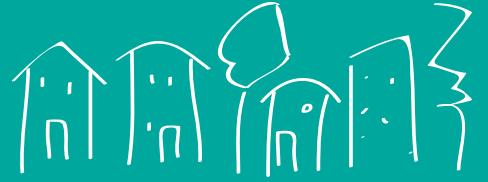


July 2011



DOWNTOWN SOUTH *Master Plan*



Conceptual rendering of Rogers St at 5th Ave



Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation



Planning and Development Services

Introduction

The time is now to work together to create a revitalized Downtown South. This area of Downtown Whitehorse stretches from Lambert St to Robert Service Way, and from the escarpment to Second Ave. It is home to nearly 1000 people and more than 50 businesses, with the potential for many more. Historically, Downtown South has been used for residential purposes having been the location of war-era US Army barracks, along with the businesses and schools needed to support local residents. Downtown South has also served as a key railway link and staging area, the tracks for which remain nestled beside Robert Service Way.

In the 1950s, deforestation and water runoff associated with increased airport development caused significant damage to the escarpment. In the 1970s, measures were taken to relocate development away from the area. Over the years, changes to the nature of land use have led to the escarpment's improved stability. Geotechnical studies show that with mitigative techniques applied, much of this now-vacant land is again suitable for development. Modern-day Whitehorse features an increasing amount of commercial development in the Downtown's northern end, which makes Downtown South ideally located to become the residential hub of the city. The area has great potential for new and dense development, and for establishing a wide variety of amenities for residents and visitors alike.

In 2007, the City's *Downtown Plan* identified the boundaries and set a vision for Downtown South. As part of the plan's implementation, the City in partnership with Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) designed a charrette process to develop a *Master Plan* for this unique sub-area of Downtown. This process brought together a team of design professionals (architects, planners, engineers and other experts) for three days of intense design work in May 2011.

The design team received input from stakeholder meetings and four public engagement events. A Community Walk and BBQ were held prior to the charrette to aid in issues identification, and two Open Houses were held during the evenings of the charrette for feedback on concepts as they developed. Input was received from more than 300 people. The City wishes to thank the public for their time and effort; the *Master Plan* could not have been created without the benefit of this local expertise. A set of guiding principles emerged from these activities which have steered the plan's development. These principles are:

GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

1. Enrich the Urban Fabric

- Encourage a mix of housing types and land uses
- Make this area a destination for both residents and visitors, especially near the riverfront and along 4th Ave
- Encourage appropriate density increases, with controls to ensure it is compatible with existing development

2. Maximize Natural space

- Emphasize natural features through design
- Take advantage of views from/of the escarpment and river

3. Enhance Connectivity

- Enhance the pedestrian experience
- Improve the road network
- Increase active transportation connections
- Create a connected neighbourhood

4. Create a Distinct Neighbourhood Character

- Take advantage of what makes the gateway/promenade/commercial areas distinct
- Create opportunities for local business/service

The *Master Plan* sets out a 20 year vision for the future of development and redevelopment of Downtown South. It contains a specific set of action items which will guide the City and other developers to create a revitalized area. By page, it addresses the following items:

Pages 4 and 5:

Bare Land Development Areas:

To increase density and accommodate 600 potential new housing units

Pages 6 and 7:

Lower Escarpment Trail and Park:

To provide 1 km of new paved trail that allows for recreation and commuting opportunities

Pages 8 and 9:

CONCEPT MAP

Pages 10 and 11:

Gateway Promenade Area:

To enhance the southern riverfront as an urban, City-wide destination

Pages 12 and 13:

Street Enhancements:

To encourage active transportation, and improve traffic and parking issues

Page 14:

Policy and Regulation Changes:

To allow for new uses and building heights

Page 15:

Implementation:

Next steps

From left: one of three groups led by City staff at the Community Walk, April 30, 2011; design team at work on Day 1 of charrette; public comments posted on concept map at Open House, May 18, 2011.



Bare Land Development Areas

Significant potential exists for bare land development to occur in Downtown South. Encouraging multi-unit development on vacant lots, especially close to the escarpment, will help to increase residential density in the area. Ideally, new development will be a mix of social and market housing to help meet the needs of the City's growing population.

Whitehorse needs to grow in a more sustainable pattern and increased Downtown density is one of the best ways to achieve this. The Concept Map (pages 8 and 9) shows several Development Areas along the escarpment which have potential for multi-storey/multi-unit buildings. Based on the average density of recent developments, it is estimated that Downtown South could accommodate approximately 600 additional housing units on these parcels.

The City and Yukon Government are the owners of this land. Yukon Government has a mandate to provide social housing units, which is the expressed intent for its sites in this area. It is recognized, however, that Downtown South already contains a disproportionate amount of social housing (approximately 1/3 of all social housing units in Whitehorse). Adding more social housing to the area is considered appropriate, but only if blended with market housing at a recommended proportion of 40 % social to 60 % market.

This blend may be accomplished within buildings or through a division of lands. Coordination is needed between Yukon Government and the City to determine the disposition of these lands. Partnerships with the private sector should also be explored.



north

Rendering produced during the charrette to demonstrate potential building massing of sites identified as Development Areas. Orange represents potential development; gray represents existing development. Shadow cast for August 18, 4 pm.



