

and wayfinding signage. In terms of new connections, there is an opportunity to integrate 'green corridors' of natural and human-made landscape directly into new development.

#### THE COLLECTIVE MEMORY OF HISTORY AND STORIES

Exploring canvasses to express the truly unique character of a community is an essential component of placemaking. Emphasis should be placed on identifying the range of expressions (e.g. public art) which can be manifested in the streetscape. In terms of architectural and cultural heritage, effort should be made to encourage and support the preservation of buildings and sites.

#### THE IDENTITY AND PERSONALITY OF A PLACE AND ITS PEOPLE

The identity and personality of a place is its brand. The essences and themes which make up this collective image are intrinsic to the community and cannot be introduced; however, good urban design can identify canvasses upon which these themes and essences can be articulated.

#### **Branding**

When looking at branding a community it is important to first define what a brand is. Most people incorrectly believe that a brand is a logo and / or a tag line – the way a company is visually represented in marketing and sales materials. Brand, in fact, is not a logo or tag line or any other individual representation of a company or institution or place. A logo or and / or tag line is a brand association or brand trigger. It can, and does, contribute to brand but acts more as a reminder of the brand. An example of this is the Nike 'swoosh.' The swoosh has very strict rules about its use (i.e. colour, placement, proportions, etc.) but the swoosh is not Nike's brand. The swoosh is the visual representation of (to simplify Nike's brand description) 'high performance.' When people see the Nike swoosh on an article of clothing or piece of sports equipment, they have a trust that it will be a high quality, high performance item that will contribute to their own high performance. This is what people feel about the company – the emotional attachment based on the various interactions they have with Nike – from products, to people. **Brand** is what people feel about some **thing**.

It is no different when looking at what makes a place like Yellowknife. The interactions we have with physical and social qualities of a place influence what we feel about that place. This creates an emotional connection with that place – our sense of place. **Sense of place** is what people feel about some **where**.



This storyboard (below) provides a visual summary of the key urban design and place-making principles which will inform the development of the urban design initiative.

**activity and vitality**

Designing urban spaces using time-honored principles which are active and exciting all year round



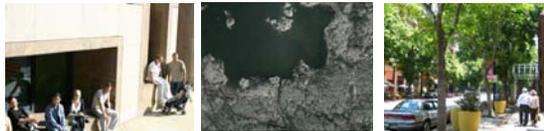
**connectivity** within a legible urban fabric



Finding canvases to express the truly unique character of a place

Secondary seating increases safety by enticing people to stay in a place for a while

**comfort and safety**



Creating attractive, comfortable and safe spaces which attract year-round use

**the identity and personality** of a place and its people



Giving streets back to pedestrians and cyclists



Accommodating the full range of transportation options, for both commuting and recreational use



**the collective memory** of history and stories

Getting people involved in the design and maintenance of cities.



**accessibility for all**

a sense of ownership and **community pride**

Buildings that reflect their geographical space and ecological environment will have long lasting appeal and strengthen their community's identity.



**the integration** of architecture and environment

**inclusiveness**



A potluck brings the community together



Giving space to all people and their right to belong and their need for self-expression



Incorporating green technologies such as rainwater gardens



Supporting community gardens to contribute to local self-sufficiency



Incorporating and celebrating simple, durable and recyclable materials in architecture

**sustainability**

Preserving natural areas and reintroducing nature into the urban landscape



So if brand is what people feel about something and sense of place is what people feel about somewhere, then a community's brand is its sense of place. A community's brand describes its personality about whom and what it is. For Yellowknife, this personality is inherent in its physical pattern of streets, the physical form and materiality of buildings, the natural and human-made landscape, the economy and industry, people, groups, climate, arts and activities. These both inform the personality of the place and are informed by physical intervention (e.g. urban design).

In both cases, the brand or personality must be based on reality. If Nike is about performance but the quality of their products were to decrease, and becomes noticeable by users, the brand begins to disintegrate because the message does not accurately reflect what it is being delivered. The performance message then becomes superficial and not trust-worthy.

