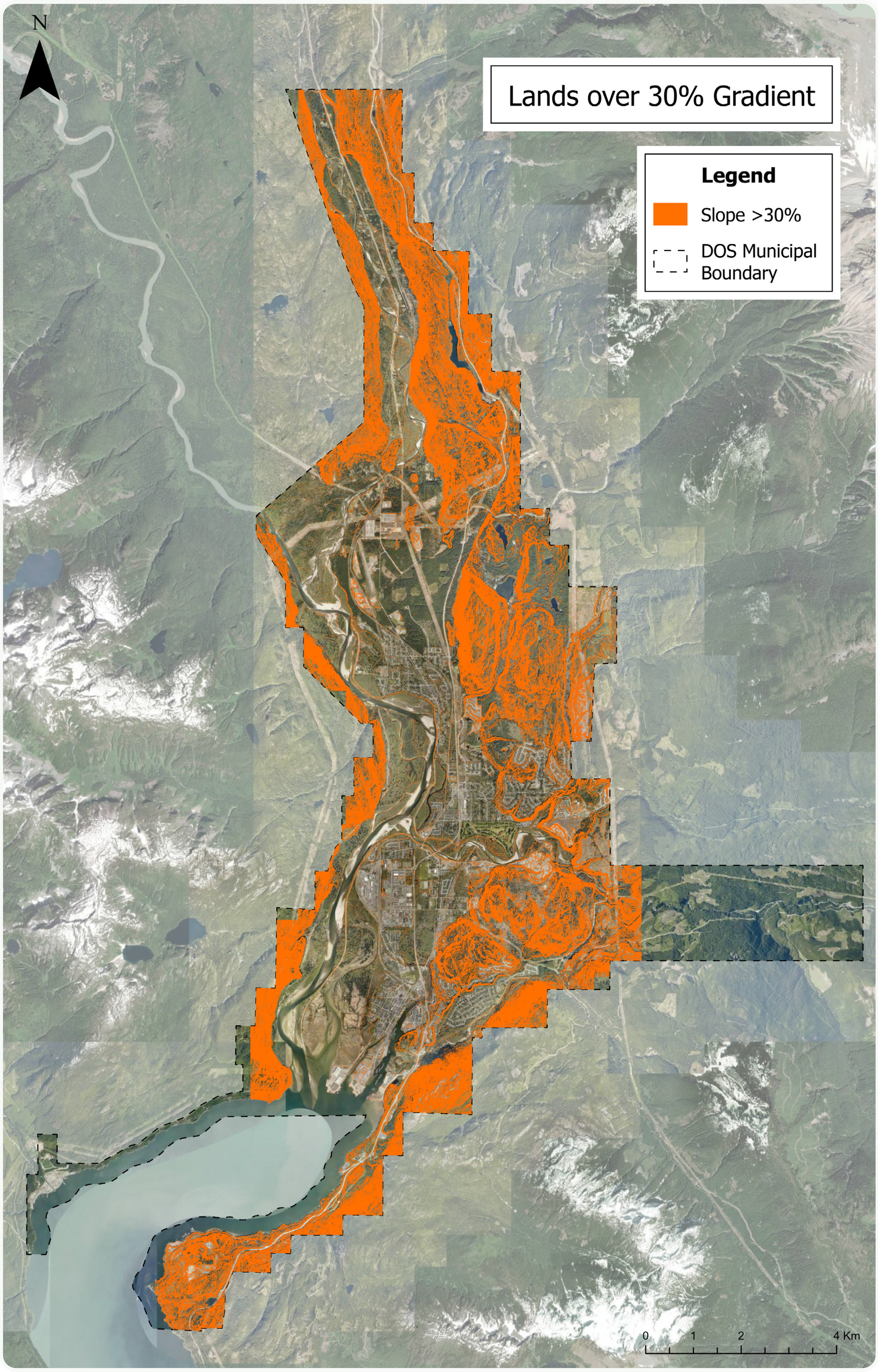
- The intention of the new proposed DPA is to reduce risks associated with steep slopes, protect the environment, and minimize the visual impacts of development.
- A Steep Slopes Development Permit is required prior to land development activities such as subdivision, construction, excavation, soil placement or removal, and tree removal within designated steep slope areas.
- The DPA guidelines address key considerations including hazard assessment, site layout and grading, building form and character, transportation and access, retaining walls and rock cuts, excavation practices, groundwater and surface water management, appropriate setbacks, and vegetation protection and restoration.

Steep Slopes Development Permit Area

Lands Over 30% Gradient

What properties are included in the DPA?

The Steep Slopes Developent Permit Area applies to all lands with a slope greater than 30 per cent.