Development on privately-owned land is also essential. Incentives and zoning to encourage more private development are addressed on pages 14 and 15 of this plan.

The Whitehorse *Official Community Plan* gives support for 25 metre tall development (5 metres higher than the current height limit) in select areas. Within the Downtown South area, buildings of this height are appropriate immediately adjacent to the escarpment. This is because when the sun is low in the western or eastern sky, the shadows cast are either shorter than those of the 55 metre escarpment, or are cast onto the escarpment itself.

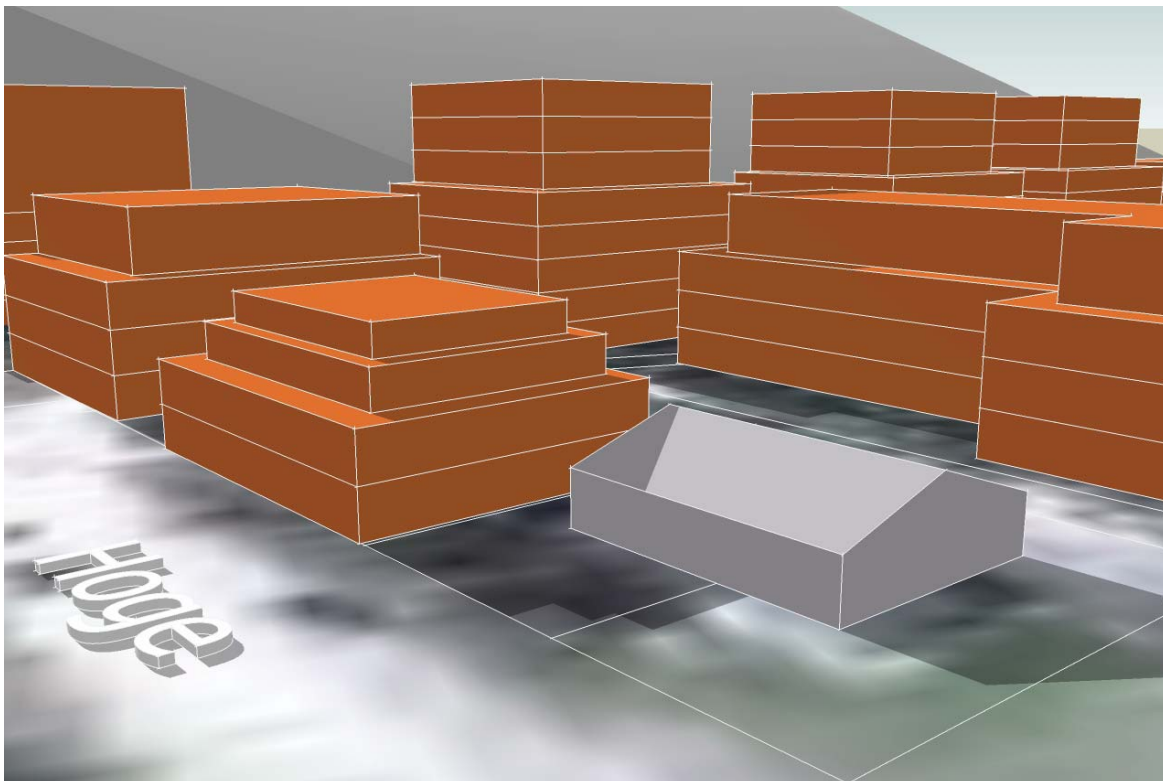
To revitalize and transform Downtown South into a dense and livable urban area, the City will need to:

- Conduct a detailed geotechnical hazard study for development sites in the escarpment area;
- Extend Rogers St, Lowe St, 6th Ave and three lanes to continue the area's street grid and provide for on-street angle parking;
- Update the zoning of Development Area parcels to include new height controls, as well as parameters for tiered upper floors where development has street frontage and/or is adjacent to smaller buildings;
- Service and sell City-owned parcels identified as Development Areas to allow for private housing development; and
- Work with Yukon Government to release land for market development.