In the same way, the personality of Yellowknife (and its neighbourhoods and districts) and its sense of place will correspond directly to and have direct influence on the design of such things as streetscapes, architecture, signage and landscaping. These elements inform the sense of place and urban design strategy, and in a cyclical manner, the urban design strategy informs the sense of place and ultimately the city's brand.

## **Process**

In order to define the various brands of the Yellowknife neighbourhoods and districts, that are the Urban Design Initiative's study areas, the first step was an inventory of the elements that create and express Yellowknife's personality. This inventory was undertaken while touring the community and recording the physical form and experiences of the built and natural environment. Interviews were also conducted with various members of the Yellowknife community from both the private and public sectors to provide impressions and opinions to inform the written descriptions.

The inventory process begins with looking at what makes up the community. Yellowknife's history, culture, community attributes and natural environment are its community canvasses. Each of these canvasses are painted with the people, activities and geography which inform, and are informed by, life in Yellowknife - beginning to define Yellowknife's cultural landscape.

From this inventory, a synthesis of the essences, underlying themes, commonalities and differences could be completed, from which a formalization of brand descriptions could occur. These brand descriptions describe the personality of each neighbourhood or district. These community brand descriptions then become the basis for much of the urban design strategies. This then reinforces the brand(s) of each neighbourhood or district while still creating a unity throughout the city.



The storyboard (below) describes and illustrates potential 'canvasses' of history, culture, community attributes and environment. Within each of these categories are themes and essences observed within the community by the Project Team that define the cultural landscape of Yellowknife and are the basis in which a brand can be articulated.

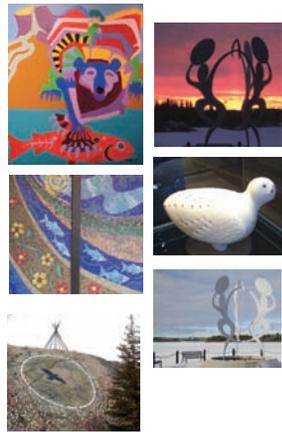
### History

events  
people  
places  
town origins  
transportation  
supply lines  
resources  
recreation  
commerce



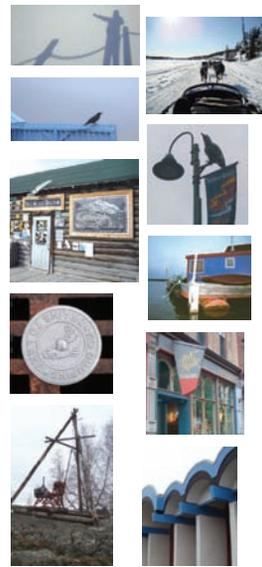
### Culture

events  
people  
places  
industrious  
non-conformist  
artistic  
independent spirit  
cradle of YK



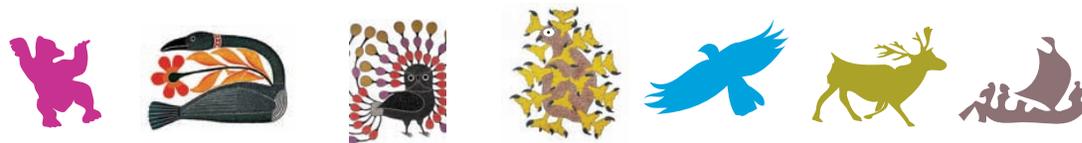
### Community Attributes

traditions  
events  
points of pride  
contrasts  
connection to water  
seasonal lake life  
built environment



### Natural Environment

geology  
flora  
fauna  
climate  
cycles  
sky  
land





*Old Airport Road is for most people the first impression of Yellowknife, and arguably this impression could be more positive. With efforts by the City to relocate industrial uses elsewhere, and bolstered by community input, there is an opportunity to remake the corridor not only into a more attractive gateway to the city, but as a centrepiece for sustainable urban intensification in this district of Yellowknife. As a result, the vision for the corridor incorporates greater density and diversity of use, with a special emphasis on the creation of open space networks that link the corridor not only to the existing Range Lake area, but to Frame Lake and the Capitol Area as well.*



## Redevelopment Vision

The redevelopment vision for the Old Airport Road reflects the guiding principles and broad conceptual direction from the charrette, coupled with current best practices in sustainable urban design and placemaking. From the charrette, the Project Team gleaned the following:

