

# Commercial & Industrial Land Study

## Focus Group Sessions: Input Summary

In November 2018, the City of Whitehorse (Planning & Sustainability Services Department) and a consulting team led by Groundswell Planning initiated a project to develop a *Commercial & Industrial Land Study* focused on areas outside of the downtown core. Three focus group sessions were held as part the engagement process. A fourth session was planned, but was cancelled due to lack of interest. Invitation letters were sent by mail on November 5<sup>th</sup> to approximately 350 property owners and businesses located in the four zones of interest for the study: *CH-Highway Commercial*, *CIM-Mixed-Use Commercial/Industrial*, *IS-Service Industrial*, and *IH-Heavy Industrial*. The sessions were also open to prospective property and business owners, and were advertised through social media platforms and networks (Facebook and Twitter). The events were described as follows:

- **Session 1:** Monday, November 26<sup>th</sup>, 11:30 am – 1:00 pm  
**Planning for Highway Commercial and Mixed-Use Commercial/Industrial Lands**  
Discussion will focus on challenges and opportunities in the Marwell, Hillcrest, Kopper King, and Alaska Highway corridor commercial and mixed-use areas. Marwell topics include the recently adopted *Marwell Plan*.
- **Session 2:** Tuesday, November 27<sup>th</sup>, 11:30 am – 1:00 pm  
**Planning for Service Industrial Lands**  
Discussion will focus on challenges and opportunities in the Kulan, Taylor, Mount Sima, MacRae, and Alaska Highway corridor industrial areas.
- **Session 3:** Thursday, November 29<sup>th</sup>, 11:30 am – 1:00 pm (Cancelled)  
**Planning for Heavy Industrial Lands**  
Discussion will focus on heavy industrial activities that require larger land parcels and buffers to mitigate potential nuisances (e.g. noise, dust, odour, vibration).
- **Session 4:** Friday, November 30<sup>th</sup>, 11:30 am – 1:00 pm  
**Meeting the Needs of the Food, Beverage, and Cannabis Production Sectors**  
This session will focus on the specific needs of these emerging sectors in terms of land, servicing, and other requirements. Discussion includes indoor agriculture and processing.

A combined total of 20 participants engaged in the sessions. Some participants represented associations and government departments, and some attended multiple sessions. Each session began with a presentation given by project staff; a hybrid version of the Power Point slides is available on the project website at [www.whitehorse.ca/commercialindustrial](http://www.whitehorse.ca/commercialindustrial). The presentations were followed by group discussions. All sessions ended approximately 30 minutes overtime.

The following summary captures conversation highlights from the sessions. View the extended summaries featured in Appendices 1-3 to read more about each highlight. This document is intended to show the array of topics raised and views held by participants, and is not intended to reflect consensus amongst participants. Some topics fall outside of the scope of the land study, but are useful to capture as they point to situations affecting the business community, and will be communicated to the appropriate government departments.

### **Session 1: Planning for Highway Commercial and Mixed-Use Commercial/Industrial Lands**

Location: Public Safety Building, Large Meeting Room

Participants: 8

Read more in Appendix 1, pages 5-7

Conversation highlights (concerns, support, insights, ideas, views, etc.):

1. Implementing the **vision of the *Marwell Plan*** will impact heavy industrial businesses.
2. Lack of **notification to property owners** about the *Marwell Plan*.
3. Whitehorse needs to “grow up” to be a more supportive **place for doing business**.
4. One **point of government contact** would improve business relations.
5. **Trust, transparency, and fairness** are important and need to be improved.
6. A faster **permitting process** is needed and applications should be treated consistently.
7. A better **approach** to developing commercial and industrial lands is needed.
8. **Land scarcity** leads owners to rezone in order to get what they need.
9. Businesses need to own land to build **equity and assets**; leasing/renting is not a good option.
10. Government of Yukon proposed **Alaska Highway upgrades** would impact businesses.
11. Maintenance is needed in the **Alaska Highway right-of-way**; whose responsibility is it?
12. The City has enough **trails**; trail interests should not be used to block development.
13. Converting the **Whitehorse Copper former mine site** to industrial lands... what’s the hold up?

