

# City of Yellowknife Community Plan Update **Phase 2 Community Engagement Report**

V3 Draft submitted Jan. 27, 2025

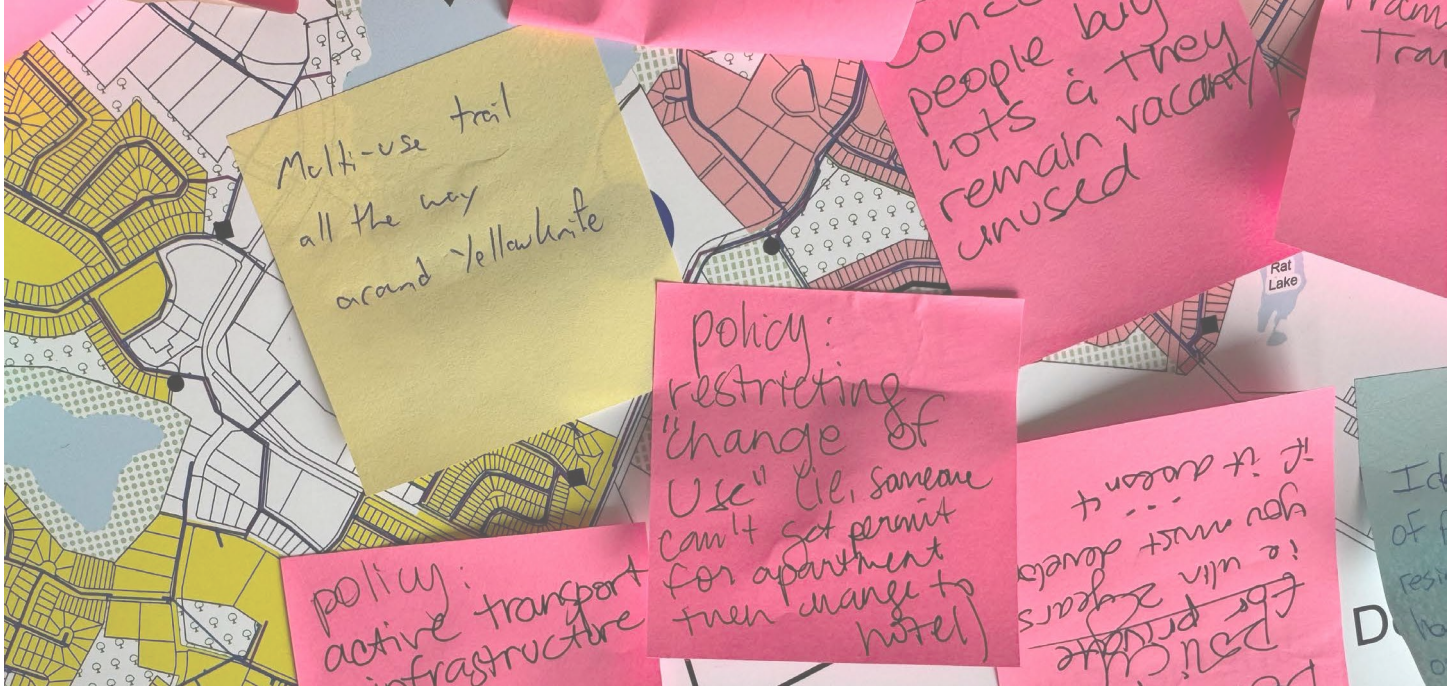
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# 1.0 Introduction

The City of Yellowknife is undertaking a comprehensive **Community Plan Update ('CPU')**, led by the **Planning & Development** team. This work aims to address **evolving challenges and realities of the moment**, such as climate change, housing access and affordability, economic resilience, public safety, and social equity. The CPU also considers possible future conditions, informed by a Population Projections report submitted to the City in August 2025, which provides forecasting data for low, medium, and high scenarios over the next 25 years.

Supported by an external team ('the Engagement Team,' 'facilitators'), the City has now **completed the second phase of a three-phase Community Engagement Project** ('the Project'). Building on the shared **Vision** and **Thematic Goals** identified in Phase 1 Engagement (see the [What We Heard: Phase 1 Community Engagement Report here](#)), Phase 2 engagement used a focus group approach, meaning conversations with **groups of 10-15 participants** (vs. broad community participation).

Discussions centred on the City's objectives and directions that will inform the Community Plan Update for **five key policy areas**, including:

- Land Use and Intensification
- Housing
- Workforce Accommodation
- Environment & Climate Change
- Infrastructure & Transportation

Understanding that **community members should not be expected to be policy experts**, participants were encouraged to speak from their own **professional and lived experience**. This **What We Heard: Phase 2 Community Engagement Report** ('the Report') summarizes thoughts, ideas and perspectives shared in each focus group session, with the expectation that the City's Planning & Development team take these findings and **interpret how what was shared can inform CPU activities and outcomes**.

Keep reading to learn more about the Approach to Phase 2 Engagement, followed by key insights from focus groups, from which emerging areas for policy direction and organizational practice have been derived and presented herein.

# 2.0 Approach

The Engagement Team, with guidance from the City’s Planning & Development and Communications teams, designed an inclusive engagement approach in an effort to have a wide range of voices and perspectives shape the Community Plan Update. This approach aligns with the City’s Accessibility Policy and respects Indigenous engagement protocols.

**Phase 2** builds on the shared vision, thematic goals, and relationships established through Phase 1 initiatives and engagements. Feedback loops with the **Community Advisory Team** and **Community Animators** convened at the beginning and end of Phase 1, informed modifications to the approach to mitigate engagement fatigue while remaining meaningful and accessible. The Engagement Team also facilitated a meeting with cross-departmental City representatives to gain insights into internal priorities and concurrent initiatives (such as the Transportation Master Plan), and to identify potential implementation barriers or synergies early.

An **Expression of Interest** (‘EOI’) for Phase 2 focus groups was circulated to the individuals, groups, and organizations identified through community network mapping, and to community members who, by participating in the Phase 1 online questionnaire, expressed interest in Phase 2 engagement. EOI responses informed the approach to Phase 2 engagement—specifically, dates and times for focus group sessions—in an effort to maximize participation.

As a result, Phase 2 engagement included a mix of in-person and online community conversations at various times of day (e.g., evenings and daytime). The following five key policy areas were sequenced as distinct conversations:

- 1. Land Use and Intensification
- 2. Housing
- 3. Workforce Accommodation
- 4. Environment and Climate Change
- 5. Infrastructure and Transportation

Table 1: Phase 2 Focus Group Details

Phase 2 Engagement	# Participants	Date, Time
Land Use: In-person focus group	12	Sept. 8, 2025, 5:30 - 8:30 p.m. In-person, Aquatic Centre
Land Use: Online focus group	6	Sept. 16, 3:00 - 5:00 p.m., Zoom
Housing: In-person focus group	11	Sept. 10, 2025, 5:30 - 8:30 p.m. In-person, Aquatic Centre
Housing: Online focus group	10	Sept. 18, 3:00 - 5:00 p.m., Zoom
Workforce Accommodation: Online focus group	4	Sept. 23, 3:00 - 4:30 p.m., Zoom
Environment + Climate Change: Online focus group	10	Oct. 2, 3:00 - 5 p.m., Zoom
Infrastructure + Transportation: Online focus group	14	Oct. 14, 5:30 - 7:30 p.m., Zoom

The existing Community Plan, and an internal draft policy framework document provided by the City for each policy area informed the respective discussion framework, as did “emerging themes” identified within each thematic goal derived from Phase One engagement (and presented in the Phase 1 Report).