- Development of a gateway at Highway 3 intersection
- Potential for recreational development in / adjacent to Bristol Pit
- Potential to develop into capital area east of Old Airport Road, and need to carefully integrate transportation connections
- Mixed use development, with a focus on walkability and open space connections
- Housing choice, with emphasis on affordability
- Incorporation of innovative commercial models
- Development focus at CO-OP corner, with relationship to lake
- Protection of water quality within Frame Lake

The redevelopment vision for Old Airport Road builds upon these ideas with a concept incorporating intensified, walkable, mixed use development linked with greenspace, streetscaping and active transportation connections. The vision is fully described on the following page.

## Community Brand Description

Old Airport Road is Yellowknife's front door. With its proximity to the airport and as the location of the city's familiar big box retailers, Old Airport Road acts as a connection to the rest of the world. Its blue collar businesses and utilitarian building forms and materials express the community's 'get it done' attitude as a key part of Yellowknife's industrial base. Key words and essences to explore through urban design strategies include: Yellowknife's gateway; part of Yellowknife's industrial persona; 'get it done' attitude; utilitarian; connection with the rest of the world.





The redevelopment concept for Old Airport Road is based on key principles including 1) general infill and intensification of uses, including residential and commercial, through creative architecture and urban design, with emphasis on creative integration of highway-oriented commercial and housing choices; 2) creation of a strong streetscape presence which supports public activity and active transportation; 3) targeted redevelopment which supports (and is supported by) transit; 3) 'green corridors' which connect Old Airport Road, new mixed uses and adjacent natural areas; and 4) gateway development at the north end of Old Airport Road.

- 1 Walkable, mixed use development precedent.
- 2 Creative integration of highway-oriented commercial with residential, Vancouver BC.
- 3 Belvedere precedent.

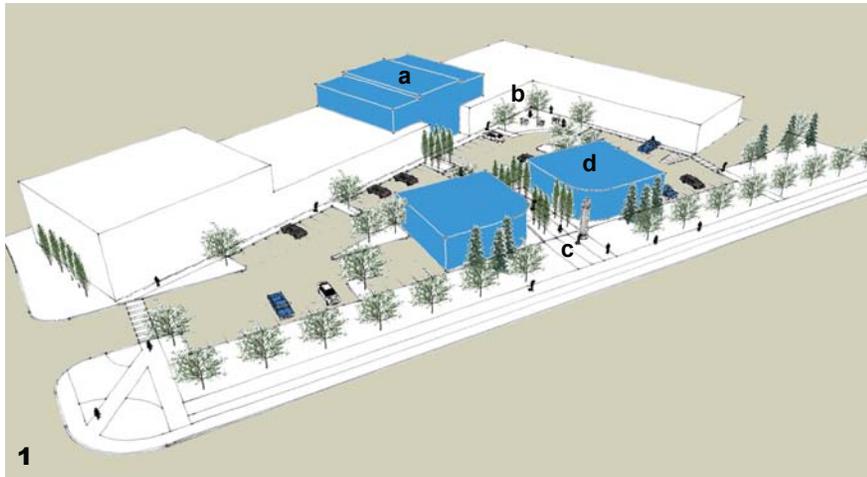


**Legend**

- Transitional area  
Mixed use with increased density
- Institutional district
- Parks and designated natural areas
- Transit Oriented Development Node
- Potential node opportunity
- Landmark public building opportunity
- District gateway
- Active transportation Corridor
- Existing multi-use trail



## Range Lake



1

**1** Redevelopment opportunity on the Stanton Plaza site, looking north. In existing developments such as this one, there is an opportunity to add additional floor space within the existing structure (a), enhance existing storefronts and streetscape areas (b) for greater pedestrian activity, provide better connections through parking lot areas (c), and develop pad sites as stand-alone retail opportunities with a strong street presence (d).

**2** Existing Stanton Plaza site.

**3** Redevelopment catalyst opportunity on former Extra Foods site, looking northwest. Whether as a conversion of the existing development, or as a new undertaking, there is a strong opportunity to create a community node at this location which supports (and is supported by) transit. Potential features include landscaped plaza (e) with transit facility (f), landmark public facility (e.g. library or community centre) (g), storefront retail (h) and a strong physical connection with Range Lake (i).