## Session 2: Planning for Service Industrial Lands

Location: Public Safety Building, Large Meeting Room

Participants: 6

Read more in Appendix 2, pages 8-11

Conversation highlights (concerns, support, insights, ideas, views, etc.):

1. **Rents** are high and difficult for some businesses to afford.
2. More **rental space** is not the solution; businesses need to own land to build equity.
3. Keep **land costs** low; leave out the servicing.
4. Interest in **live/work situations**.
5. Sometimes **residential and industrial uses** do not mix well.
6. Construction monopolies drive up **infrastructure costs**; consider unbundling projects.
7. Time to consider a new **development model** to get land on the market.
8. Businesses have different needs; an ideal **lot size** does not exist.
9. **Building codes** could use review to be more practical for industrial settings.
10. Optimizing operational space can mean less than optimal **septic practices**.
11. New industrial lands are needed, and would generate **employment**.
12. **Landscaping** requirements in industrial areas are not needed.
13. Prevent **vacant lots**; transfer land title after development occurs.
14. Salvage yard?... or junk yard? **Tipping fees** are keeping properties out of circulation.
15. **Development permits** trigger new zoning requirements that are costly to meet.
16. **Quarry lands** should be viewed as sites for future industrial lands.
17. The area **behind Canyon Crescent** could have development potential.

## Session 4: Meeting the Needs of the Food, Beverage, and Cannabis Production Sectors

Location: Canada Games Centre, Board Room

Participants: 10

Read more in Appendix 3, pages 12-16

Conversation highlights (concerns, supports, insights, ideas, views, etc.):

### 1. Industry trends:

- a. The territory's **poultry, egg, pork, and cattle industries** are maturing;
  - b. Interest in **entomophagy** (bug farming) is growing, and has potential as a protein source for human consumption or to be added to grain as feed for livestock;
  - c. There is a demographic interested in buying **local products**, and entrepreneurs that want to produce local products;
  - d. Interest is growing in the "**slow food**" movement;
  - e. There are a lot of **DIY-ers** wanting to grow and process their own food and beverage;
  - f. Interest is growing for **non-commercial** food production opportunities, close to residences;
  - g. There is interest in **cannabis production** (cultivation and processing), though no completed licenses yet in Yukon for non-medical cannabis;
  - h. Producers are **energy** consumers, but also interested in being energy producers, particularly on farms.
2. **System-wide industry support** is needed; not just through zoning and land availability.
  3. Is it waste?... or a resource? **Full-resource thinking** needed.
  4. **Federal regulations** make it difficult to get local products onto shelves.
  5. **Legislative boxes** are difficult to navigate and difficult to change.
  6. **Power and tech infrastructure** is important for indoor agriculture production methods.
  7. High **municipal taxes** can be a disincentive for locating businesses within Whitehorse.
  8. Access to **public transportation** is needed in decentralized employment centres.
  9. **Caretaker residences** help to offset wages and subsidize living costs.
  10. A "**living wage**" means more money spent in the community.
  11. Industries locate where **economic and operational factors** make sense.
  12. **Waterfront + breweries** = good combo.
  13. **Onsite enjoyment of FB&C products** can enhance the educational experience of a product.
  14. The **future of cannabis production** depends on ability to sell to Government of Yukon as the retailer.
  15. "**Local**" **branding** is important, but it has to be accurate.
  16. **Community market spaces** lower financial risk and help businesses to start-up.
  17. Whitehorse needs a "**Yukonstruct**" for foodies.

# Appendix 1

## Session 1: Planning for Highway Commercial and Mixed-Use Commercial/Industrial Lands – Extended Input Summary

**Date:** Monday November 26<sup>th</sup>, 2018  
**Time:** 11:30 am to 1:00 pm (adjourned ~1:30 pm)  
**Location:** Public Safety Building, Large Meeting Room  
**Staff:** Erica Beasley (City of Whitehorse) and Jane Koepke (Groundswell Planning)

The focus of the November 26<sup>th</sup> group session was on *Planning for Highway Commercial and Mixed-use Commercial/Industrial Lands*. This session was open to existing and prospective property and business owners. Advertising included a direct mail-out to property owners, general notices on Facebook and Twitter, and promotion through the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce Facebook page. Eight participants attended. Representation was from property owners and business operators in the Marwell, central/airport, and southern Whitehorse areas. One participant identified as a prospective property owner. One association (the Alaska Highway Business Association) was represented. The session began with a presentation delivered by project staff, followed by a group discussion. The questions below were used as conversation prompts:

- What about your current location/land parcel **works well** for your business?
- What about your current location/land parcel **doesn't work well** for your business?
- What **trends and opportunities** should the City be thinking about as it plans future commercial/industrial lands?
- What **strategies** should the City consider to better utilize existing commercial/industrial lands?
- What **areas** do you think would be strategic for developing new commercial/industrial lands?
- Do you have **other thoughts/comments/ideas** for the City to consider in facilitating private sector activity outside of the Downtown core?