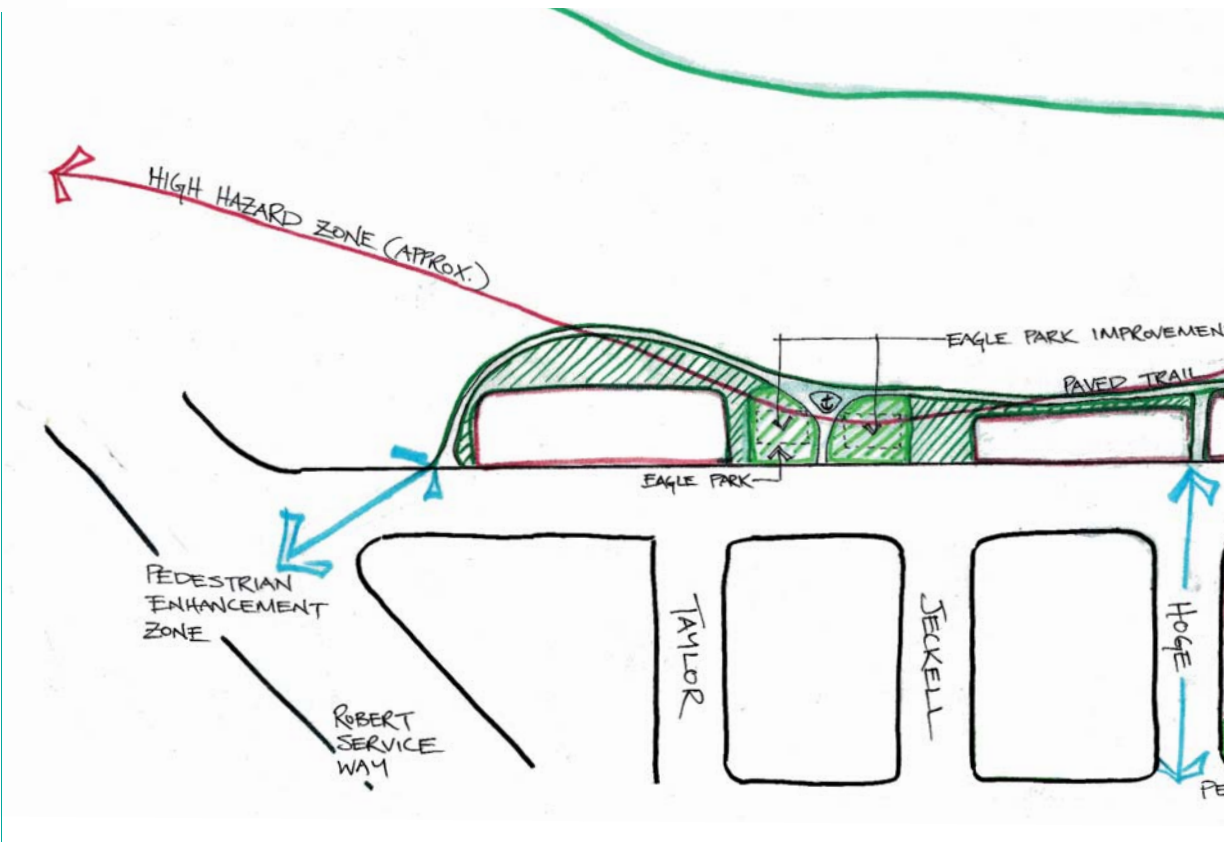
north

Requiring tiered building design can help to reduce shadow impacts and mitigate the 'dwarfing' of smaller existing developments.



Lower Escarpment Trail and Parks

The escarpment is one of the most unique natural features of Whitehorse. It provides recreational and scenic opportunities for residents and tourists alike. A trail that is paved and intended for multi-use (pedestrian and bicycle) purposes is envisioned for the lower escarpment area. This trail will connect to the upper escarpment trail via a staircase at the west end of Rogers St.



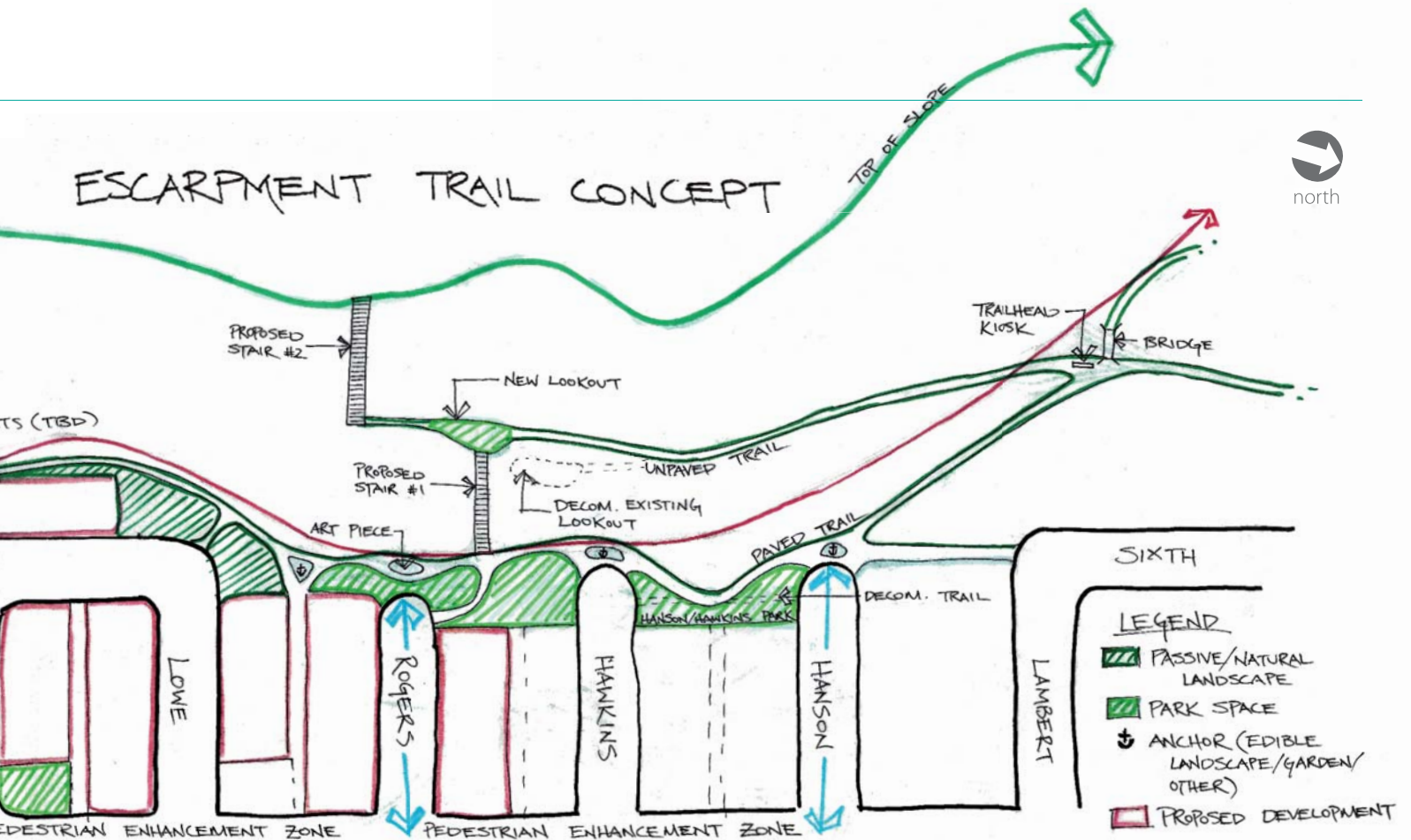
The Whitehorse escarpment has been an important recreation area since the city first developed. It has long been used as a transportation connection to the north and south ends of Downtown, as well as to the airport and other development areas such as the Alaska Highway and its adjacent neighbourhoods.