Across all sessions, participants were encouraged to explore broad guidelines or strategies rather than focusing only on specific ‘policies.’ Facilitators invited participants to share anything that came to mind, including points beyond the Community Plan policy scope, to understand community needs that may be addressed through policy.

Facilitators also aimed to create a welcoming process by emphasizing confidentiality and data de-identification, grounding the dialogue in cultivating safer spaces to support participants’ feeling comfortable speaking from their lived experiences. Participants’ responses were de-identified and synthesized using a qualitative, theme-based approach to derive key insights and emerging areas for policy directions.

Focus group attendees included representatives with various interests, including but not limited to: private investment, local business and commercial investors; real estate; environment and climate; active transportation; and affordable & accessible housing (including those dedicated to special interest groups); as well as citizens generally interested in policy direction.

### **Approach: Land Use & Intensification**

Two ‘Land Use & Intensification’ sessions were hosted; the first, in person, and the second, virtually, each with two separate groups of participants.

Both discussions were organized around specific ‘Area Designations’ (e.g., Old Airport Commercial, Kam Lake), consistent with the current Plan’s land use designations. This approach was meant to ground participants in their direct experiences with specific areas rather than discussing abstract use categories. To kick off each session, Facilitators provided a summary of the CPU’s Vision & Thematic Goals, as emerged from the Phase 1 engagement, and shared insights on growth informed by the Population Projections report. The City’s Planning & Development team also provided insight about areas designated for future residential development.

In-person attendees were split into two smaller groups to foster richer conversation. Based on the breadth and depth of interest in housing and the city’s downtown that emerged from Phase 1 engagement, both groups participated in conversations about the designated Residential and Downtown areas. From there, they were invited to sit at one table if they wanted to talk about Old Town & the Capital Area, and at the other if they wanted to discuss Industrial, Commercial & Recreation.

| sidebar |

## **Overview of CA & CAT Roles**

### **Community Animators (‘CAs’)**

The roles and responsibilities of Community Animators are to:

- Help to set-up and tear down events, which may include arranging materials, setting up signage, and occasionally lifting/carrying items (e.g., boxes of supplies, small tables).
- Distribute flyers throughout the community
- Support facilitation of engagement sessions and outreach activities
- Assist with data collection (surveys, interviews, informal conversations) and note-taking
- Encourage participation of passersby during public activations
- Act as trusted connectors within your community
- Receive mentorship and training throughout the project

### **Community Advisory Table (‘CAT’)**

The roles and responsibilities of the volunteer Community Advisory Table (CAT) members are to:

- Guide engagement approaches and advise on methods
- Review and offer feedback on draft engagement materials
- Support recruitment of Community Ambassadors by leveraging their community networks
- Help disseminate engagement opportunities through their community networks.
- Represent diverse voices from across the community
- Attend at least one meeting per month with the project team

# Discussion format

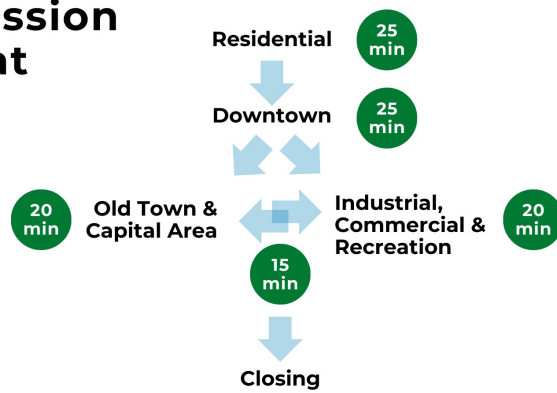


Image 1: Land Use & Intensification In-Person Focus Group Structure

Various tools were provided to guide each discussion, including:

- **A Toolkit**, which provided:
  - Background information on the Community Plan Update
  - The Vision & Thematic Goals, as presented in the Phase 1 What We Heard report
  - Key terms relevant to the discussion
  - Maps of each area designation
  - Specific context for each designated area, including relevant objectives in the Current Plan, relevant themes extracted from Phase 1 engagement, and discussion questions.
  - (See Appendix B.)
- **Mini cards**, which provided high-level summaries and situational context of each designated area, including:
  - Unique desired characteristics;
  - Housing types/use permits;
  - Intensification level; and
  - Parking minimums
  - (See 'Mini Cards' in Appendix C.)
- **Large maps**, which were placed at the centre of the table and used as a reference throughout each discussion.

For each designation, the questions posed were broad in nature:

- What **opportunities** exist to address emerging needs?
- What **risks, limitations or considerations** exist connected to these changes?

This provided participants with an open runway to share their perspectives, and specific ideas were then explored with more depth. Facilitators recorded notes, including on post-it notes, which were placed on the map in front of them for the group's reference, pointing to specific areas as relevant.

The approach to the second Land Use & Intensification session, which was virtual, evolved based on learnings from the first. Participants received the Toolkit via e-mail prior to the session.

While the practice of dividing participants into two groups was maintained, the discussion format was updated so:

- All participants participated in the Residential Areas discussion;
- Then, they could decide if they wanted to participate in the Old Town & Capital Area discussion, or the City Core & Central Residential discussion; and finally,
- They could decide if they wanted to participate in the Recreational Hub and Industrial discussion, or the Commercial & Light Industrial discussion

Facilitators used Miro, an online tool, to guide conversation, encourage participation, and record perspectives gleaned. Discussion questions were more specific to build upon insights captured during the first Land Use & Intensification session. Miro activities included maps and mini cards to further foster dialogue amongst the participants.

## Approach: Housing

Two Housing sessions were hosted as part of Phase 2 initiatives, and, like the Land Use & Intensification sessions, the first was in person, and the second was hosted virtually, each with two separate groups of participants. Both discussions were organized around specific objectives, including:

- Efficient use of existing infrastructure and resources
- Sustainability
- Accessibility and inclusion
- Community essence
- Partnerships

Each began by providing participants with an overview of Yellowknife’s current housing realities, based on data from sources such as Statistics Canada and Housing Assessment Resource Tools (HART) (see Appendix A for the deck). Population projection data was also referenced, providing further context to inform subsequent conversations.

In-person attendees were split into two smaller groups, for the sake of richer conversation. While both groups participated in the ‘Housing for All’ discussion, each group had a different focus for the conversations that followed in an effort for the Engagement Team to glean as much insight as possible in the limited time available.