The group discussion is summarized in the following notes, which are organized by theme. These notes are intended to capture the array of topics raised and views held by participants, and are not intended to reflect a consensus amongst participants.

### **1. Implementation of the vision of the Marwell Plan will impact heavy industrial businesses.**

Several questions and concerns were raised regarding the direction set by the City's recently adopted *Marwell Plan*. The stated vision is for Marwell to evolve into a denser mixed-use and light industrial neighbourhood, functioning as an industrious extension to Downtown. Implementation would include relocating heavy industrial uses to other areas, and promoting active commercial uses. Participants raised concern for the impacts this would have to existing heavy industrial businesses and the long term investments made into properties. It was suggested that the area's new vision has created a state of limbo and uncertainty that could affect the value of properties and other assets. The City's suggestion of

taking a “land swap” approach to implementation was not viewed as a desirable solution. Questions were raised about who would pay for the costs of relocation and decontamination of properties.

## **2. Lack of notification to property owners about the *Marwell Plan*.**

Concern was raised that Marwell property owners were not sufficiently notified about the *Marwell Plan* process and final adoption. It was suggested that property owners should be made aware of the plan’s vision when applying for development permits (i.e. owners should be made aware before they make significant investments into their properties, when the City has a long term vision that differs from their proposed improvements).

## **3. Whitehorse needs to “grow up” to be a more supportive place for doing business.**

It was indicated that Whitehorse is currently not an attractive place for doing business, and that more needs to be done to support the business community. It was expressed that bureaucracies and the current regulatory framework are impeding businesses from establishing. Reflection is needed by the City and the Government of Yukon (YG) on why certain regulations exist and what they are intended to accomplish. It was suggested that Whitehorse needs to “grow up” and adapt to the current needs of businesses.

## **4. One point of government contact would improve business relations.**

Interest was expressed for the responsibility of managing Crown lands within Whitehorse to be transferred from YG to the City. It was suggested that having just one point of government contact would help to reduce the back-and-forth between governments that businesses are currently subject to.

## **5. Trust, transparency, and fairness are important and need to be improved.**

Concern was raised regarding “back room deals” for land purchases. It was suggested that small land holders are treated unfairly when larger interests are present, and that better communication is needed from the City on this front. It was also mentioned that land sales need to be negotiated at a fair price, and that the City’s speculation on subdivision interests should not block requests for land.

## **6. A faster permitting process is needed and applications should be treated consistently.**

Concern was raised for the length of time required in getting through the permitting process, and it was indicated that the lack of consistent messaging from the City on applications needs to be resolved. The situation leads people to appeal to City Council with their issues, rather than working with administration through the designated processes. Examples mentioned include land uses being allowed on one property, but refused on neighbouring properties. The inconsistent application of rules for sea can storage throughout Whitehorse was also raised as being problematic and causing uncertainty on what is actually allowed.

## **7. A better approach to developing commercial and industrial lands is needed.**

Support was expressed for the City’s initiative to develop a *Commercial & Industrial Land Study* as a coordinated approach to land planning. It was indicated that in the past a dart board approach has been taken to identify new areas for development. This is why commercial and industrial lands have been

slivered along the highway and piecemealed throughout Whitehorse. It was expressed that a more comprehensive approach is needed.

#### **8. Land scarcity leads owners to rezone in order to get what they need.**

It was noted that the shortage in land availability leads some property owners to rezone at their locations in order to carry out their desired business activities. There is nowhere to move to, so owners try to make do with the properties that they have. Sometimes this does not result in a good outcome from a neighbourhood design perspective; but other options do not seem available.