A paved trail along the Downtown Riverfront is scheduled to be finished by 2012. By installing a complementary connection along the lower escarpment area, the opportunity exists to create a looped trail that encircles Downtown. This paved and universally accessible trail will not only serve as a recreation facility, but will also be a tourist attraction and provide an alternate route for commuters.

To provide this valuable community resource, the City will need to:

- Establish a 3 metre wide asphalt paved trail with “anchors”, such as art pieces and edible landscaping nodes, that will draw people from Downtown locations. Anchors will be placed so that they are visible from Fourth Ave and will tie into pedestrian areas as identified on the Concept Map (enhancements listed on page 12);
- Provide a connection to the Millennium Trail by building a wheelchair-accessible ramp and a crosswalk on Robert Service Way (see artist’s rendition on page 11);

ESCARPMENT TRAIL CONCEPT



Concept of Lower Escarpment Trail produced during the charrette.

- Provide trailhead/signage at two locations: near Lambert St at the existing trail connecting to Teegatha' Oh Zheh Park, and at Rogers St where the City-commissioned art piece "Nature, Culture, Transportation and Community" will be placed; and
- Investigate the potential for a staircase that connects from the Rogers St trailhead to the upper escarpment trail, and features a half-way viewpoint (replacing the old viewpoint near Hawkins St). Geotechnical study will be required to assess site suitability.

Downtown South is also home to two parks: Jim Light Park, a well-loved community resource that was built on land obtained from White Pass & Yukon Route in the 1950s, and Eagle Park which is a small playground and basketball court located close to the escarpment. As the population in Downtown South increases, enhancement to the parks network will be necessary. The City will need to:

- Upgrade Eagle Park with new features including hockey rink boards, basketball nets, toddler-age equipment, and a wheelchair-accessible connection; and
- Develop a new "pocket park" at the northwest corner of Hoge St and 5th Ave.