**4** Former Extra Foods site.

2



4



3





**1** RTL site redevelopment, looking northwest. The concept includes mixed use (a), residential (b) and public facilities (c) in a medium density, mixed use urban pattern. Commercial and public uses are oriented towards Old Airport Road, with a mix of housing choices behind. A finely grained roadway network ensures access into and through the site, and the retention of natural landscape features (d), as well as the introduction of ornamental landscaping within parking areas (e), ensures a high quality urban landscape.

**2** View of the site from Old Airport Road showing the potential public facility.

**3** Existing RTL site.



- 1** Streetscape enhancement opportunity for Old Airport Road. Key requirements include the provision for active transportation (a) and the artful integration of the existing natural landscape (b). Other features include hardscape patterning (c), landscape development (d) and district identify signage (e).
- 2** Streetscape enhancement opportunity for the west end of Franklin Avenue near the multi-plex. The streetscape treatment would be a continuation of that proposed for Old Airport Road, but with the introduction of more formal, rhythmical pillars / seating walls / art plinths (f) to reinforce the character of this roadway as both parkway and downtown gateway,
- 3** Gateway opportunity including a series of illuminated entry markers on stone bases (g), paired with lighting and banners (h) which could be implemented along Old Airport Road, Highway 3 and Highway 4.



*Downtown is the commercial and cultural heart of Yellowknife, with a mix of offices, housing, cultural venues, academic facilities and open spaces. As with most communities, many challenges face the continued vitality of downtown; however, the community has imagined the district being revitalized through an intensification and diversification of housing, new attractions and higher quality urban spaces. The vision responds with a pattern of reinvestment tied to existing land use patterns, future infrastructure enhancements, and potential transportation networks.*



## Redevelopment Vision

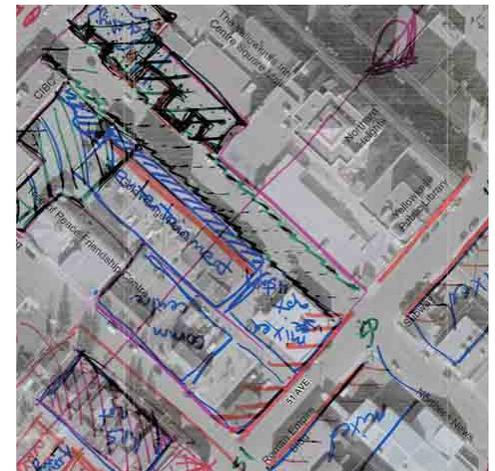
The redevelopment vision for Downtown reflects the guiding principles and broad conceptual direction from the charrette, coupled with current best practices in sustainable urban design and placemaking. From the charrette, the Project Team gleaned the following:

- Encourage mixed use development
- Infill housing, with an emphasis on a range of housing choices responsive to the needs of user and cultural groups
- Strategic commercial development
- Better pedestrian connections, particularly mid-block, linking to greenspace, community gardens
- More indoor and outdoor public space, with washrooms and similar amenities
- Redevelopment of parking lots
- Enhancement of streetscapes and street life
- District gateways needed - from north and west
- Exploration of convention centre within downtown

The redevelopment vision for Downtown builds upon these ideas with a concept incorporating intensified, mixed use development linked with greenspace, streetscaping and active transportation connections. Special consideration has been given to increasing housing choice, strengthening the district through gateways and signage, and providing formal and informal venues for community gathering. The vision is fully described on the following page.

## Community Brand Description

Downtown is the heart of life in Yellowknife. As a collection of businesses, governments, agencies, shops, galleries, restaurants, bars, entertainment, hotels, and apartments, it is the centre for everyday activities of Yellowknifers and visitors alike. Downtown is a social condenser and connector, generating the city's energy. Key words and essences to explore through urban design strategies include: Heart of life in Yellowknife; creates connections; Yellowknife's energy; business; entertainment; living.