#### **9. Businesses need to own land to build equity and assets; leasing/renting is not a good option.**

A repeated message heard from participants is that businesses need access to land ownership opportunities in order to build their assets and equity. Increasing rental opportunities was not viewed as a viable solution to addressing the land availability challenge, and it was questionable as to whether there is interest in the land leasing/rental model. Businesses often have very specific needs that require customized buildings to accommodate their activities; it was viewed as uncommon for businesses to be able to rent exactly what they need.

#### **10. YG's proposed Alaska Highway upgrades would impact businesses.**

Concern was expressed for the impacts that the *Alaska Highway Whitehorse Corridor Functional Plan* will have on highway businesses, if the plan's central portions are implemented. In some cases, buildings are situated within the highway right-of-way and would need to be removed. In other cases, parking, storage, and access would be impacted. Preference was expressed to preserve the existing land use configuration, rather than widening the highway. The plan's proposal to divide the highway with a median was also viewed as problematic; not allowing left hand turns by northbound traffic would mean loss of customers who would continue on to more convenient business locations.

#### **11. Maintenance is needed in the Alaska Highway right-of-way; whose responsibility is it?**

Frustration was expressed about ownership and maintenance of the highway right-of-way, which can flood in spring time. It was suggested that maintenance is needed, but there is confusion on whose responsibility it is. Clarity was also requested on property owners' ability to pave driveways through the right-of-way to connect out to the highway.

#### **12. The City has enough trails; trail interests should not be used to block development.**

It was suggested that there is an over-consideration for trails in City planning processes and that trail interests are sometimes expressed as a means to block development. Interest was expressed for a more balanced approach to considering land requests. It was expressed that over-development of trails represents elite interests, and that the City needs to stop drinking the Kool-Aid.

#### **13. Converting the Whitehorse Copper former mine site to industrial lands... what's the hold up?**

Questions were raised relating to the former Whitehorse Copper mine site and the perceived administrative barriers created by the City that are preventing active reclamation of the site, and its eventual conversion to industrial lands.

# Appendix 2

## Session 2: Planning for Service Industrial Lands – Extended Input Summary

**Date:** Tuesday November 27<sup>th</sup>, 2018  
**Time:** 11:30 am to 1:00 pm (adjourned ~1:30 pm)  
**Location:** Public Safety Building, Large Meeting Room  
**Project staff:** Erica Beasley (City of Whitehorse) and Jane Koepke (Groundswell Planning)

The focus of the November 27<sup>th</sup> group session was on *Planning for Service Industrial Lands*. This session was open to existing and prospective property and business owners. Advertising included a direct mail-out to commercial and industrial property owners, general notices on Facebook and Twitter, and promotion through the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce Facebook page. Six participants attended, of which three also attended the session held on November 26<sup>th</sup>. Representation was from a mix of property owners and business operators, including three owners of properties zoned *Service Industrial*. One association (the Alaska Highway Business Association) was represented. The session began with a presentation delivered by project staff, followed by a group discussion. The questions below were used as conversation prompts:

- What about your current location/land parcel **works well** for your business?
- What about your current location/land parcel **doesn't work well** for your business?
- What **trends and opportunities** should the City be thinking about as it plans future *Service Industrial* lands?
- What **strategies** should the City consider to better utilize existing *Service Industrial* lands?
- What **type of Service Industrial lots** do you think industry needs, now and in the future?
- Do you have **other thoughts/comments/ideas** for the City to consider in facilitating private sector activity outside of the Downtown core?

The group discussion is summarized in the following notes, which are organized by theme. These notes are intended to capture the array of topics raised and views held by participants, and are not intended to reflect a consensus amongst participants.

### **1. Rents are high and difficult for some businesses to afford.**

It was expressed by participants that the affordability of shop rental space is a big issue for Whitehorse's business community. A rental rate example of \$3,500/month was mentioned, which was difficult for the business owner to find; other options available were more expensive. It was suggested that many businesses struggle to cover their rent, and that the high cost of purchasing land translates into high rents. It was mentioned that land costs have tripled since lots were released in the Mount Sima area, and that the days of \$90,000 lots are over.

## **2. More rental space is not the solution; businesses need to own land to build equity.**

It was mentioned that while some businesses rent, for many it is not their preferred situation. It was mentioned that businesses need to own land in order to leverage assets and develop capital.