Steep Slopes Development Permit Area

Approach

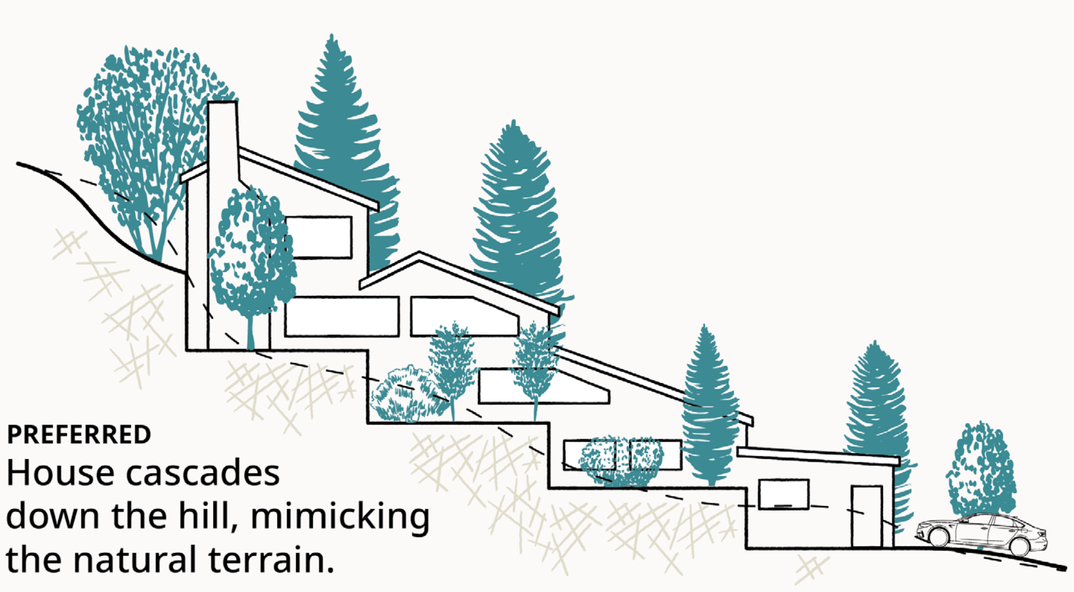
Reducing Risk on Steep Slopes

Developing steep terrain can present challenges related to slope stability, and safety. The draft guidelines address these risks in several ways:

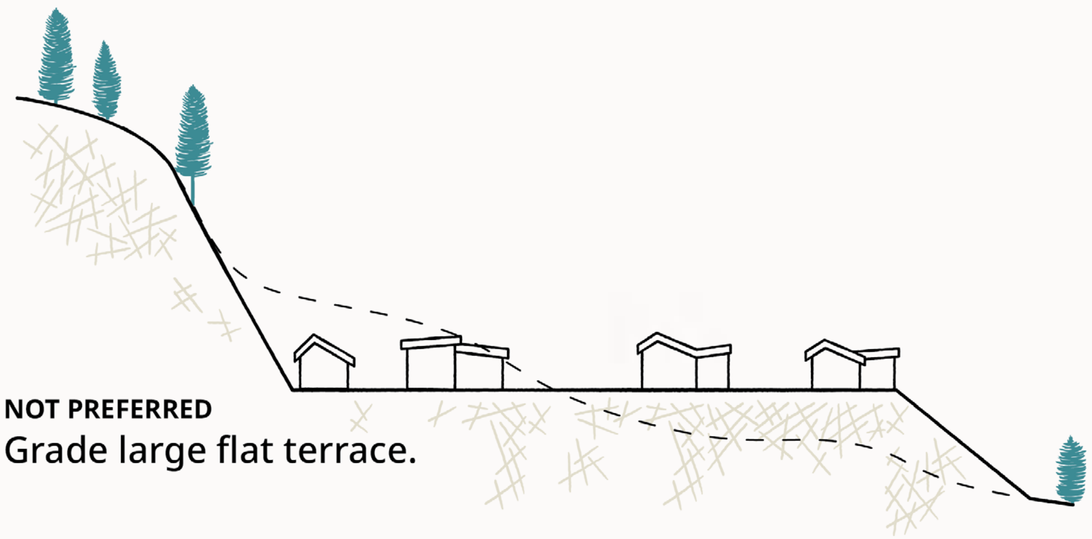
- A steep slope hazard assessment is required to confirm that land is safe for its intended use and to evaluate how ground and surface water may affect slope stability.
- Site grading, excavation, rock cuts, and retaining walls should be designed by qualified professional engineers.
- Road grades in strata developments should align with District of Squamish standards.
- Vegetation removed during development should be replanted to support slope stability and long-term resilience.