## Discussion format

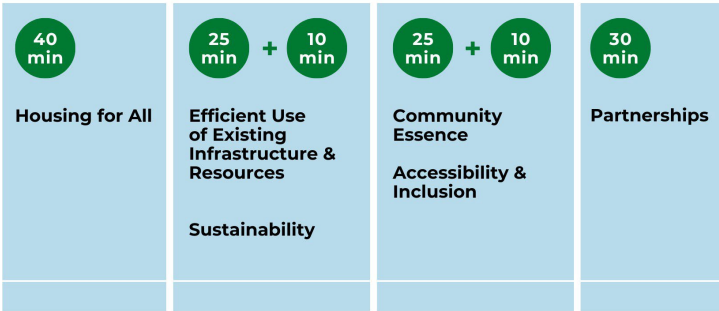


Image 2: Housing In-Person Focus Group Structure

For each area of conversation, Facilitators shared considerations from the Current Plan, as well as relevant themes that emerged from Phase 1 engagement. These insights informed the discussion questions posed and also provided participants necessary context to inform the conversations.

Discussion questions for the second, virtual Housing session evolved based on learnings from the first. Participants were provided with a Discussion Guide via email ahead of the focus group, which also included a summary of key terms. Again, Miro was used as the online facilitation tool.

## Approach: Workforce Accommodation

The Engagement Team hosted one Workforce Accommodation focus group. Facilitators used Mentimeter as an interactive audience engagement tool, though because of the small group size, it was not deeply relied upon for data collection. Instead, the 90-minute session was treated more as an informal conversation to gather perspectives.

## Approach: Transportation & Infrastructure and Environment & Climate

There was one virtual session hosted for each Transportation & Infrastructure and Environment & Climate. As with the other sessions, Facilitators leaned on Phase 1 findings, the existing Community Plan and the Framework provided by the City team to inform the approach and discussion questions.

Mentimeter was used as a supporting facilitation tool for the Transportation & Infrastructure session, while the Environment & Climate focus group took a more conversational approach, without relying on digital tools for data collection.

Participants were provided with discussion guides in advance, and each session kicked off with a short presentation from the Facilitators and City representatives to set context for the conversations.

## Validation

A draft of this Phase 2 report was circulated to Phase 2 Focus Group participants, who were invited to validate findings and identify gaps in the draft content. Feedback was collected via an online form, and a virtual Zoom session was also hosted on Dec. 16. Some feedback was shared with the Engagement team via email. Concurrently, the Engagement Team convened a meeting with the Community Advisory Table to receive their notes on the draft report and close the loop on Phase 2 engagement.

During this validation period, participants shared hope—despite some skepticism—that the City turn the directions within this Report into action. They also emphasized a desire to see and understand how the insights shared throughout are reflected within the CPU once a draft is available to the public.

Feedback received during the validation period informed updates to the original draft content, to finalize this version. In some cases, feedback informed direct updates to the text, to bring balance to perspectives shared. In other cases, feedback has been highlighted throughout the report as “additional insights” to offer additional perspective to sentiments captured in the focus group sessions.



## 2.1 Limitations & Gaps in Findings

Community engagement was conducted within the predetermined time and resource limitations, as dictated by the project scope. The six-week window for Phase 2, while broadly promoted through sharing the Expression of Interest, likely posed barriers to turnout for residents with work, school, or family commitments, resulting in some attrition. While the intention of focus groups is to facilitate small-group discussion with folks who have a personal or professional interest in a given topic, there were gaps in the representation of Yellowknife residents in Phase 2 focus groups. Notably, conversations did not capture a full spectrum of perspectives, with respect to age, race, ethnicity, and socio-economic status, and other underrepresented groups. Additionally, many participants attended various sessions, further limiting the diversity of perspectives gleaned through the process.

The engagement approach was designed to gather specific insights directly related to the topics at hand. In some cases, online engagement sessions specifically relied on structured digital tools to guide conversations and gather input efficiently. While this approach supported broad participation and clear documentation, in-person sessions allowed for more free-flowing, exploratory dialogue.

The findings in this Report are based on insights from Phase 2 focus groups and do not necessarily reflect the views of the entire Yellowknife community.

# 3.0 Summary of Findings

Each subsection of this Summary of Findings is dedicated to a policy area. Various resources inform these sub-sections, as follows:

- **Emerging themes** under each thematic goal derived **from Phase One engagement** (and presented in the Phase 1 Report);
- A **internal draft policy framework document** for each policy area provided by the City's Planning & Development team; and
- A comprehensive review of the **existing Community Plan**;
- A comprehensive review of other City reports, specific to each session, as follows:
  - Environment & Climate: Draft 2026-2036 Climate Action Plan and its What We Heard Phase 1 and 2 reports
  - Transportation & Infrastructure: Public-facing survey questions prepared for Let's Move YK (the City's Transportation Master Plan community survey); and
- A review of other resources and reports, including relevant Zoning By-laws and the Tin Can Hill Conservation Committee: Proposed Amendments to the Yellowknife Community Plan.

For each Policy Area, readers will find the content organized into:

- **Key Insights from Participants:** A summary of perspectives, concerns, and ideas shared by focus group participants. "Participants' Insights" are a key component of the findings, offering essential context for policy development and should be referenced in policy design. While applicable throughout all sections, this is particularly important for the Land Use & Intensification and Environment & Climate sections. These are organized into subthemes and key areas of focus.
- **Guiding Directions for Policy & Practice:** General directions to inform policies developed for the Community Plan Update, or to inform general City practice, as extracted from Focus Group conversations. (Note: These are strictly an interpretation of what was shared by focus group participants and do not necessarily reflect recommendations from the Engagement Team.) This provides an aggregated, synthesized overview, though it cannot substitute for the specific insights shared across sub-themes to inform policy development, as outlined in the "Participants' Insights" sections. It is the responsibility of CPU authors to consider and apply appropriate points to new or refined policies in the CPU, and for the broader City administration more broadly to consider those points related to general organizational practice.

Note that, given the location-based approach to Land Use conversations, content is organized slightly differently from other subsections, to best serve the presentation of findings and the "guiding policy directions & practice" extracted.



## 3.1 Land Use & Intensification

'Land Use' discussions (1x in-person, 1x virtual) began with discussions about Growth and Residential needs, and then were structured around a specific area or land use designations, which include:

- Downtown
- Old Town
- Capital Area
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Recreational

The sessions primarily included participants interested in multimodal, active, and non-car transportation; housing accessibility; tourism; affordability; real estate and development; and seniors & aging populations, as well as environmental protection.

Because of the breadth and depth of information, findings are presented following the same structure in the pages to follow, supported by Guiding Directions for Policy & Practice for each area as well.



# KEY INSIGHTS FROM PARTICIPANTS:

## RESIDENTIAL

### Central Residential and City Core

**Gradual shift from higher density to lower density based on location:** The idea that areas connected to the City Core have potential for intensification was widely supported, as was the feeling that this potential should be tapped through strategies that allow for a transition to more density near the Core. Participants emphasized a vision for a gradual shift from more density/more heights at the Core of downtown to mid-rise and low-rise buildings towards out (i.e., the edge of Central Residential, connected to City Core).