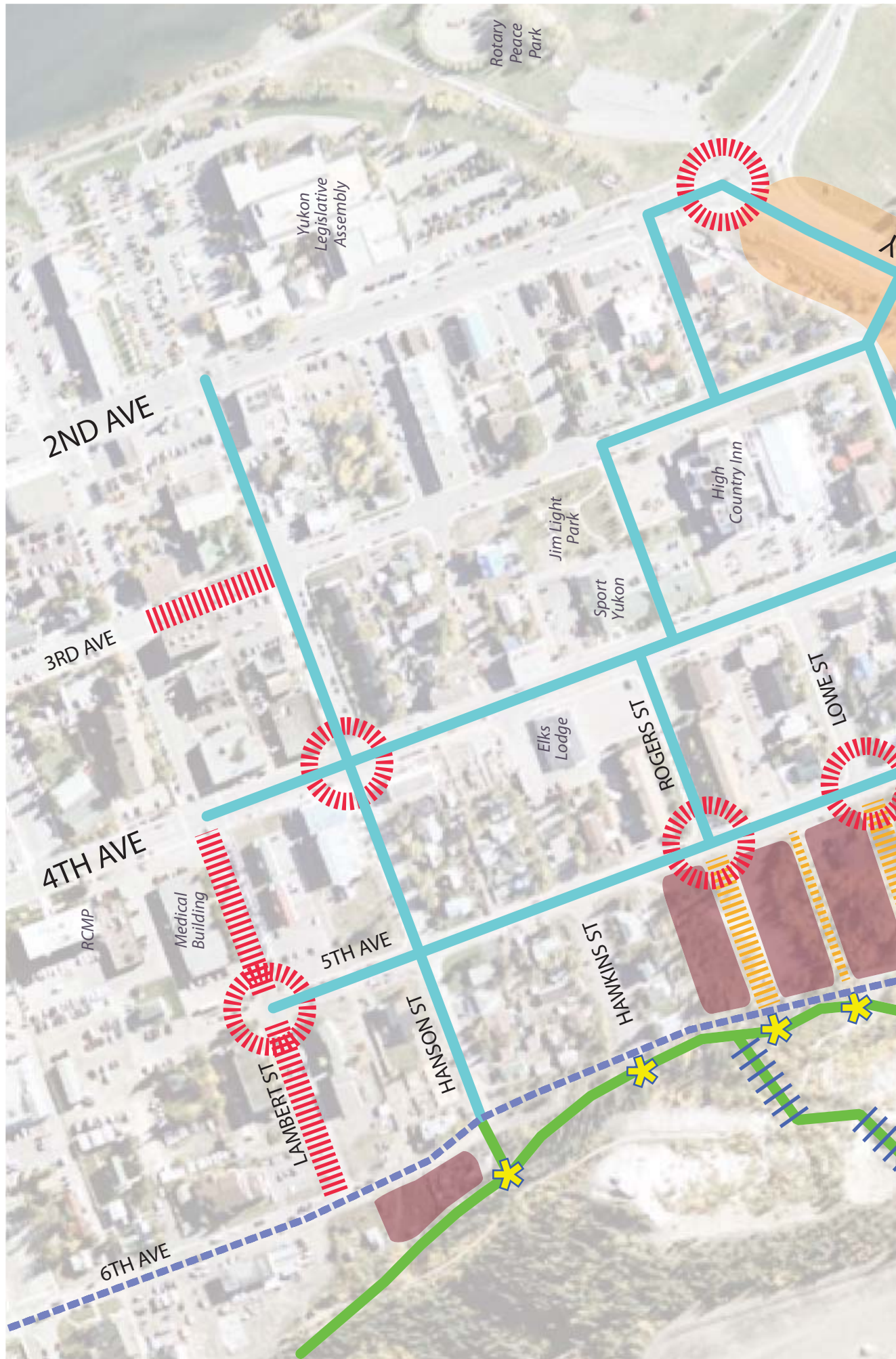
Note that the charrette process only examined the southern portion of the lower escarpment area. In the future, the City will examine the escarpment's northern portion from Lambert St to Ogilvie St in order to form a complete trail loop.

MAP

Concept



DOWNTOWN SOUTH
Master Plan





SS Klondike

YUKON RIVER

ROBERT SERVICE WA

HOGUE ST

JECHELL ST

TAYLOR ST

DRURY ST

6TH AVE

Street Extension

Lane Extension

Street Enhancement Area

Intersection Enhancement Area

Cycle Enhancement Area

Pedestrian Enhancement Area

Lower Escarpment Trail

Gateway/Promenade Area

Development Area: YG-owned

Development Area: City-owned

Escarpment Stairs

Park/Public Art Anchor

Park Development Area

Park Improvement Area



200 m

Gateway Promenade Area

Downtown South is uniquely positioned at the water's edge of the Yukon River. Scenic views and southern exposure make it an ideal location for use as a mixed commercial/residential promenade.



Conceptual rendering of Gateway Promenade area produced during charrette.

The portion of Robert Service Way that forms the southern boundary of Downtown South has significant potential to become a thriving, urban promenade. At present, the area is characterized by large parcels of underutilized land, fast-moving traffic, and a main pedestrian route (the Millennium Trail) which is poorly connected to its surroundings.



north

Redevelopment is envisioned to optimize features that are inherent to the area, including its:

- Gateway function to the southern end of Downtown;
- Spectacular views of Grey Mountain and clear view of the Yukon River (which is unique in contrast to most Downtown riverfront property); and
- Southern orientation with excellent solar exposure.

Redevelopment will alter the highway character of Robert Service Way to enhance the arrival experience leading into the city's urban core. The promenade will be a magnet for Whitehorse residents and visitors by accommodating an attractive walking path and mixed uses that encourage patrons to visit and engage in the area. Two conceptual renderings are featured on these pages which are intended to illustrate different approaches for achieving this.

To accomplish the Gateway Promenade vision for the area, the City will need to:

- Rezone properties from RD2 – *Residential Downtown 2* to CMW – *Mixed Use Waterfront*, to foster the development of a mix of pedestrian-oriented commercial uses with residential uses on upper floors (see map 14);
- Convert seldom-used City-owned land into development sites and release them for private sale;
- Use landscaping, hard surfacing and art to transform public right of way areas into accessible and pedestrian-friendly corridors. This requires traffic calming features, such as landscaped medians. The City will need to work with White Pass & Yukon Route to achieve this; and
- Create a pedestrian/cyclist connection between the Millennium Trail and the new Lower Escarpment Trail, featuring a wheelchair-accessible ramp and safe crossing of Robert Service Way. A potential roundabout or other traffic control could also be located here (see page 13 for more detail).