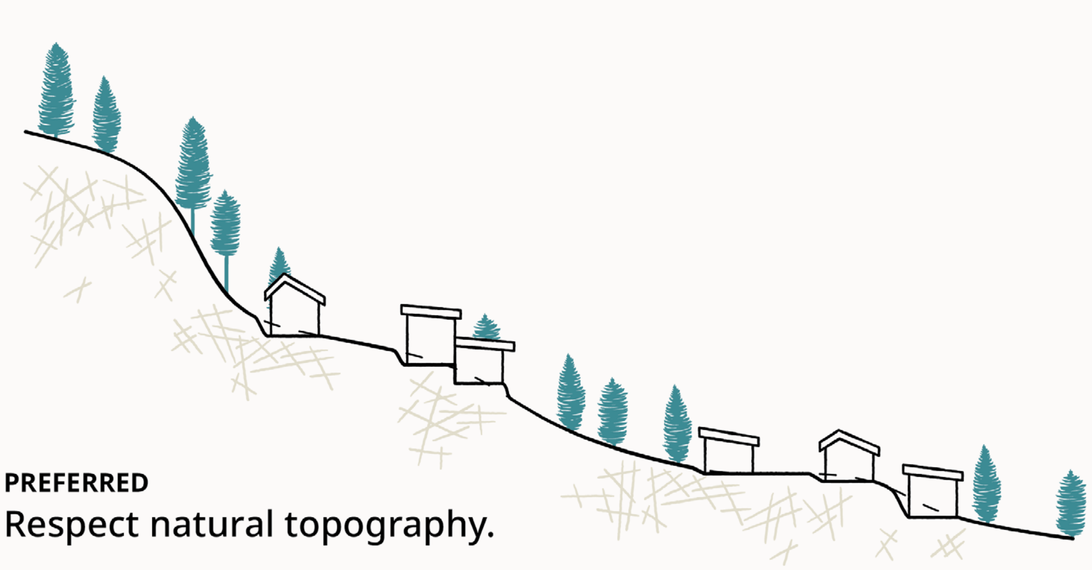
NOT PREFERRED
House design does not reflect natural slope.



PREFERRED
House cascades down the hill, mimicking the natural terrain.



NOT PREFERRED
Grade large flat terrace.



PREFERRED
Respect natural topography.

Steep Slopes Development Permit Area

Approach

Respecting the Natural Landscape

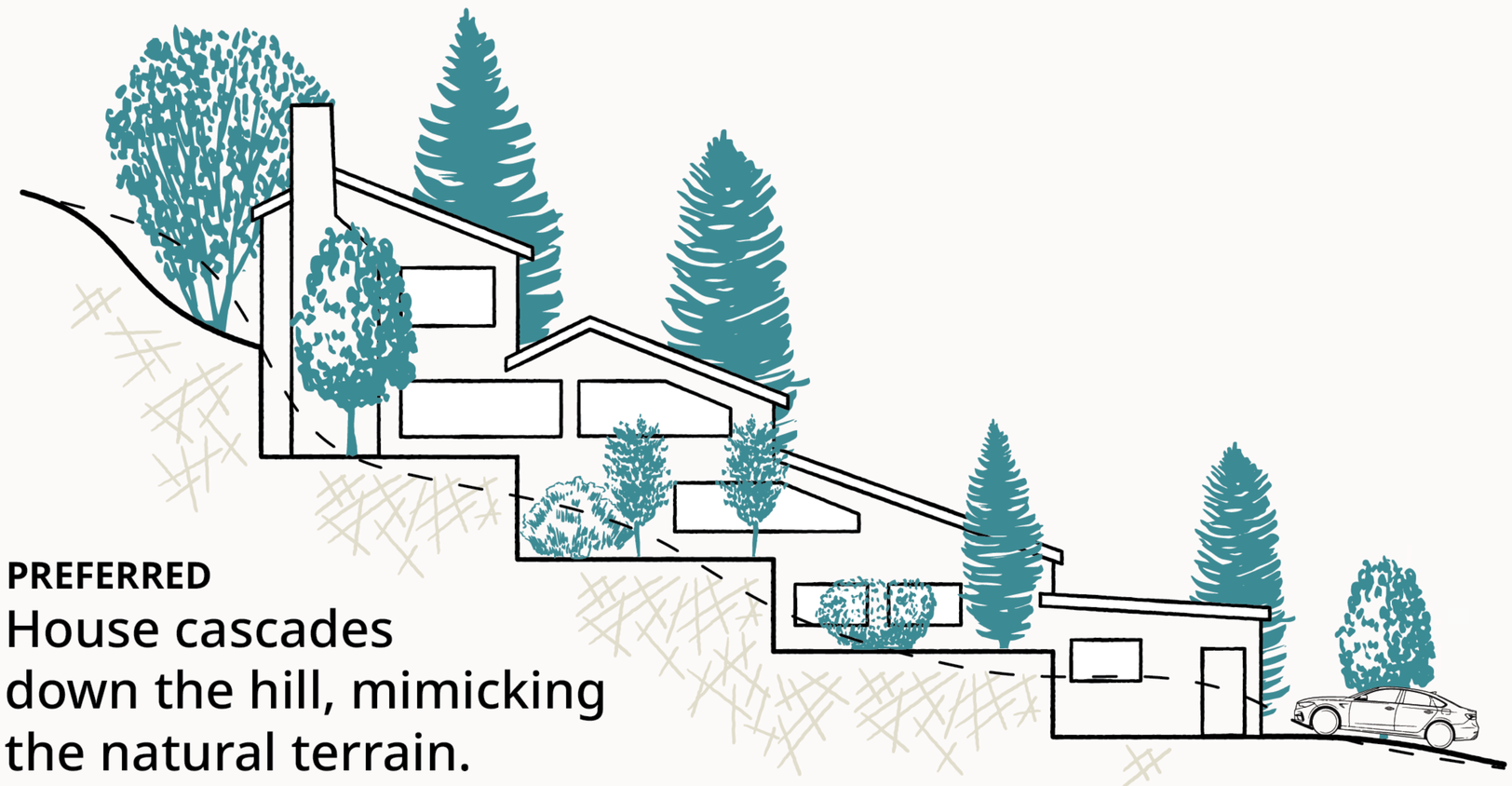
Squamish's steep hillsides and ridgelines are defining features of the community. The guidelines aim to ensure new development works with the land rather than dramatically reshaping it.