Participants also emphasized a desire for this prospective transition from a low-rise, single- to multi-unit “family-oriented” neighbourhood to “mid-rise”/“high-rise” neighbourhood to be regulated in a way that considers and mitigates impacts of intensification on the community, including factors such as traffic, parking, shadowing, micro-climate effects, pressure on municipal services, and access to community services.

There is a desire to maintain the characteristics of Central Residential as a low-rise neighbourhood as it goes to the edges of that designated area, and specifically, in areas closer to water and existing green areas (at West/Southwest/Northwest). Additionally, there was a significant emphasis on recognizing and maintaining the connectivity—visual and actual—to Tin Can Hill for any future designations closer to the area. (See ‘All Residential Designations’ Map, pg. 13, #1, 2, 3).

**Protect natural assets as a priority, regardless of density:**

Participants value the remaining rock formations within the Central Residential designation (at south, southeast), viewing these spaces as core to the area’s natural identity and important spaces that allow the neighbourhood to breathe. They want to see these natural characteristics protected, and an approach to development that carefully considers the value they bring to the neighbourhood, and the city as a whole. Allocating them to single-house development is perceived as failing to respect the environmental and community values of these land assets.

**Encouraging mixed-use functions:** There was strong alignment among participants that high-rise and mid-rise residential developments within the City Core and the edge of the Central Residential area have significant potential for mixed-use designations. They see a need to encourage and/or enforce mixed-use functions of these areas as a key strategy to downtown revitalization, intensification, and activating underutilized assets in the central part of the town.

### Niven Lake Residential Area

**Maintaining public access to green and blue spaces:**

Participants generally shared positive feedback about the flexibility of mid-rise development in the Niven Lake Residential Area and the function of trails that maintain public access around the lake and impede the privatization around valuable natural assets. Considerations were raised, such as a perceived need to connect the trail to broader walking pathways while maintaining public access and passive recreational use around the lake. This is considered a required strategy, in the interest of preventing the sense of exclusive use of the trail for Niven Lake residents.

**Encouraging mixed-use development & diversity of housing types:**

There was a strong emphasis on encouraging mixed-use development and diversity of housing types (in particular, multi-unit apartments and rentals) in this area. Emphasis was placed on regulations (i.e. policies) that encourage and/or incentivize community-friendly uses and functions, not only as part of new development but also as a possibility to be integrated with existing single houses or multi-units, particularly uses that bring a live vibe to the community such as cafes, restaurants and neighbourhood-level services.



## West Residential Area

**Enhancing community connections and amenities:** Participants described the West Residential Area as a family-oriented neighbourhood with well-used open and green spaces that positively contribute to its character. They value these spaces, emphasizing the importance of policies that enhance parks and protect natural areas, discouraging any development that could compromise these assets. There was strong interest in strategies that support community-level, small-scale commercial uses, such as cafés, restaurants, small convenience stores, barbershops, and childcare centres, that could be integrated within residential fabric to make the community more vibrant & enhance the local livability.

Additionally, participants say that there is a need to address gaps in walking and biking networks, especially near the edges of the area where it meets Commercial and Industrial areas, and along major roads such as Kam Lake Road, Range Lake Road, and Old Airport Road.

**Easing transitions between residential and commercial:** A recurring theme was the physical and experiential disconnect between two residential areas by large-footprint commercial developments (see 'All Residential Designations' Map, pg. 13, #4; see also 'Land Use: Commercial'). Participants said that the transition from a human-scale residential environment to a "big-box" commercial area feels abrupt and suggested that the City explore policies that improve the interface between these land uses, including mixed-use development and gradual transitions from residential to commercial uses.

One idea presented was to explore intensification and mixed-use development along edges shared with the Old Airport Road and Capital Area designations, with an emphasis on mixed-use developments that accommodate street-level commercial uses and residential units on the upper floors, for the sake of creating more dynamic corridors. (See 'All Residential Designations' Map, pg. 13, #5.)

**Approaches new residential options:** Participants support incentivizing strategies for multi-unit and mid-rise residential developments, provided that their scale and design respect the existing low-rise character. Some suggested that such developments are most appropriate at the edges of the neighbourhood, serving as a transition to adjacent land uses, while maintaining strong pedestrian and cycling connections to local amenities and services.

The southern section of the area, bounded by Kam Lake Road and Deh Cho Boulevard at the east and south, was viewed as a promising location for innovative, community-based residential projects that promote affordability and sustainability, such as co-operative housing and tiny homes. (See 'All Residential Designations' Map, pg. 13, #6.)

Participants also discussed existing multi-unit and condominium developments, presenting ideas to make these and future sub-communities better integrated with the larger neighbourhood, such as shared amenities, reduced surface parking, and enhanced walkability.

## Grace Lake Residential Area

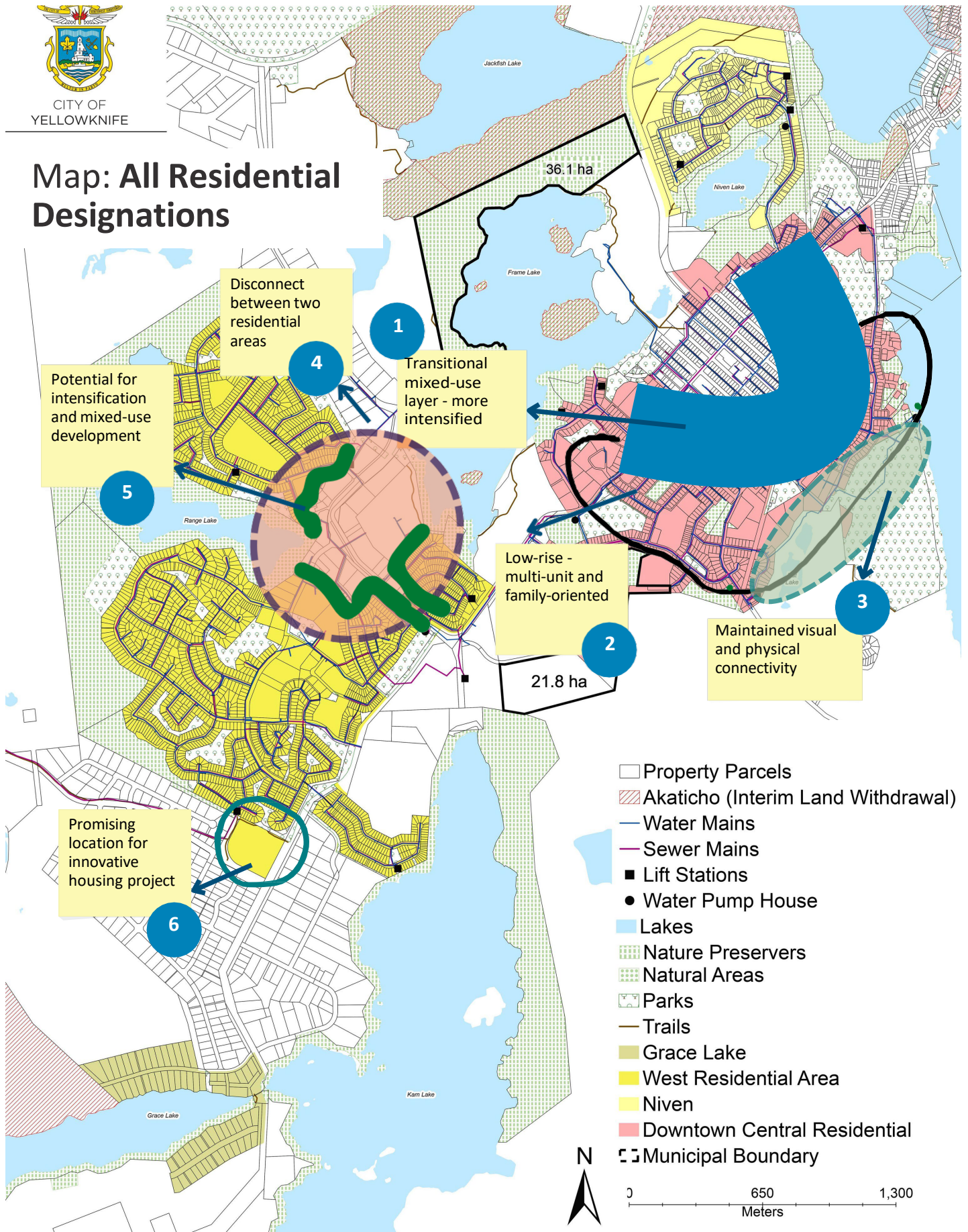
**Maintaining public access to green and blue spaces:** Participants shared strong concerns about the limited public access to Grace Lake and said that lakefront areas should remain open and accessible through continuous public trails and non-exclusive pathways along the shoreline. There was a shared sentiment that land use policies must prevent the privatization or restriction of public access to lakes or other significant shared natural assets.