## **3. Keep land costs low; leave out the servicing.**

Participants suggested that keeping the cost of land down should be a top priority and that this can be achieved, in part, by keeping servicing to a minimum. For example, installing water and sewer mains within road infrastructure was not viewed as a priority, if it means that land costs will be higher. If needing to choose between municipal water and sewer servicing, water was indicated as the preferred service.

## **4. Interest in live/work situations.**

It was expressed that having the opportunity for live/work situations on industrial properties is desirable and can help with business and housing affordability. However, it was noted that residential functions and resident expectations should not detract from the intended purposes of industrial lands. For example, noise within an industrial area should be expected, and nuisance complaints should not be enforced the same way that they are in residential areas.

## **5. Sometimes residential and industrial uses do not mix well.**

It was pointed out that while live/work situations are needed, the mix of industrial and residential activity are not always a good fit. The example of heavy industrial trucks driving through the residential portions of Mount Sima was provided as an example. It was recommended that similar situations should be avoided in the future through better separation of uses.

## **6. Construction monopolies drive up infrastructure costs; consider unbundling projects.**

It was expressed that construction monopolies for utility and road works are driving up the price of land development. Part of the issue was viewed to be how governments bundle project phases (e.g. deep, shallow, and surface works). It was suggested that by separating phases into smaller contracts, a more competitive bidding process could occur, which would help to bring infrastructure costs down. There are multiple smaller businesses in Whitehorse that can handle specific project components; but only a few large businesses that can handle the full suite of infrastructure works. It was suggested that unbundling contracts would open opportunities for these smaller businesses, while bringing costs down. BC Hydro was mentioned as an example of a company that is able to choose amongst many eligible contractors at competitive rates.

## **7. Time to consider a new development model to get land on the market.**

It was suggested that the slow development process in Whitehorse is due to industry's reliance on government to open up new land. It was suggested that the City should look into alternative models that are working in other municipalities; in some places, government/private partnerships are moving development along at a faster pace and there may be potential for similar partnerships in Whitehorse.

### **8. Businesses have different needs; an ideal lot size does not exist.**

It was suggested that an ideal lot size does not exist because businesses vary widely in their operational needs. It was suggested that all lots should be designed to at least meet their basic servicing needs. It was questioned whether water delivery was a viable servicing option.

### **9. Building codes could use review to be more practical for industrial settings.**

It was pointed out that building code requirements could use review to be more practical for their application to industrial settings. An example was offered whereby insulation requirements in walls are set to a high R value, yet large shop/garage doors are a low R value, so net heat loss occurs. It was also mentioned that some industrial spaces do not need to be heated, depending on the operation, yet are required to meet high R values. These requirements increase the development costs for businesses, and might not be having the desired outcomes.

### **10. Optimizing operational space can mean less than optimal septic practices.**

It was indicated that lot size constraints can lead businesses to fully utilize their surface areas out of necessity; sometimes this means storing materials or driving heavy vehicles over septic fields. Compaction of septic fields should generally be avoided because this can impact the proper functioning of the system. Having municipal connection to water and sewer could free up operational space on lots, but this was not viewed as being a significant help to the situation, since some businesses are already utilizing septic field areas, despite potential issues.

### **11. New industrial lands are needed, and would generate employment.**

It was emphasized that recognition is needed for the important role that industrial areas provide in generating employment and supporting the Whitehorse economy. The business case for supporting industrial land development needs to reflect the many direct and spin-off benefits that industrial lands bring to the community.

### **12. Landscaping requirements in industrial areas are not needed.**

Questions were raised as to why the City has landscaping requirements for industrial areas. It was indicated that these requirements are an added cost to businesses for the installation and maintenance of vegetation, yet it was suggested that this adds little value to the neighbourhood. It was also mentioned as being ineffective given that after installation there are no inspections to make sure that landscaping stays alive.

### **13. Prevent vacant lots; transfer land title after development occurs.**

An idea was proposed for helping to address underutilization of lots, in cases where new lots are purchased but remain vacant. The assessed value of vacant land is low, and so municipal taxes are also low; there is no financial hardship to owners when a property remains vacant. It was suggested that perhaps full transfer of a parcel's land title should occur after the property has been developed.

