

2018 DOWNTOWN PLAN What We Heard

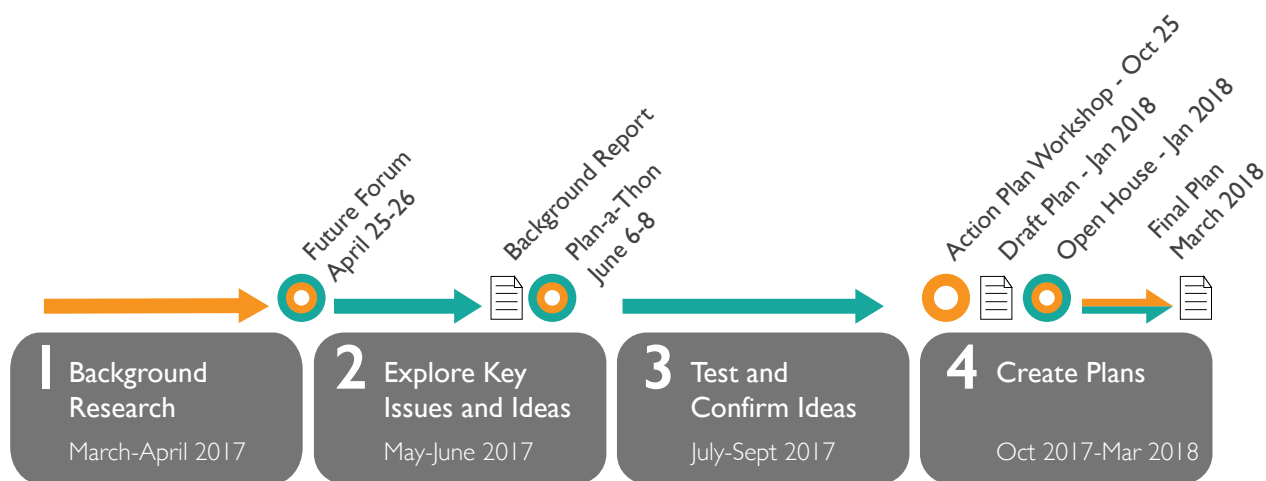
A SUMMARY OF PUBLIC CONSULTATION RESULTS APRIL-JULY 2017

OVERVIEW

The Downtown Plan project began in the spring of 2017. Its goal is to create an updated and unified vision for the Downtown Whitehorse area and establish priorities for the direction and specific actions needed to keep it a vibrant and vital part of our community over the next 10-20 years.

Between late April and Canada Day (July 1), an estimated 750+ people shared their ideas and thoughts for the Downtown via interviews, workshops, online surveys, the Future Forum, Plan-a-Thon, interactive installations, and social media conversations.

PLANNING PROCESS



WHAT WE'VE DONE

PHASE 1 – INTERVIEWS AND FUTURE FORUM

What's working, what's not, and what are your ideas for change? These questions were the focus of our Phase 1 background research. The project team hosted the April 25-26 Future Forum and interviewed key organizations to collect answers to these questions and launch the project.

ENGAGEMENT BY THE NUMBERS:

- 12 key interviews with representatives from government, private sector, and non-profit groups.
- 15 representatives from Kwanlin Dün First Nation, Ta'an Kwäch'än Council, City of Whitehorse, and Government of Yukon attended an intergovernmental session.
- 50 people from across all sectors attended the Downtown Future Forum Workshop.
- An estimated 150 people attended the Downtown/Marwell Future Forum public session.

PHASE 2 – PLAN-A-THON AND COMMUNITY EVENTS

What is our vision for the Downtown? What ideas would make how we move, shop, work, live, play, and express our identity as a city better? Phase 2 of the engagement process focused on generating, exploring and prioritizing key ideas and honing in further on a vision of how we would like the Downtown to evolve. The project team launched a variety of engagement initiatives throughout May, June, and July to collect ideas and feedback on the work completed so far. A social media campaign gathered feedback on a variety of topics, additional interviews were held, and a PLAN-A-THON workshop and pop-ups took place in early June. The PLAN-A-THON allowed the project team to "bring to life" the ideas of stakeholders and the public through sketches and better pinpoint priorities for the plan to address.

ENGAGEMENT BY THE NUMBERS:

- An estimated 150-200 people shared ideas, questions, and concerns on the CONVERSATION CUBE that toured the community. The Cube lived for a week at the Waterfront Wharf, F.H. Collins/ Second Heaven Skate Park and the Black St. Stairs in May.
- An estimated 175 people shared their ideas with the Project Team and/or on the CONVERSATION CUBE during Canada Day celebrations at Shipyards Park.
- 20 people shared their ideas at the Whitehorse Connex event for marginalized community members.
- People engaged with social media posts 3,062 times (photo clicks, reactions, shares, and comments), and shared 288 comments on our Facebook page.
- 40 participants and 15 intergovernmental representatives attended the Downtown PLAN-A-THON workshop.
- 125 people talked to us about Downtown and Marwell at the Open House and pop-up booths (Farmer's Market and Tony's Pizza).
- 40 people responded to an online survey directed at the Downtown/Marwell business community.