Conceptual rendering of Gateway Promenade.

Street Enhancements

Healthy streets have a mix of users – motorists, cyclists, and pedestrians.

The needs and safety of each group must be carefully considered in the design of new transportation infrastructure. As density increases in Downtown South and the quantity of users grows, upgrades will be needed to walking and parking infrastructure.

Downtown South has the potential to be the densest neighbourhood in the city and is well-located for easy access to amenities located in Downtown. The Concept Map shows several important walking routes; the pedestrian experience in these areas should be made safe and enjoyable in order to encourage residents to walk and take transit as frequently as possible.

To accomplish these pedestrian enhancements, the City will need to:

- Continue street upgrades along 4th Ave by duplicating improvements that have occurred north of Main St, which includes the addition of planters and corner bulbs at intersections;
- Shortening crossing distances at key points by building landscaped medians in the centre turning lane on 4th Ave and adding corner bulbs at key intersections on 5th Ave – at Rogers St and Hoge St;
- Add sidewalks at key locations: 5th Ave between Taylor St and Lambert St; 6th Ave between Jeckell St and Robert Service Way; Hoge St between 3rd Ave and 6th Ave; and both Hanson St and Rogers St between 4th Ave and 5th Ave;
- Add safe crosswalks at two busy traffic locations: 2nd Ave at the north side of Robert Service Way, and 6th Ave at Robert Service Way; and



- Add pedestrian-scale amenities at key points: on Lowe St near Riverside Grocery, and along 4th Ave at bus stops and at the intersections of Hanson St, Rogers St and Hoge St.

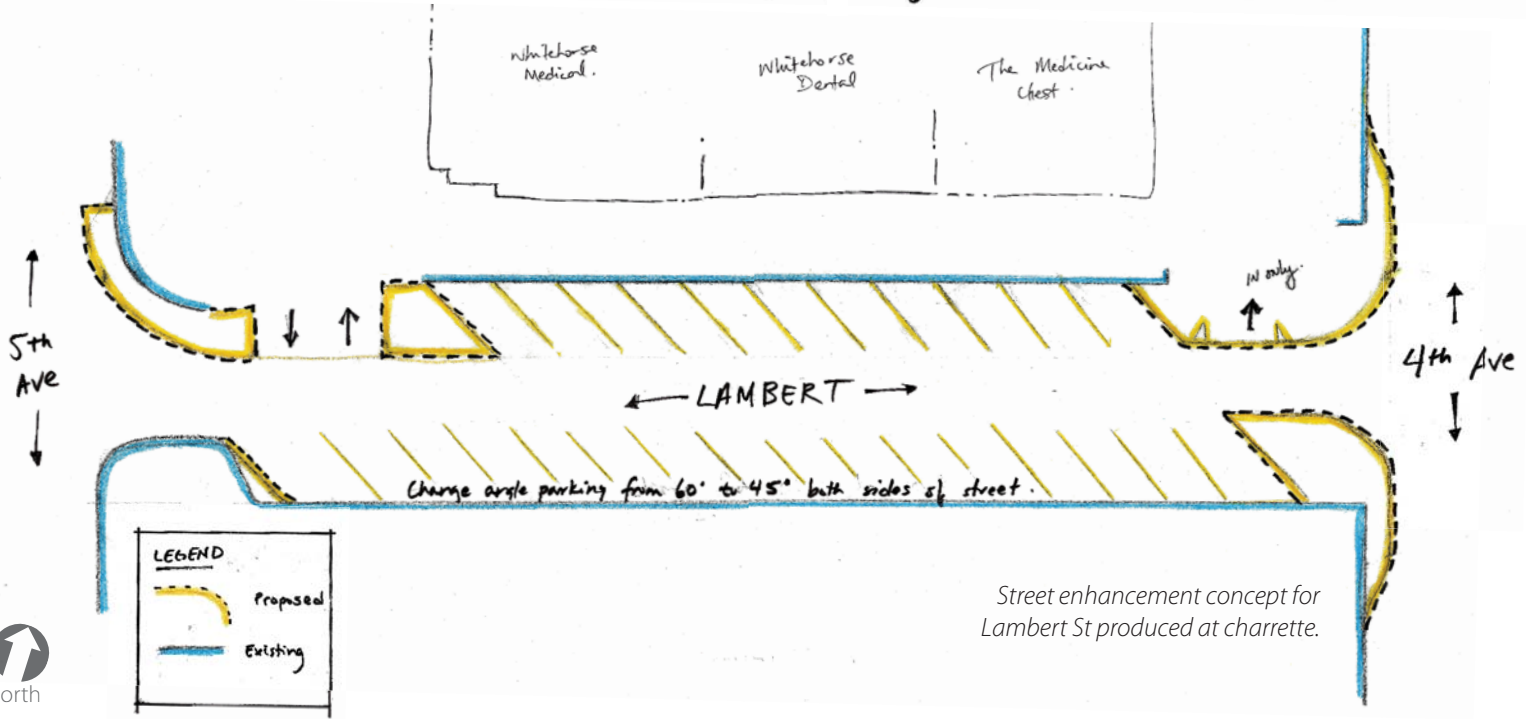
The existing bike lanes on 4th Ave will connect to, and complement, planned improvements to the Millennium Trail portion of the Gateway Promenade. To encourage more active transportation, the City will need to:

- Upgrade 6th Ave to include bicycle priority improvements from Robert Service Way to Lowe St; and
- Build a direct bike path from Lowe St to Lambert St that runs adjacent to the lower escarpment trail.