**14. Salvage yard?... or junk yard? Tipping fees are keeping properties out of circulation.**

The line between “salvage yard” and “junk yard” is blurred in industrial areas across Whitehorse. It was pointed out that the underutilization of some lots can be linked to tipping fees at the City landfill. The cost for disposing of property contents may be unfeasible for some owners who have gone out of business, or have inherited properties. As a result, these lots remain inactive and will likely stay that way until financial situations change, or until it becomes more affordable to dispose of property contents. Another contributing factor is the lack of a reuse economy in Whitehorse; businesses do not want to landfill items that under different circumstances could have an economic value. It was viewed that using tax penalties as a disincentive in these situations would hurt land owners and businesses that are likely already struggling.

**15. Development permits trigger new zoning requirements that are costly to meet.**

Concern was raised for how development permit applications can trigger current zoning regulations. It was indicated that this can have a big financial impact on businesses looking to upgrade their developments. It was requested that the City review this situation and perhaps be lenient, particularly when minor improvements are triggering major renovations for compliance. Making the rules fair for existing and new developers was recognized as being a challenge.

**16. Quarry lands should be viewed as sites for future industrial lands.**

Interest was expressed to see more quarry lands opened for use. Support was expressed for using quarrying as an effective way off opening up and preparing new areas for future industrial use. This approach was viewed as making a lot more sense than spending resources to grade and fill new development areas.

**17. The area behind Canyon Crescent could have development potential.**

It was suggested that the area behind (to the west of) the Canyon Crescent neighbourhood might be a suitable location for new *Service Industrial* lots, given that residences are on water delivery because of existing quality issues, and would not be put at risk.

# Appendix 3

## Session 4: Meeting the Needs of the Food, Beverage, and Cannabis Production Sectors – Extended Input Summary

**Date:** Friday, November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2018

**Time:** 11:30 am to 1:00 pm (adjourned ~1:30 pm)

**Location:** Canada Games Centre, Board Room

**Project staff:** Erica Beasley (City of Whitehorse) and Jane Koepke (Groundswell Planning)

The focus of the November 30<sup>th</sup> group session was on *Meeting the Needs of the Food, Beverage, and Cannabis Production Sectors*. This session was open to existing and prospective property and business owners, government staff, and associations working on, or interested in, this topic. Ten participants attended, with representation from the following governments and associations:

- Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
- Yukon Government Agriculture Branch
- Fireweed Community Market Society
- Growers of Organic Food Yukon
- Yukon Agricultural Association
- Yukon Chamber of Commerce, Food and Beverage Committee
- Alaska Highway Business Association

Several participants represented more than one association. One participant attended the two other sessions. Representation was also from two farm owners, two restaurant owners, and two owners of *Highway Commercial* and *Service Industrial* properties. The session began with a presentation delivered by project staff, followed by a group discussion. The questions below were used as conversation prompts:

- What are **current trends** in production/processing in Yukon? Where is industry heading?
- What are the **challenges** that you're hearing from your memberships/communities? Are they finding what they need to do business?
- What are **advantages/disadvantages** for locating in Whitehorse? Do industries want to be in Whitehorse?
- **Where** do industries want to be located, within Whitehorse?
- How likely is **cannabis production/processing** to take off in Whitehorse, given Federal licensing options and requirements?

The group discussion is summarized in the following notes, which are organized by theme. These notes are intended to capture the array of topics raised and views held by participants, and are not intended to reflect a consensus amongst participants.

## **1. Industry trends.**

Participants indicated the following as emerging trends in the food, beverage, and cannabis (FB&C) production sectors in Yukon:

- The territory's poultry, egg, pork, and cattle industries are maturing (e.g. there is now a dairy farm operating in Dawson City);
- Interest in entomophagy (bug farming) is growing, and has potential as a protein source for human consumption or to be added to grain as feed for livestock;
- There is a demographic interested in buying local products, and entrepreneurs that want to produce local products;
- Interest is growing in the "slow food" movement;
- There are a lot of DIY-ers wanting to grow and process their own food and beverage;
- Interest is growing for non-commercial food production opportunities, close to residences;
- There is interest in cannabis production (cultivation and processing), though no completed licenses yet in Yukon for non-medical cannabis;
- Producers are energy consumers, but also interested in being energy producers, particularly on farms.

