



ROBERT SERVICE WAY

Planning Study

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT Summary of Results October 2017

1.0 Introduction

The public engagement component of the Robert Service Way Planning Study centered around a survey that was posted online and made available in hard copy at four “pop-up” booths from July 28 to September 10, 2017. Additional input was received via the City’s social media account during the course of survey promotion.

Two different surveys – a “quick” and long version - were made available. The long survey included the same core questions as the quick survey (use of the study area, values, general comments) as well as more detailed questions about land uses, recreation, and Ear Lake.



Neighbourhood	# of Respondents	% of Responses
Arkell/Logan/Ingram/McIntyre	20	4.7%
Copper Ridge	44	10.4%
Country Residential (North)	2	0.5%
Country Residential (South)	45	10.6%
Crestview	14	3.3%
Downtown	30	7%
Granger	17	4%
Hillcrest	15	3.5%
Porter Creek	47	11.1%
Range Point	6	1.4%
Riverdale	117	27.6%
Takhini	28	6.6%
Valleyview	8	1.9%
Whistle Bend	8	1.9%
Other	10	2.4%
Outside City Limits	13	3.1%
TOTAL	424	100%

176 and 300 people completed the quick and long surveys, respectively, for a total of 476 responses. In addition, there were 257 interactions on social media, including 81 comments received.

2.0 Place of Residence and Use of Study Area

Almost one third of survey respondents resided in Riverdale (28%). The next most represented neighbourhoods were Porter Creek (11%), country residential areas south of Downtown (11%), Copper Ridge (10%), and Downtown (7%).

Survey participants were most likely to use the Millennium Trail (88%), drive through the study area (85%), and use other trails in the area (59%). Users of the ball diamonds and

What They Said: Development

Lower Bowl/Snow Dump

“Please don’t pollute this access into Whitehorse with big box stores! It sets the tone for the perception of our city.”

“Respect current motorized uses.”

“Motocross, mud bog need a place for their events but not along one of two access(es) to our city. Eye sore.”

“This is a valuable piece of land close to the downtown core which is highly under-used. Snow can melt elsewhere.”

“I think it could be developed into a more interesting recreational space.”

“Industrial and commercial do not belong near our river and campground.”

“Let our land be please.”

“Makes sense to use this area as it is already disturbed.”

“I don’t support destructive machine-based “recreating”, though I think the motocross area is a good use and place for that kind of thing – a sacrifice zone.”

Upper Terrace

“This area has incredible recreational potential...”

“Create an aesthetic corridor leading to Whitehorse, first impression shouldn’t be industrial looking.”

“We already have a large land intensive commercial area...there is absolutely no need for more of this.”

“Creating too much retail or commercial use next to the highway may slowly replace the downtown core and become a “strip highway town” (not good).”

“This is a prime commercial area, completely unused. However, development should consider aesthetics.”

supporting and 32% opposing. A few comments were made on social media requesting that the City keep the area in its current state.

• *Lower “Bowl”/City Snow Dump*

The survey asked respondents to indicate their level of agreement with a range of future land uses for the area currently occupied by the City’s snow dump, motocross track, and mud bog pits. **Support was strongest for parks and recreation** (play fields, etc.) (82%), **community agriculture** (64%), and **continued use for motocross and “mud bogging”** (51%). **Opposition was strongest to permanent development** as follows: “big box” stores (86%), light/clean industrial development (76%), small-scale commercial (65%), and institutional (63%). Continued use of the area as the City snow dump received relatively low support (42%), but almost as much indifference (38%).

95% of survey participants who use the motocross track supported it remaining there. **43% of participants who don’t use the track expressed support for its continued use, while 30% expressed opposition.**

The question of future use of this area prompted a significant social media response, with 45 shares and 77 comments. The overwhelming majority of comments either expressed **support for the motocross track** and/or **concerns about urbanization/development** of the area and city in general.

Although residential development was not offered as an option, numerous comments expressed support for this use.

• *Upper Terrace/South of Airport*

The survey asked respondents to indicate their level of agreement with a range of future land uses for the upper terrace area located directly south of the airport. Similar to the lower bowl, **parks and recreation was the most strongly supported option (67%) and development was generally opposed** – by 46% of respondents for light/clean industrial, 45% for “land-intensive commercial” (car dealerships, etc.), and 44% for institutional. There were

many more neutral responses to these options than for the snow dump area.

- *Ear Lake Quarry*

The survey asked respondents to indicate their level of agreement with a range of future land use options for the portion of the quarry situated closest to Ear Lake. **Non-motorized recreation (85%) and commercial recreational development (63%) were supported by over half**, while motorized recreation (48%) and parking/staging (48%) fell just short. **Opposition was strongest to continued industrial operations (51%), motorized recreation (41%), and use as a snow dump (38%)**. Continued quarrying and asphalt plant operations were supported by 21%, with almost one-third (28%) having no opinion.