Car-oriented street enhancements will help to improve parking and provide for improved traffic control. To accomplish vehicular enhancements, **the City will first need to conduct a detailed traffic study** of the area. Several recommendations were generated during the charrette that will be considered, which are to:

- Add new angle parking on the west side of 3rd Ave between Lambert St and Hanson St, and on the north side of Lambert St between 5th Ave and 6th Ave;
- Adjust parking on Lambert St between 4th Ave and 5th Ave so that cars are angled at 45 degrees instead of 60, to allow proper width driving lanes (see diagram below);
- Change yield sign direction along 5th Ave so that Jeckell St, Lowe St and Hanson St have priority and 5th Ave traffic needs to yield;
- Change 5th Ave from having a yield sign at Lambert St to a stop sign;
- As traffic increases, consider adding a roundabout or other traffic control measure at the intersection of 4th Ave and Hanson St (or other intersection as determined by the proposed traffic study); and
- Eventually consider allowing traffic flow at the corner of 6th Ave and Robert Service Way, provided that increased traffic through the neighbourhood will not cause a safety concern. The traffic control could be a roundabout or other design.

→ Enhancement to Lambert St. - Angle parking and Pedestrian Improvements



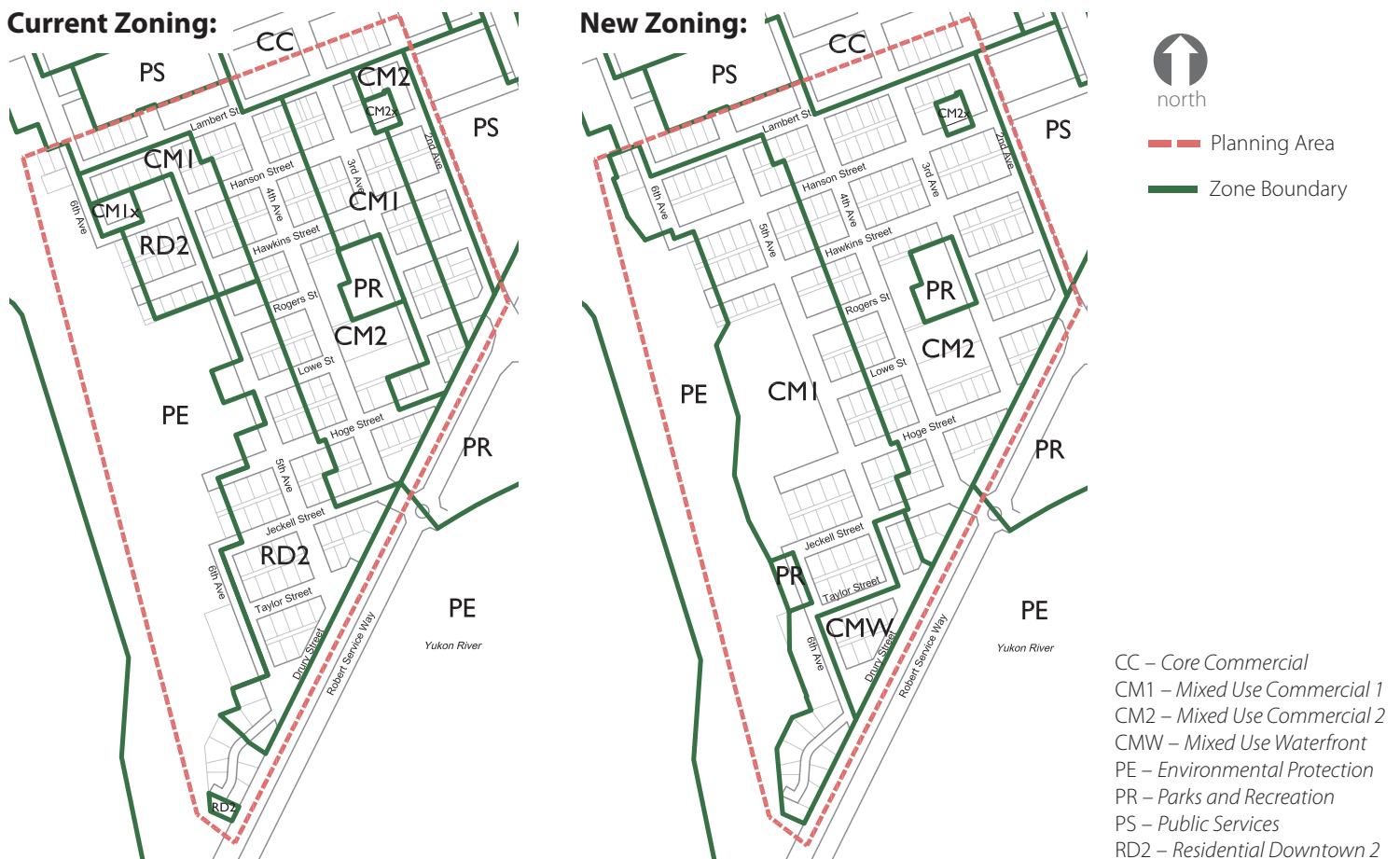
Policy and Regulation Changes

Downtown South has the potential to accommodate far more development than what is present today. Realizing this will require new zoning regulations that allow for a higher intensity of development. These changes, along with incentives to encourage new housing, should make it attractive for developers to invest in the area.