Some key principles include:

- Buildings should follow the natural contours of the site. Stepped, clustered, and articulated forms are encouraged.
- Large-scale grading and the creation of expansive flat terraces on hillsides should be avoided.
- Altered slopes should use varied contours and vegetation to avoid sharp angles or a manufactured appearance.



NOT PREFERRED
House design does not reflect natural slope.



PREFERRED
House cascades down the hill, mimicking the natural terrain.

Steep Slopes Development Permit Area

What's Missing?

Public Engagement

April 2026

Residents are invited to review the draft Steep Slopes DPA proposal, submit comments and complete a short survey on Let's Talk Squamish.

April/ May 2026

Staff will review feedback received through public engagement and refine the draft guidelines.

May 2026

A summary of engagement results and recommended updates will be prepared for Council.

An online survey is available for both the general public and members of the development community.



The survey is intended to better understand perspectives on the draft guidelines, including safety, design, practicality, and implementation.

Public input will be collected and carefully considered before the draft DPA is brought forward for Council for consideration.

Take the online survey to share your input.

Steep Slopes Development Permit Area

Steep Slopes Hazard Management Table

Land Development Planning Stage	Decision Maker	Legislation	Local Government Hazard Management Tool
Planning and Land Use (OCP Amendments, Neighbourhood Plans, Rezoning)	Council	Local Government Act Official Community Plans, Division 4, Sec 473 Development Approval Information Requirements Division 6, Sec 485	• Official Community Plans may include policy statements, map designations and restrictions on use of land subject to hazard conditions. • The District requires a geotechnical report where steep slopes or hazards are identified. • For neighbourhood plans, geotechnical reports guide land use patterns and road layout. • During rezoning, recommendations from geotechnical reports are secured through Section 219 covenants registered on title.
Subdivision	Approving Officer	Land Title Act Approval of Subdivision Plans Division 4, Section 86	• The Approving Officer may require a geotechnical report confirming the land may be safely used for the intended purpose. • A grading plan may be required and registered on title, requiring future development to follow the approved grading plan. • Registration of a covenant may be required restricting use of the land. • If geotechnical recommendations are secured through subdivision, lots are typically graded to create buildable sites prior to building construction.
Development Permit	Council or Director (as delegated by bylaw)	Local Government Act Development Permits Division 7, Sec 488 & 491	• Development Permit Areas are designated to protect development from hazardous conditions. • The municipality may require a Qualified Professional (QP) report to determine whether land can be safely developed. • Development permits may include conditions related to slope stability, grading, and site design.
Building Permit	Building Inspector	Community Charter Building Regulations Division 8, Sec 56	• If construction is proposed on land subject to steep slopes or landslide hazards, the Building Inspector may require a report from a Qualified Professional confirming that land is safe for the intended use. • Registration of a covenant may be required restricting use of the land. • The building permit may only be issued if a QP confirms the site can be safely used. • If the building inspector determines the site is not safe for the intended use, the permit must be withheld.