## **2. System-wide industry support is needed; not just through zoning and land availability.**

It was suggested by participants that supporting Whitehorse's FB&C production sectors (as well as other local industries) requires creating a supportive and attractive climate for doing business. A system-wide review could help reduce barriers at different stages of the production chain, from the initial step of getting a business license to dealing with production waste. Specific examples were offered, including the City's current restriction of two business licenses per address; this was viewed as a hindrance to start-ups that sometimes experiment with multiple business ideas at the same time. The intent of this restriction was questioned, and whether or not the intent is being achieved. Waste management restrictions at the City landfill were also raised as a barrier to the FB&C sectors, given that certain kinds of production waste are not currently accepted. Slaughter waste was a noted example. Communication with the business community is needed on the reasons for this ban, so that potential solutions can be explored. It was pointed out that if these sectors are unable to manage their waste, they will not be able to establish in Whitehorse.

## **3. Is it waste? ... or a resource? Full-resource thinking needed.**

It was expressed that some "wastes" from production sectors are instead "resources", when the right processes and infrastructure are in place to capture their potential (e.g. organics turned into compost). Slaughter waste was again raised as an example, which is an organic material that could be used as animal feed, or contribute to the compost production process.

## **4. Federal regulations make it difficult to get local products onto shelves.**

It was mentioned that Federal regulations can make it difficult for small scale local producers to get their products onto grocery store shelves. It was recognized that retailers also have their own corporate policies that may influence this, but generally these policies align with Federal regulations. The narrow profit margins in the food and beverage sectors make compliance difficult for smaller producers.

## **5. Legislative boxes are difficult to navigate and difficult to change.**

It was suggested that government departments at the City and Government of Yukon (YG) operate within regulatory boxes, and it can be difficult for businesses to navigate between them. It was also expressed that certain regulations for the FB&C production sectors are outdated, and in need of review; but given the complexities of revising legislation, there is often reluctance by administrators to look into changing the rules. Modernization of municipal and territorial regulations was viewed as being needed to respond to the emergence of new sectors, otherwise they will not be able to develop.

## **6. Power and tech infrastructure is important for indoor agriculture production methods.**

It was pointed out that indoor agriculture sectors are tech-reliant, and having access to fast and reliable 4G internet is important; this can influence a producer's decision on where to locate their facility (i.e. within or outside of Whitehorse). Indoor production methods often use cameras and systems requiring internet to monitor and regulate growing conditions (e.g. watering, heating, cooling, and feeding). It was emphasized that having affordable land is not the only determining factor in where a business will choose to locate. It was stated that three phase electric power is also needed to support production, and that some producers are interested not only to use power, but to generate power than can be sold back into the grid.

## **7. High municipal taxes can be a disincentive for locating businesses within Whitehorse.**

It was suggested that high municipal tax rates are a disincentive to locating production facilities within city limits. It was also suggested that a tax incentive specific to food production could help to encourage businesses to get into the industry. The question was posed as to whether the agricultural tax rate (applied to lands in the YG agriculture zone) could be tied to land use rather than zoning (i.e. apply the rate to food producers in commercial and industrial zones).

## **8. Access to public transportation is needed in decentralized employment centres.**

It was suggested that access to public transportation is needed in employment areas located outside of the city's core, and will become increasingly important for industries that have on-site employment (versus current industries that operate off-site, such as construction companies). Public transit can help to support employers and workers by providing low cost transportation options that offset other living costs. Snow clearing of transit routes was also recognized as being needed.

## **9. Caretaker residences help to offset wages and subsidize living costs.**

Participants indicated that the housing scarcity in Whitehorse and high cost of accommodations can make it difficult for businesses to attract and retain employees, and that some businesses have trouble paying sufficient wages. It was suggested that caretaker residences can provide a viable option for businesses to support workers by offering subsidized board in exchange for labour; an arrangement that can help to keep labour costs down, while providing employees with affordable accommodations. This was viewed as being particularly beneficial for attracting and supporting seasonal/short-term employees. Caretaker residences have the added benefits of providing on-site security presence in low density and isolated neighbourhoods, and can reduce transportation challenges. Marwell was suggested as an example of an area that feels like it "never shuts down", which helps to ward off crime. Following the meeting, a participant suggested that perhaps the City could look into relaxing its rule on the

number of dogs allowed at caretaker residences, since dogs can provide added security, and caretaker residences tend to be in areas where noise nuisance to neighbours is less of a concern.