**Lessons learned from this development:** Discussions also highlighted concerns about the risk of exclusive or segregated neighbourhoods. Participants used language such as "avoiding future ghetto-type developments" and stressed the importance of policies that promote mixed-income, inclusive neighbourhoods in future residential planning. Several participants questioned the planning rationale behind the existing residential development in this area. They viewed

it as inconsistent with sound planning principles, noting its proximity to lands zoned for commercial and industrial uses and its limited municipal infrastructure connections. From their perspective, this model (isolated, car-dependent, and lacking accessibility) should not be repeated in future growth areas.

Some saw this CPU project as an opportunity to rethink underused industrial areas for future residential expansion. They suggested that if land adjacent to industrial zones could be converted for residential use at Grace Lake, a similar approach could guide the transition of underutilized non-residential lands, particularly north and northeast of Kam Lake, into accessible, inclusive neighbourhoods through policies that encourage mixed uses, and diverse housing options. (See 'Land Use: Growth' and 'Proposed New Residential Designations'.)

## Map: All Residential Designations



## | LAND USE & INTENSIFICATION: EXISTING RESIDENTIAL |

# GUIDING DIRECTIONS FOR POLICY & PRACTICE

The following strategies synthesize participants' input into high-level directions that can guide land use policy for both existing residential designations:

### Central Residential & City Core

- Enable a **graduated intensification strategy** that transitions from higher-density, taller forms near the City Core to lower-scale residential forms toward the edges of Central Residential areas. Integrate **context-sensitive measures** that account for cumulative neighbourhood impacts including mobility, microclimate, servicing capacity, and access to community amenities.
- Maintain the **low-rise, family-oriented character** at the outer edges of Central Residential, particularly in proximity to waterfronts and significant green/natural spaces.
- Identify **key natural features and landscape assets**, including significant visual and physical connections (such as to Tin Can Hill), as protected elements to be integrated into land use patterns and open-space networks.
- Support **mixed-use development** in areas closest to the City Core where it contributes to downtown vitality, active ground floors, and the activation of underutilized lands.

### Niven Lake Residential Area

- Strengthen trail connectivity and public access to Niven Lake by **improving connections between Frame Lake, Niven Lake, and Great Slave Lake** through an enhanced and connected **multi-modal trail network**.
- Encourage **neighbourhood-serving mixed uses** that contribute to everyday activity and social life, while remaining compatible with the residential character of the area.
- Encourage a **diverse housing mix**, including **rental and multi-unit options**.

### West Residential

- Maintain an **open-space-rich neighbourhood design** where open spaces and natural areas remain central to land use decisions and neighbourhood identity.
- Use land use and built form transition policies as tools to mediate between low-rise residential areas and adjacent large-footprint commercial and industrial uses through **gradual transitions in scale and intensity**. This includes exploring **intensification and mixed-use development along edges** shared with Old Airport Road and the Capital Area designations, with an emphasis on street-level commercial uses and residential units above to support more dynamic corridors.
- Encourage **multi-unit & mid-rise residential development**, and **community-level, small-scale commercial uses**, that are integrated within the residential fabric across the area.
- Encourage **innovative housing development** on underused or vacant lands (see Map, 'All Residential Designations,' #6, pg. 13), with a focus on **affordability and housing diversity**.
- Improve the **social and physical integration of condominium developments** within the broader neighbourhood fabric through shared amenities, reduced surface parking, and enhanced walkability.



# KEY INSIGHTS FROM PARTICIPANTS:

## GROWTH

The discussion on growth and new designations focused on how Yellowknife should plan for future residential needs. It centred on two main areas: the suitability of locations proposed by City for new residential designations, and alternative areas that participants felt may be better suited for future residential growth. As participants compared the opportunities and limitations of both sets of locations, they also identified several expectations and principles that, from their perspective, should guide any future residential land designations.

### Growth and New Land Designations

Several key themes emerged from discussions about new land designations to address the lands needed to accommodate projected population growth:

**Concerns about growth projections:** Participants expressed concern about the growth projection scenarios, emphasizing that pursuing higher-growth scenarios should be approached cautiously, particularly if doing so requires allocating valuable natural lands for development. They said there should be a strong, evidence-based justification for any land needs assessment that assumes substantial new land requirements for growth.

**Efficient use of existing lands:** In discussions on efficient land use, many emphasized that Yellowknife needs a smart growth strategy that prioritizes developing underutilized lands within existing city footprints before allocating new land for development in natural or previously undeveloped areas. Participants noted that underutilized lands are (often) located in areas already supported by municipal services and infrastructure, and that focusing growth in these areas could make the extension and use of services and infrastructure more efficient. Further, they suggested that the City develop a clearer understanding of the range and location of underutilized lands. Examples raised included vacant parcels, properties, buildings, or structures that are deteriorated, left unused, or underused, as well as lands that have remained undeveloped for extended periods, particularly in strategic locations such as downtown. They also discussed the importance of recognizing that different forms of underutilization may require different responses.

**Balancing expansion and infill:** Alongside discussions about prioritizing underutilized lands, participants raised the importance of maintaining a balanced approach to growth. While some participants discussed inward growth (infill) as an important component of smart growth, others expressed concern that an intensification-focused approach could be problematic if it does not reflect Yellowknifers' strong values around maintaining 'space between' in neighbourhoods, including open and green spaces and natural rock formations.