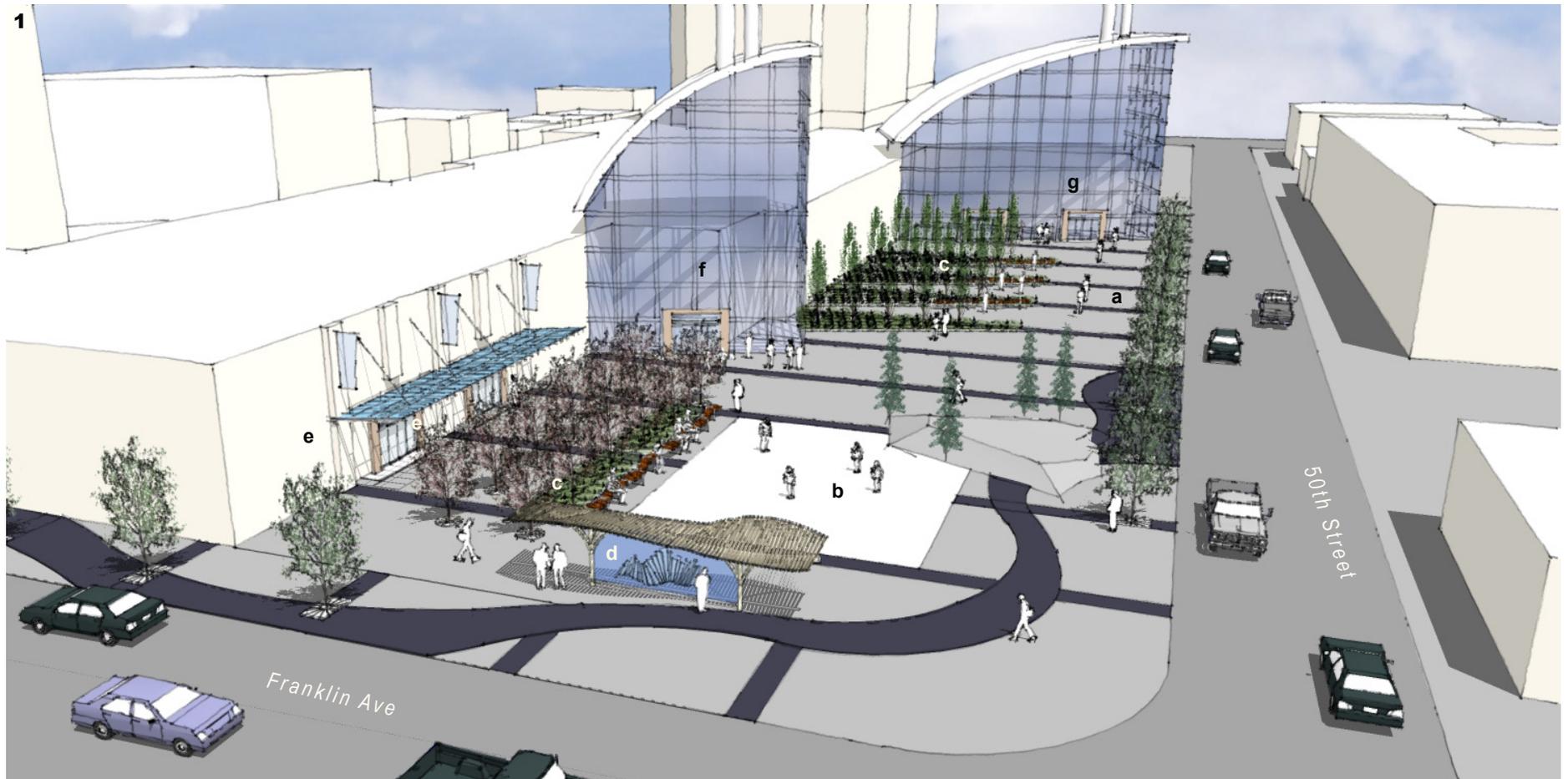




The redevelopment concept for Downtown is based on key principles including 1) general infill and intensification of uses, with a special emphasis on the architectural integration of a variety of building types; 2) general streetscape and open space development including gateways, public art and furnishings, tied to infrastructure upgrades and transportation improvements; 3) creation of a major downtown gathering area as a redevelopment catalyst; and 4) introduction of new mid-block connections and 'green' corridors' to increase pedestrian connectivity and support the development of both traditional and non-traditional housing models.