WHAT WE HEARD – KEY ISSUES

A number of key themes emerged during the course of engagement, including:

QUOTES ABOUT HOW WE MOVE

"I love being able to walk to everything I need and also to wander pleasantly through alleys, walkable spring, summer and fall, perfect for jogging or a family outing."

"I love a lot of things about this city but I will say that public transit here is probably the worst out of [any] city I've ever been to. We don't even have a bus that runs on Sundays. And limited on Saturdays. Makes it hard for some of us to get around when we rely on it."

"Paint the entire bike lanes green, versus a thin white line that eventually gets obliterated by car tires. Continuous separated and paved trails along Alaska Highway and other major arterials."

HOW WE MOVE

- Active transportation options have improved but there is still work to do, particularly better maintenance and marking of existing bike paths, safe connections into Downtown from Two Mile Hill and east-west connections through Downtown.
- Transit has also improved but people would like increased bus service (weekends, late night, more stops) and more comfortable transit stops.
- People want safer connections between the Downtown and other neighbourhoods and safer ways for cars, bikes, and walkers to share roads and trails in the Downtown.
- Traffic speeds on 2nd Avenue are a major safety concern (and 4th Ave to a lesser extent).
- Safer east/west connections through the Downtown by bike and foot are needed.
- Downtown businesses (especially in the Main Street area) and some residents are concerned about parking issues, including a shortage of parking spaces due to all-day parking, the inconvenience of payment methods, and the possible need for a parkade.
- There is some interest in alternative modes of transit in the Downtown (smaller buses, shuttles, etc.).
- Some roads in the Old Town area (6th and 7th Ave especially) need upgrading.

QUOTES ABOUT HOW WE LIVE

“Love: the KDCC, Old Firehall, the Millennium Trail, Fireweed Market. Hate: empty, dilapidated buildings like the old Dairy Queen. They look awful and take up prime real estate.”

“Love the murals, millenium trail, KDCC, trolley, both downtown parks and much more.”

HOW WE LIVE

- Housing types and tenures for all ages and incomes are needed in the Downtown.
- There is debate over continued density in the Downtown, but general agreement that more density must be accompanied by more amenities.
- People are worried about safety, public intoxication, panhandling, and homelessness.
- There were concerns about the number of unused lots and buildings.
- Some people expressed a desire to be an environmentally friendly city, offering suggestions such as public recycling and compost bins.

QUOTES ABOUT HOW WE PLAY

“Lepage Park seems to be a place that is used for parties and there is always broken glass. This is a place where people bring their children for the arts in the park and it's pretty dangerous with all the broken glass.”

“Frank Slim building great recreation/ gathering area, love the skate loop, fire pit, lights, farmers market”

“Not enough venues for small productions and shows”

“Need to celebrate arts and culture as integral to Downtown”

HOW WE PLAY

- The Downtown parks (Rotary and Shipyards) are highly valued, as is the network of paved and natural surface trails.
- The trail network still needs better connections:
 - Completion of the lower escarpment trail to connect to the Millennium Trail.

- Another staircase to the airport escarpment from the southern part of Downtown.
- Youth do not seem to have many safe, inviting spaces to hang out.
- The waterfront wharf is great but is often windy and lacking in activity/animation.
- Concerns about public intoxication and safety at Lepage Park were raised.
- People would like more family-friendly spaces in the Downtown core.
- Downtown beautification efforts – such as holiday lights, flower boxes, murals, etc. – are very appreciated.

HOW WE WORK/SHOP DOWNTOWN

- “Pop-up” shops, food trucks, growth of “Made in Yukon” products, and micro-retail options are seen as positive developments that people would like to see more of.
- Some people want more variety and expanded hours for shops.
- Downtown Whitehorse should facilitate entrepreneurship and local business development.

HOW WE EXPRESS OUR IDENTITY

- First Nations heritage and place names should be integrated into the Downtown.
- The local festival, music and arts scene is generally thriving.
- People want more evening activity options and venues that are family-friendly/alcohol-free.
- Flexible public spaces and more opportunities for winter and summer outdoor gatherings and events are desired.
- Increased use of rooftop space and establishment of community gardens would enrich the Downtown.
- Some people expressed concerns about newer building forms in the Downtown (particularly Old Town) and would like design guidelines to maintain a certain aesthetic.
- Residents want Whitehorse to live up to its “Wilderness City” branding with its design choices and not look like cities in the south.
- There is strong interest in having more events located in the Downtown core versus Shipyards Park.

QUOTES ABOUT HOW WE WORK/SHOP

“Stores hours are limited. We need more variety. Few places in town for children’s clothes”

“Would love to see more local coffee spots and food trucks downtown.”

“...services for lower income are slowly evaporating (family thrift store, 2nd hand clothing once on 2nd before new build that can't seem to rent 99.99% of its space, and various free stores)”

GET IN TOUCH WITH US!

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