**Concerns about overlooking future land needs:** Given the emphasis on a balanced growth strategy, participants raised concerns that this balance may not be sufficiently reflected in the Community Plan Update. In particular, participants expressed concern that not enough feasible land may be identified to accommodate future growth, and that limited attention has been given to strategies for securing lands needed for long-term expansion through cross-governmental collaboration.

**New lands for smart growth:** Participants emphasized that decisions about new lands for growth should align with long-term environmental stewardship and reflect community values related to growth, access to nature, and connectivity. Considerations raised included the cost efficiency of extending municipal services and infrastructure connectivity; access and trail connectivity; minimizing disruption to ecosystem functions and wildlife corridors; and avoiding development in environmentally sensitive areas such as lakefronts. (See also: '*Land Use: Alternative Suggestions for New Residential Designations.*') )



Participants noted that encouraging development, redevelopment, infill, or revitalization of underutilized lands may require a more proactive municipal role. This was discussed in relation to targeted investment, incentive programs, regulatory measures, and active leadership in mapping and updating information on underutilized lands. (*See also 'Housing: Collaboration & Partnerships.'*)

**Speculative land holding and land release processes:**

Participants raised concerns about monopolistic land ownership, noting that it can limit access to land and constrain orderly growth. They suggested that the City take steps to limit speculative holding and ensure transparent, fair processes for the release and sale of new lands.

**An agriculture-focused area:** Participants expressed interest in the potential value of a designated agriculture-focused area. This was discussed in relation to local food production, land stewardship, and long-term community resilience. Participants emphasized that identifying or establishing such an area would require consultation with key parties.

**Neighbourhood parks and open spaces - fixed requirements vs. flexible approaches:**

Participants emphasized the importance of a planning framework that supports the provision of green spaces and neighbourhood-level parks as part of new development and redevelopment. Some participants referenced a standards-based approach, in which a defined proportion of land within new developments would be set aside for parks or green space, and some raised concerns that a fixed land dedication requirement could result in residual, poorly located, or lower-quality parcels being designated as open space rather than spaces that meaningfully serve neighbourhood needs. A more flexible, context-responsive approach was discussed by many participants as preferable. This approach was described in relation to flexible zoning provisions and application-specific coordination, allowing the location, size, and function of parks and open spaces to respond to neighbourhood context and priorities. Participants emphasized that such flexibility would require sufficient municipal capacity to coordinate development applications in ways that meaningfully incorporate residents' day-to-day experiences and local priorities into decisions about the location, function, and design of neighbourhood parks and open spaces.



## Proposed New Residential Designations

Participants discussed two potential areas proposed by City as new residential designations:

### A. New designated area at south of Central Residential Area (including redesignated land from Con Redevelopment)

**Value of informal trails and natural features:** Participants noted that this land contains informal trails that are important for public access to natural rock formations year-round. They said that, while this land may not be officially recognized by City as part of Tin Can Hill, it has significant community value. Specifically, the visual and physical access to Tin Can Hill in this area is highly prized by Yellowknife residents. There were concerns that any type of development might compromise these values and functions. (See 'Growth' Map, pg. 20, #7.)

**Social and environmental priorities for future land use:** Participants widely agreed that any future land use designation for this area must deliver significant added social and environmental value to the community. A key recommendation was to allocate this area for alternative forms of dwellings that promote affordability (such as co-operative housing) and non-car-dependent living. (See also 'Land Use: Alternative Suggestions for New Residential Designations, Con Redevelopment Area.') Participants suggested that any future development along Taylor Road would require a public transit route for access.

### B. Frame Lake North new designated area for residential development

**Unsuitability for residential use:** There was strong alignment amongst participants that the Frame Lake North area is unsuitable for residential development due to its significant ecological and community value. They highlighted the following considerations:

- The area's critical role as a wildlife corridor adjacent to Frame Lake;
- The need to preserve important ecosystem functions and natural habitats;
- The community importance of the Frame Lake Trail, which would be negatively affected by nearby housing developments;

- The narrow shape of the proposed land, which would result in a low ratio of potential lots compared to the required roads and infrastructure;
- Concerns that any new housing could become exclusive or inaccessible, contradicting the goal of inclusive community development; and
- A common perception that the GNWT is unlikely to support residential development in Frame Lake North.

**Alternative land use potential:** Some participants proposed reserving the area for the future university or college use rather than residential development, emphasizing the importance of public investment in this land that upholds shared community values and the area's ecological significance.

**Planning and land use considerations:** Participants brought forward several considerations they felt were essential to account for if any land use changes were contemplated in this area:

- Establishing a substantial buffer zone along the lakeshore to protect ecosystem functions and maintain the integrity of the Frame Lake Trail;
- Considering the area beyond this buffer for low-impact, environmentally-friendly recreational uses, such as green camps;
- Exploring car-free concepts for any limited development at the outer layer, with a strong emphasis on policies that:
  - Prevent privatization of lakeshores,
  - Mandate environmentally-sensitive design and construction techniques, and
  - Protect scenic views of the lake and surrounding landscape.

Participants noted that once these environmental protections and layered approaches are applied, the remaining developable land would be negligible. This led to a shared conclusion that any major development in this area would be unreasonable and unlikely to justify municipal investment in servicing or infrastructure expansion. (See 'Growth' Map, pg. 20, #8.)



## Alternative Suggestions for New Residential Designations

During the discussion about residential designations, participants expressed strong interest in identifying alternative areas that could be designated or redesignated for residential use, as opposed to the City's currently proposed new residential designations. In the following paragraphs, participants' suggestions have been categorized based on the relevant designations, and the characteristics they discussed have been summarized.

### A. Old Airport Road Areas (see 'Growth' Map, pg. 20, #9)

Participants suggested that the areas currently designated for commercial growth along Old Airport Road hold strong potential for residential development, and identified this location as a more suitable alternative to the proposed residential designation north of Frame Lake. The following themes reflect the opportunities participants shared for why and how this policy change (i.e., introducing residential uses along Old Airport Road) could be an impactful land use and growth strategy.

**Underutilization of commercial lands:** Based on the City's 25-year Commercial Land Needs projection (17–21 hectares) and the considerable commercial land already available elsewhere (e.g., within the Kam Lake designation), participants felt the 32-hectare designated for new commercial development along Old Airport Road is unlikely to be developed in the foreseeable future and may remain underutilized.

**A smoother land use transition:** Given its adjacency to the West Residential Area, participants viewed this location as well-suited for residential development that could naturally extend the existing neighbourhood fabric and support a smoother transition between residential and larger commercial areas.

**Existing informal residential presence:** Participants noted that some business owners already live on-site along this corridor. They noted that recognizing and supporting residential uses in this area not only will benefit those who already live there but also could improve safety, support activity throughout the day and evening, and foster a more human-scaled and community-oriented environment, gradually transition the area into a place where people can both live and work.

### A vision for a mixed-use residential community:

Participants shared several key strategies about how residential and commercial uses could be meaningfully integrated in this area:

- Allowing residential uses above ground-floor commercial spaces, particularly on parcels directly fronting the main corridor (Old Airport Road.)
- Establishing a gradual transition from more intensive mixed-use forms near the corridor to more neighbourhood-oriented residential forms farther from the road.