- 1 The opportunity to redevelop 50 / 50 corner represents a major revitalization catalyst for downtown. Features include courtyard areas (a), a multi-purpose surface which could accommodate winter skating (b), and landscape development (c). Opportunities to further enliven this space include the addition of a future transit facility (d), and the redevelopment of Centre Square - turning a portion of the mall 'inside out' with new storefronts (e) and entrances (f), and relocating the Library to better connect with the outdoors (g).
- 2 Winter activities in urban open spaces, Quebec City PQ.



The provision of a range of housing types and models in Downtown Yellowknife is critical in securing the vibrancy and vitality of the district, and at the same time addressing the housing needs of various groups in the community.

- 1-4 Illustrate a range of housing types and densities common in communities across North America. In all cases, the relationship of building to street, and the provision of semi-private and / or transitional space, is important and addressed to various degrees of success.
- 5,6 Illustrate innovative housing types located on laneways, which offer the potential of an additional layer of housing development and intensification within existing areas.
- 7 Co-housing model of supportive housing. Note the role of greenspace in meeting the individual and communal needs of residents.
- 8 Laneway development, Vancouver BC. These connections have added greenspace opportunities for higher density areas where none previously existed.





- 1 Streetscape development as undertaken on 50th Street, which serves as a model for the redevelopment of north-south streets within the downtown area. Features include boulevard tree planting (a), curb extensions with landscaping and site furnishings (b), hardscape patterning (c) and public art (d).
- 2 On Franklin Avenue, where curb extensions are not feasible due to traffic concerns, greater emphasis should be placed on hardscape treatments (e). Where sidewalks have already been placed, this hardscape pattern allows for incremental replacement while maintaining a unified whole.
- 3 Careful design of curb extensions yield multiple benefits - calming traffic, reducing crossing widths and providing opportunities for seating areas, cafes and similar uses. Special emphasis should be placed on the development of these spaces with good solar access.



*The Con Mine / Con Camp area south of Tin Can Hill has a rich industrial history, and based on community input, offers a unique opportunity to position Yellowknife as a leader in innovative and sustainable urban design. This vision includes a green community of transit friendly, walkable neighbourhoods linked to recreational assets, commercial amenities, academic and employment opportunities.*



## Redevelopment Vision

The redevelopment vision for the Con Mine / Con Camp area reflects the guiding principles and broad conceptual direction from the charrette, coupled with current best practices in sustainable urban design and placemaking. From the charrette, the Project Team gleaned the following:

- Maintain and enhance waterfront access, with the potential for residential and commercial development
- Protect natural systems
- Introduce higher density housing at strategic locations to retain open space
- Recognize cultural and industrial heritage of area
- Better integrate roadways - Taylor Road extension
- Introduction of interpretive trails
- Vision for academic and research park coupled open space development and mine rehabilitation

The redevelopment vision for the Con Mine / Con Camp area is uniquely different from those of the other three study areas. This site is 'greenfield' in nature, and as a result the vision is more intimately based on the opportunities and constraints posed by the landscape south of Tin Can Hill. The revitalization vision therefore builds upon the charrette direction with a concept of a 'green community' - walkable, medium density residential organized around landform, sightlines and solar orientation. Special consideration is given to the preservation of landform, view and access to nature (including the lake) and the creation of denser, transit-oriented nodes with commercial and employment opportunities. The vision is fully described on the following page.