The *Official Community Plan (OCP)* is the City's guiding document which sets out land use designations across Whitehorse. The OCP was updated in 2010 and confirms the vision of Downtown South as a *Mixed-Use Residential/Commercial* area that features a wide range of dense uses. The *Downtown South Master Plan* is intended to supplement the OCP with planning goals and actions that are specific to the area.

To accomplish the Downtown South vision outlined in this *Master Plan*, the City will need to:

- Rezone much of the area to higher density, mixed-use zoning to accommodate the vision stated in the OCP and reflected in the Bare Land Development and Gateway Promenade concepts of the *Master Plan*;
- Ensure that new development in the area makes a positive contribution to the existing streetscape by adding zoning regulations to screen parking from view, increase landscaping standards, and require height transitions for tall new development where it fronts the street and/or is adjacent to smaller buildings; and
- Place restrictions in the CM1 – *Mixed Use Commercial 1* zone between 4th Ave and the escarpment to control heights on a location-specific basis, restrict office space to the ground floor only, and ensure that development adjacent to the escarpment is done in accordance with site-specific geotechnical study.



This Plan calls for new development on “bare land” Government-owned properties, but it is equally important that new development also occur on private land. There are a number of underdeveloped privately-owned properties in Downtown South. The OCP calls for incentives (e.g. tax reduction) in order to stimulate development on underdeveloped properties, especially in Downtown. These incentives were examined in great detail as part of the charrette process. A survey of property owners in the area, public input and professional input all helped to generate ideas on this topic. Council is currently considering adopting a Development Incentives Policy as a result of this work.

This Plan calls for a great deal of public investment in streets, parks and trails – work that will make the area more attractive, and encourage more private investment and development. Additional ideas to encourage development were generated during the charrette. These include establishing an “information bank” to better link property owners and developers, increasing the promotion of City Heritage-based incentives, and working with Yukon Electrical Company Ltd to develop a master plan for electrical upgrades.

Council is currently considering the adoption of a newly-proposed Connection Fees Bylaw. This Bylaw proposes that all new developments in this area would be subject to the payment of a fee when they hook up to City water and sewer. This will likely be in place prior to any new construction in Downtown South.

The revitalization of Downtown South should additionally build on the recommendations of the recently adopted *Downtown Parking Management Plan*. Initiatives listed for the improved management of parking resources include the exploration of shared-parking options for mixed-use development, introduction of a residential parking pass program, and reduction of off-street parking requirements by 25 % for primarily residential buildings.

Implementation

Council will consider adopting this *Master Plan* in summer 2011. If adopted, the document will guide development and infrastructure renewal in the area over the next 20 years. Work should begin immediately and continue through a phased approach. A priority should be placed on making land available for development; money from land sales can be used to fund improvements to public amenities. Additional funding sources may need to be pursued, for example, from federally driven initiatives.

The order of priority for implementation should be as follows:

1. Change zoning
2. Make bare land available for development
3. Improve neighbourhood parks
4. Establish Lower Escarpment Trail
5. Construct pedestrian improvements – corner bulbs, amenities
6. Construct Gateway Promenade area improvements
7. Implement traffic-related improvements
8. Build stairs connecting to Upper Escarpment Trail

The City and CMHC wish to thank all those involved in making this plan:

Mike Gau, *Planning*, City of Whitehorse
Mike Ellis, *Planning*, City of Whitehorse
Ben Campbell, *Planning*, City of Whitehorse
Kinden Kosick, *Planning*, City of Whitehorse
Erica Beasley, *Planning*, City of Whitehorse
Adam Humphrey, *Planning*, City of Whitehorse
Emily Wall, *Planning*, City of Whitehorse
Doug Hnatiuk, *Parks and Recreation*, City of Whitehorse
Jim McLeod, *Engineering*, City of Whitehorse
Tony Zedda, *Architecture*, Kobayashi and Zedda Architects Ltd
Jack Kobayashi, *Architecture*, Kobayashi and Zedda Architects Ltd
Ryan McLennan, *Architecture*, Kobayashi and Zedda Architects Ltd
Alan MacDiarmid, *Rendering*, Kobayashi and Zedda Architects Ltd
Justine Copestake, *Rendering*, Kobayashi and Zedda Architects Ltd
Tom Kerwin, *Housing*, CMHC
Mike Skene, *Transportation*, Boulevard Transportation Group
Deborah Pitt, *Landscape Architecture*, Independent
Ryan Hennessey, *Landscape Architecture*, Independent
Cathy Deer, *Illustration*, Artist

Thanks are extended to the public for their participation and feedback. A full record of charrette events is available online:

www.whitehorse.ca/growthstrategy