They noted that this strategy could tap the potential for a continuous (visual, functional, physical) connection between West Residential (west of the road) and the potential new residential area to the east.

### Planning and land use considerations for the mixed-use corridor:

Participants also shared other key strategies related to the land use, built forms and overall character of this area to best utilize this area's potential if residential and mixed-use development were introduced:

- Maintaining the connectivity and public access to Frame Lake;
- Preventing privatization of the lakeshore;
- Implementing strategies that enable a gradual transition to, or a meaningful integration of, residential and commercial use;
- Strengthening connections with the West Residential Area through extending the Frame Lake trail system and safe pedestrian and cycling pathways;
- Encouraging multi-use commercial developments (rather than "big-box" formats) as a strategy to help transition the area toward a more neighbourhood-oriented character. Participants referred to ideas such as courtyard-style developments that combine different commercial businesses at the ground level with residential uses above;
- Allowing mid-rise development and infill along Old Airport Road (i.e. intensification in blocks adjacent to the main corridor) to encourage mixed-use development;
- Enhancing walking and biking experience with emphasis on safety, connectivity, and placemaking.



## B. West and South of West Residential Area (see 'Growth' Map, pg. 20, #10)

Participants shared a range of perspectives and recommendations regarding the potential extension of residential areas along the west and south boundaries of the existing West Residential Area. They identified several opportunities that illustrate why this strategic (policy) change could work:

**Optimizing the use of lands adjacent to Kam Lake:** Participants noted that lands to the north and northwest of Kam Lake, currently part of the commercial/light industrial Kam Lake designation, are well positioned for future residential growth given their proximity to existing neighbourhoods, municipal infrastructure, and natural features.

**Opportunity for a gradual land use transition along Kam Lake:** Participants highlighted the potential to shift portions of the northwest Kam Lake edge from commercial/industrial to mixed-use residential over time. They emphasized that this would require policies encouraging the relocation of uses incompatible with residential character and community essence. This transition was seen as a way to create more connected and coherent neighbourhoods, addressing the current separation between residential and non-residential areas.

**Insights drawn from the Grace Lake residential development:** While many participants viewed Grace Lake residential designation as inconsistent with sound planning principles (see also *'Land Use: Residential - Grace Lake Residential Area'*), they also acknowledged it demonstrates City's capacity to be flexible and adaptive in land use decisions. Building on this precedent, participants suggested exploring the long-term transition of selected commercial and industrial lands into mixed-use, mixed-income residential areas, guided by strategies that strengthen community connectivity, encourage housing diversity, and uphold shared community values.

**Feasibility related to municipal infrastructure:** Participants noted that both the west and south extension areas are close to existing municipal infrastructure, making future investments to extend road access and services more justifiable.

## A vision for a mixed-use residential neighbourhood:

Participants described the potential for the extension areas to become a distinctive multi-use community, with higher-intensity development along primary access roads and a gradual transition inward to low-rise, multi-unit, or single-family housing.

**Planning and land use considerations for the envisioned mixed-use community:** Participants also raised several environmental, mobility, and design considerations they felt were important to account for in relation to potential residential growth:

- Prevent the privatization of lakefronts and maintain adequate buffer zones along the shoreline;
- Support passive recreational uses—such as multi-purpose trails linking North Kam Lake to Range Lake—to preserve public access to lakes, enhance connectivity, and extend trail networks;
- For potential residential development near the west side of Range Lake, emphasize environmentally cautious design and development that balances growth with the protection of natural features and ecological values;
- Encourage mid-rise residential development to make efficient use of valuable land, while freeing additional space for community services, open spaces, and natural buffers;
- Extend and improve public transit service, and expand cycling lanes and pedestrian pathways, to support sustainable mobility if these areas are to be developed as residential areas;
- Address the need for traffic and safety measures to accompany any intensification strategy.



### C. Con Redevelopment Area (see 'Growth' Map, pg. 20, #11)

Participants generally understood that Con Redevelopment Area is currently in the final stages of remediation and has already met the standard suitable for passive recreational use. Building upon this understanding, many expressed a positive outlook about the area's long-term potential for residential development, provided that remediation ultimately meets the environmental requirements for residential use and allows for the inclusion of community-level services such as schools, public amenities, and open spaces. Participants identified several opportunities that illustrate why the Con Redevelopment Area could be considered a strong candidate for future residential development. These insights are reflected in the vision and planning considerations summarized in the adjacent text.

**A vision for a future residential neighbourhood:** When discussing the area's long-term potential for residential use, participants described a future neighbourhood that would be:

- Less car-dependent, with convenient access to public transit and connected walking and biking routes;
- Designed to maintain public access to rock formations and existing informal trails;
- Planned to preserve and enhance public access and active mobility connections to the Great Slave Lake shoreline, including improved recreational infrastructure along the waterfront;
- Connected to municipal infrastructure;
- Well connected to adjacent neighbourhoods;
- Guided by policies that prohibit shoreline privatization; and
- Supported by traffic safety improvements along and across major boundary roads.

**Planning and land use considerations:** Participants also highlighted several considerations related to timing, access, and connectivity:

- Residential potential contingent on remediation outcomes: Participants emphasized that residential development would only be appropriate if environmental requirements for residential use are fully met, enabling both housing and associated community services.
- Early public access and interim recreational use: Many participants supported accelerating remediation efforts and expressed interest in the City taking a proactive role in negotiating to retain the land post-remediation.
- Connectivity opportunities: Participants highlighted opportunities to strengthen community connections through expanded trail and cycling networks, including potential links between Tin Can Hill, significant rock formations in the area, and nearby neighbourhoods.

This theme also aligns with insights from the Recreational designation (see 3.1 *Land Use: Recreational - Flexible land use and mixed-use development*).