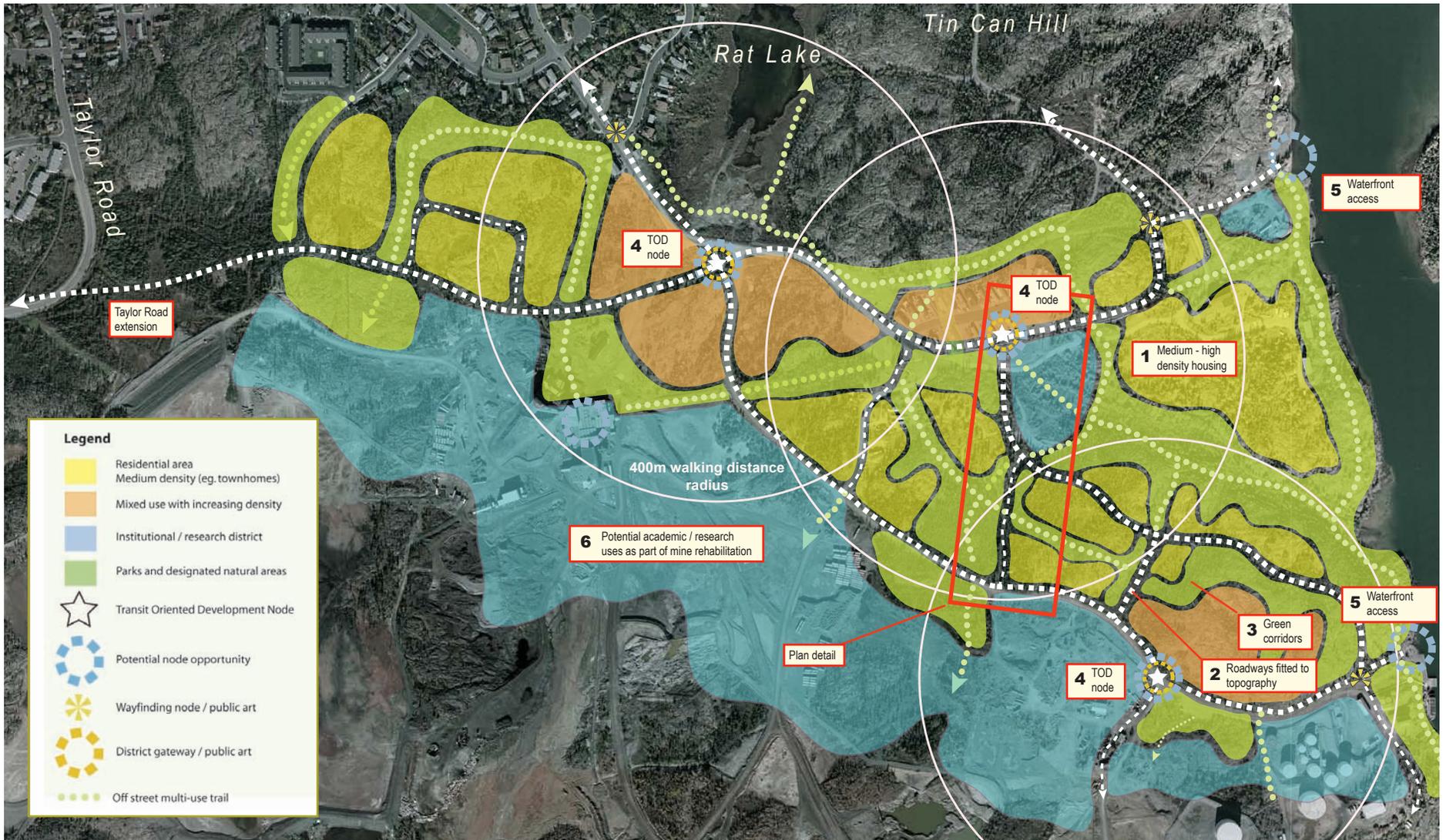
## Community Brand Description

Drawing upon Yellowknife's dependence on the landscape and its resources, Con Mine / Tin Can Hill is both visually raw and culturally cultivated for its supply of both vegetation and minerals. As wilderness in the city and natural amenity, it provides an opportunity to experience the mixed relationship with a rugged arctic landscape and the opportunity to live in ecological balance. Key words and essences to explore through urban design strategies include: wilderness in the city; dependence on landscape and resources; both rugged and cultivated; natural amenity; raw beauty.

- 1 Historic aerial photo of the Con Camp area showing the market garden area. This open space feature was identified as a key feature to be incorporated into future community development.



The redevelopment concept for the Con Mine area is based on key principles including 1) medium to high density housing sited for maximum solar orientation; 2) roadway networks which follow the topography of the site to reduce disturbance; 3) 'green corridors' of preserved natural landscape which provide ecological continuity and pedestrian connectivity; 4) transit-oriented development nodes; 5) waterfront access; and 6) future integration with the mine site for interpretive / academic / research functions.