**10. A “living wage” means more money spent in the community.**

It was suggested by a participant that there are benefits to employers providing a “living wage”, such as helping employees to access affordable housing options and increasing the amount of disposable income that employees have to spend at other businesses in the community. It was recognized that some businesses struggle to cover current labour costs and would have difficulty paying higher wages. The City was encouraged to look at examples from other cities to see what has worked elsewhere.

**11. Industries locate where economic and operational factors make sense.**

It was indicated that the discussion question of “where do industries want to be located?” was not the right question to be asking; a more appropriate question would be “where do the conditions make sense?” Land availability and affordability, and having the right infrastructure in place, were viewed as key determinants for where industries choose to locate. The City was encouraged to look at examples from elsewhere to see what factors have allowed for successful sector hubs to develop. Granville Island in Vancouver BC, for example, was a brownfield that has turned into a thriving brewery and arts district. It was also mentioned that the area’s success has translated into high rents that some businesses are now struggling to afford.

**12. Waterfront + breweries = good combo.**

Interest was expressed to see the Downtown and Marwell waterfront evolve into a thriving brewery destination. The possibility of having tasting experiences at the waterfront was strongly supported.

**13. Onsite enjoyment of FB&C products can enhance the educational experience of a product.**

Support was indicated for stacked land use allowances at production sites. For example, tasting rooms or pubs could be made an inherent property right wherever a brewery use is allowed. It was mentioned that enjoyment of a product on-site is an opportunity to enhance the educational experience and is in line with the “agro-tourism” model, which is gaining in popularity. Consumers are interested to meet the “makers” and learn about the production process. YG has explored this concept through a new “Agriculture<sup>x</sup>” zoning, whereby some farms also have land use rights to establish restaurants on-site.

**14. The future of cannabis production depends on ability to sell to YG as the retailer.**

It was suggested that at the Federal government’s “standard” cultivation license level, it might be difficult for businesses to start up because of the high capital cost involved in constructing a facility, and the costs to import nutrient supplies and export product. The small customer market in Yukon is a limiting factor that may not make economic sense for large cultivation facilities to open. The “micro” license has less Federal requirements and is less capital intensive, so might make better economic sense. It was suggested that despite the short growing season of Yukon, there is potential for outdoor cultivation to occur if cannabis plants are started indoors and are then transplanted outdoors. No licenses have been confirmed yet in Yukon, though some businesses have started the process. It is expected that cultivators will likely also want processing licenses. Most significant to the future of the

industry will be the ability of producers to sell their product to YG as the only current retailer under the territory's legalization framework.

**15. "Local" branding is important, but it has to be accurate.**

The topic of branding was raised several times during the discussion. It was suggested that there is confusion and mis-branding of products as "local", which can reduce the value of items actually produced with Yukon sourced ingredients and at higher costs. It was mentioned that "made in Yukon" is not necessarily enough to be considered "local", and education around the term would help local producers to compete with other products on store shelves. Much of the "eat local" movement is about reducing CO2 emissions from transport, and it was suggested that an indicator could be developed to show the CO2 emissions footprint of Yukon products. It was also mentioned that it would be good to develop an "organic" certification for cannabis production, but recognizing that "Yukon organic" might be different than what is considered organic elsewhere.

**16. Community market spaces lower financial risk and help businesses to start-up.**

Support was expressed to see more off-site communal retail spaces encouraged and developed, reflecting the opportunities that places such as the Fireweed Community Market and the Carcross commons are providing to small businesses. These spaces are considered incubators that are helping to lower the financial risks and overhead costs for businesses as they get established.

**17. Whitehorse needs a "Yukonstruct" for foodies.**

It was indicated that there is a large demographic of DIY-ers that want to grow and process their own food and beverage. Interest was expressed to see a makerspace with a commercial kitchen created. The idea of a food hub was mentioned as an attractive option. Communal storage opportunities for food was suggested as an idea to explore; though it was also mentioned that centralized storage could be problematic if an issue occurs and participating producers lose their harvest.