The use of the Ear Lake quarry for motorized recreation was supported by 90% of survey participants who indicated using the motocross track and 40% of those who did not. 46% of respondents who did not use the track opposed the use of the quarry area for motorized activity.

7.0 Ear Lake Recreation

- *Frequency and Nature of Use*

A sizeable majority of survey participants indicated **recreating at Ear Lake “sometimes” (42%) or “rarely” (26%) in summer**, and **“never” (43%) or “rarely” (34%) in winter**. The **predominant activities** participated in at Ear Lake were **hiking/walking/running (64%), swimming (41%), paddling (32%), and bird watching (22%)**. Orienteering, dirt biking, and snowmobiling participation were indicated by about 10% of respondents each.

- *Recreational Improvements*

The survey asked respondents to indicate their level of agreement with possible recreational improvements at Ear Lake. **Support was almost unanimous for a picnic area (92%) and 1-2 marked loop trails (89%). Interpretive signage and an artificial beach were also supported** by a majority (73% and 71%, respectively) but also elicited more neutral responses. The installation of a gate to curb party activity was supported by 59% but also received the strongest opposition of any option (22%).

8.0 Trail Use and Connections

The survey asked about the importance of specific trails and trail connections in the RSW area. Respondents indicated that the **connection between the Miles Canyon Road and Millennium Trail was the most important (77%)**, followed by the connection between the escarpment and

What They Said: Ear Lake

“The last thing we should be doing is making public land into a private playground for motorized vehicles.”

“Granville Island has a cement factory plus a wonderful array of arts, cultural, small businesses, etc. It can be done – co-existence I mean!”

“Any future activity must take into account environmental impact.”

“I would strongly encourage use of this area for swimming as an option to Long Lake. There are so few swimming lakes near Whitehorse.”

“People don’t use Ear Lake anymore because of its rumoured contaminated water...If the water is clean it could be a lovely family recreation area..but it would need some development and promotion.”

“Would spend more time at Ear Lake if it had enhancements – it’s a dirty party place with lots of garbage.”

“The area has great recreational day use potential that could certainly ease over use in other areas.”

“I love swimming in Ear Lake but there is a lot of broken glass; clean up is important.”

Downtown South (72%), airport escarpment trail (71%), and connection between escarpment and Millennium Trail (67%).

What They Said: Trails

"I think it's important to legitimize dirt bike use on some trails to avoid conflicts on other trails."

"Trail connections in the area are difficult to use. For example, if I want to cut up from RSW to the escarpment trail, it's a very steep and difficult path to push my bike up. I'd love a better trail leading up to the..escarpment.."

"We all need recreation opportunities close to town."

"Dirt bikes are disruptive for animals and people in the area. There is lots of further out places for dirt bikers."

"People who could consider that area environmentally sensitive will consider every area environmentally sensitive until there are no more places to ride motorized vehicles."

Survey participants also weighed in on the issue of whether or not the current **use of singletrack trails in the Ear Lake area by dirt bikes** should be legitimized, a matter currently under consideration in the Whitehorse South trail planning process. **45% of respondents supported the idea and 34% opposed it.** 84% of respondents who had indicated use of the motocross track supported legitimizing some dirt bike use, whereas respondents who did not were divided on the issue: 40% opposing and 36% supporting.

9.0 Conclusion

On the basis of the public input received, the Study Team concludes that the RSW area is an area of considerable importance to Whitehorse residents for its gateway function, recreational opportunities, views, and green space. Resident concerns about RSW centre around industrial development and compromised aesthetics (particularly the LNG plant), underutilized space, traffic, and quarrying activity.

The survey results would indicate that a majority of Whitehorse residents favour a balanced approach to future development in the area, with a priority placed on retention of green space and recreation but better utilization of these near-Downtown lands. Recreational use was the preferred future land use option for all of the sub-areas; opposition was generally high to built development, although less so in the upper terrace south of the airport. There was reasonably strong support for a continuation of the "status quo" for the lower bowl area. The survey further indicates that trail improvements at Bert Law Park and Ear Lake are strongly supported, as are low-impact recreational amenities (e.g., whitewater slalom park in Yukon River, picnic area and artificial beach at Ear Lake).

What They Said: Parting Words

"Land so close to downtown should be developed but keep the green character."

"The RSW is a first impression - it should reflect our diversity, uniqueness as a northern community and be welcoming."

"Council should take its time and not rush. Can't turn back clock once major development is done."

"I would like to see different types of recreation continue to co-exist."

"Quit trying to build wilderness within a city."

"Please please please just leave the WHOLE area as is."

"Developing already disturbed land makes sense ..That leaves recreation opportunities (in park areas) unaffected...."