- 1 Potential development pattern for the Con Mine / Con Camp area. Houses are generally placed on south facing slopes to maximize solar exposure, and away from north facing slopes. These slopes and other areas are protected as part of the open space / pedestrian network of the community. Streets are fit to the topography of the site, and pathways provide direct connections between residential areas and community nodes, including schools and mixed use amenities.
- 2 Potential medium density housing model - row housing with main floor garage ideally suited to the terrain of the Con Mine area.



*Old Town is an integral part of Yellowknife's history and a major part of the unique character and personality of the community. Based on the community input, the opportunities for Old Town include a careful and incremental redevelopment of key sites and waterfront areas to add additional activity, increase public waterfront access, while at the same time respecting the organic and authentic character of the area.*



## Redevelopment Vision

The redevelopment vision for Old Town reflects the guiding principles and broad conceptual direction from the charrette, coupled with current best practices in sustainable urban design and placemaking. From the charrette, the Project Team gleaned the following:

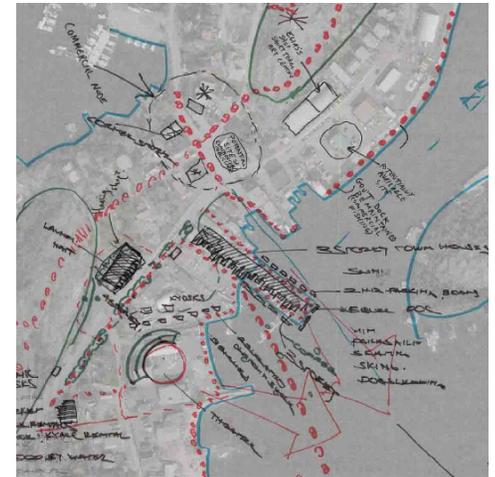
- Preserve / enhance links to waterfront
- More public amenities and gathering spaces
- Maintain and protect the rock
- Introduce mixed use development; but limit higher density development closer to downtown.
- Introduce traffic calming - to enhance pedestrian safety
- Protect views to the lake
- Find ways to incorporate houseboats
- Explore relocating boat launch from Old Town to alleviate parking and access issues
- Opportunity to develop a winter ice path
- Potential node development at School draw, with potential parking area for Old Town access
- Explore development of Joliffe Island as a public park

The revitalization vision for Old Town builds upon these ideas with a concept incorporating fine grained, mixed use development with a key focus on waterfront access. Because of its unique and sensitive nature, redevelopment in Old Town may occur within a much longer timeframe than in other districts, and as a result, new development must be highly incremental and self-sustaining. The vision is fully described on the following page.

## Community Brand Description

Old Town is the cradle of modern life in Yellowknife. Founded on the search for riches in the remotest of locations, the sheer will of Yellowknifers built a community that was about not just surviving but thriving. Its eclectic buildings and forms, varied streets, modern and rustic materials, colour and texture, diverse people and activities reflect the independent, industrious and artistic culture of Yellowknife. Old and new, rugged and refined, variable spaces, and a human scale define the original Yellowknife as a community oasis in the infinite landscape.

Key words and essences to explore through urban design strategies include: cradle of Yellowknife; independent; eclectic; industrious; Yellowknife's industrious and artistic culture and heritage in built form.



The redevelopment concept for Old Town area is based on balancing opportunities for appropriate development with the preservation of the area's unique character. Key principles include 1) relocating industrial uses not needing waterfront access in favor of sensitively designed mixed use development; 2) the potential relocation of the boat launch to address parking issues; 3) encouraging waterfront redevelopment that respects the architectural fabric and preserves public access and views; and 4) improving public access and amenities within the Back Bay area.



- 1 Existing site.
- 2 Granville Island redevelopment precedent, Vancouver BC
- 3 Redevelopment catalyst opportunity looking northwest. Features include mixed-use (a), residential (b) and commercial (c) buildings, well-landscaped parking courts (d), a large public plaza area (e) and waterfront walkways (f) with pedestrian connections to adjacent areas (g).