### | additional insight |

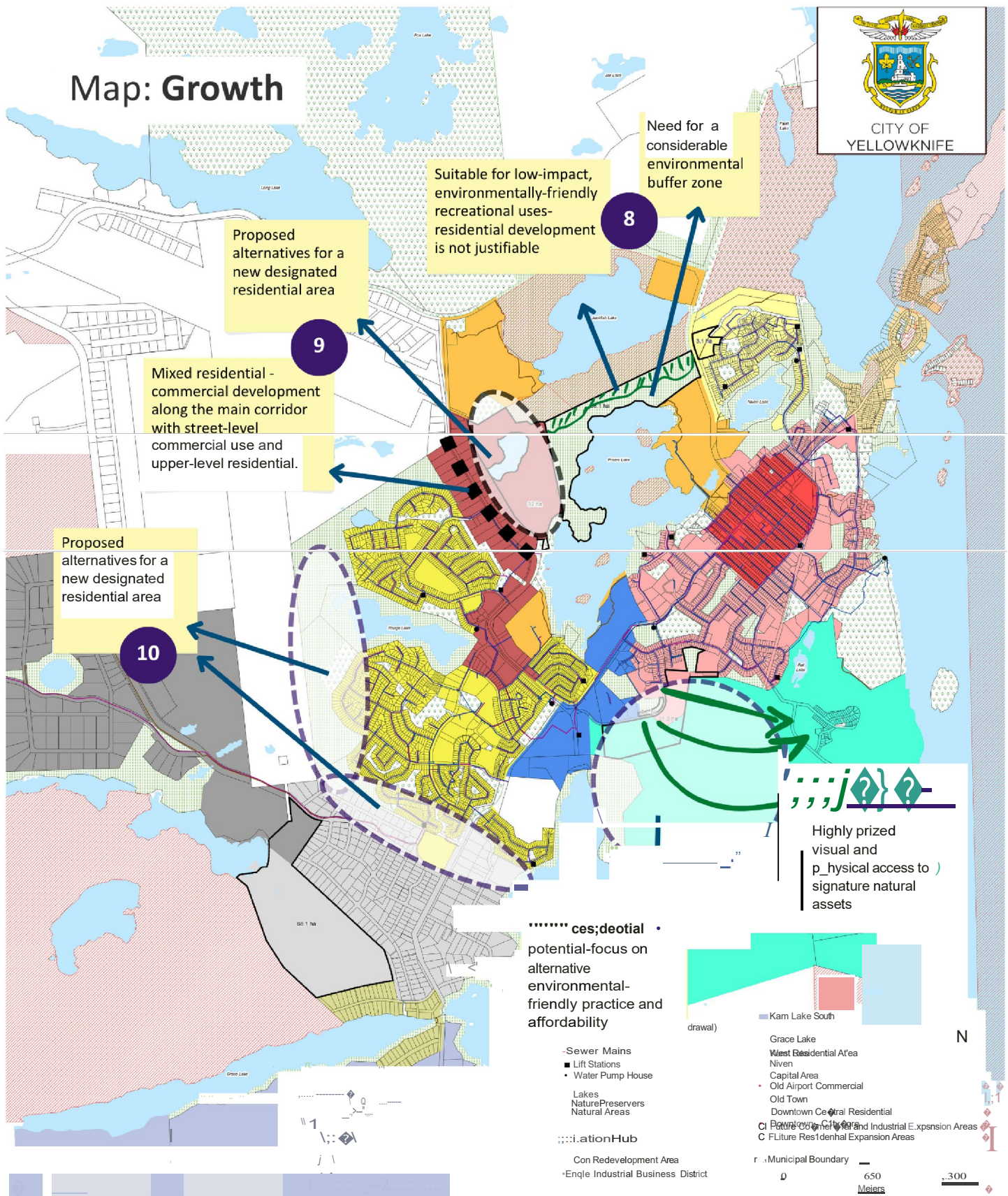
Additional feedback was emphasized when the first draft of this Report was shared with participants for validation purposes, as follows:

- The City should ensure Con Mine incorporates non-market and supportive housing early in planning, not as an afterthought.

# Map: Growth



CITY OF  
YELLOWKNIFE



## | LAND USE & INTENSIFICATION: GROWTH |

# GUIDING DIRECTIONS FOR POLICY & PRACTICE

### Directions for existing residential designations (infill, redevelopment, underutilized lands)

The following strategic-level directions reflect recurring priorities and tensions raised by participants across all existing residential designations. These directions are intended to guide land use policy and regulatory frameworks related to infill, redevelopment, and the use of underutilized lands within serviced areas.

- Support **context-sensitive redevelopment and intensification** within existing serviced areas, responsive to location, scale, and surrounding conditions, and attentive to cumulative impacts on neighbourhood function, infrastructure capacity, and access to community services.
- Use **land use and built form transitions as a core planning tool** to manage interfaces between residential areas and adjacent commercial, industrial, or major access corridors, avoiding abrupt changes in scale, form, and function.
- Enable **mixed-use and neighbourhood-serving functions** within residential designations, supporting complete communities while remaining compatible with residential character.
- Advance **housing diversity and affordability** through redevelopment, supporting a range of housing types and affordability levels.
- Protect **natural assets and open spaces** as central considerations in infill and redevelopment strategies.
- Embed **environmental and shoreline protection principles**, including buffers, public access, passive recreational use, and ecological stewardship, into new development and redevelopment along or in close proximity to lakes.
- Advance land use efficiency through **strategies that incentivize or require timely development** of vacant, underutilized, or strategically located parcels.
- Improve **land disposition and redevelopment processes** to reduce speculative holding, enhance transparency, and align land allocation with long-term community and planning objectives.
- Advance **integrated land use and mobility planning in redevelopment planning** to strengthen active mobility networks, improve connectivity within and between neighbourhoods, support safe interfaces at major roads and edges, and reduce car dependency. (*See also 'Transportation & Infrastructure.'*)

### Directions for residential designations

The following strategic-level directions reflect recurring priorities and tensions raised by participants in relation to growth, new land designations, and proposed future residential areas. These directions are intended to guide land use policy and decision-making for large-scale residential development, land release, and expansion beyond existing residential areas.

- Align new residential designations with **evidence-based growth needs**, ensuring that land needs assessments and growth scenarios are clearly justified.
- Apply clear, **evidence-based criteria for evaluating potential new residential designations**, including ecological value, community use, infrastructure feasibility, connectivity to municipal infrastructure and adjacent neighbourhoods, and long-term stewardship considerations.
- Avoid new residential designations in areas where development would diminish **key natural assets**, disrupt **wildlife corridors**, or compromise trail systems and public access to **natural landscapes**.

- Prioritize new **residential designations adjacent to established neighbourhoods**, and mixed-use potential to support efficient and sustainable land use.
- Maintain **shoreline protection and public access** in any new waterfront-adjacent designations, including implementation of buffers and environmentally sensitive design.
- Recognize the role of **flexible planning approaches** in shaping parks and open spaces in large developments, prioritizing location, accessibility, functionality, and neighbourhood priorities rather than fixed land-percentage requirements.
- Maintain and enhance **connectivity between walkways, public transit, bike lanes, and multi-use trails**, ensuring new development does not block or compromise existing or future network connections.
- Plan new residential areas as **complete, multimodal neighbourhoods**, with integrated land use, mobility, and service planning.
- Integrate **community-informed approaches** to the allocation of neighbourhood parks, public open spaces, and community amenities within new residential areas.
- Prioritize **mixed-use and mixed-income development** in new residential designations, particularly in locations that can leverage proximity to commercial corridors, services, and community supports.
- Support **housing diversity and inclusive residential forms** in new areas, enabling a range of housing types and tenures that respond to affordability and changing household needs.
- **Avoid forms of planning and development that encourage privatization or gated communities**, particularly in proximity to valued natural areas.

## | additional insight |

Additional feedback was emphasized when the first draft of this Report was shared with participants for validation purposes, as follows:

- The Plan must implement anti-speculation measures and prioritize social-purpose organizations (Yellowknife Women's Society (YKWS), Indigenous groups, co-ops) in land release processes.
- Land allocations should include a social-value scoring matrix that prioritizes:
  - non-profit ownership
  - housing for equity-deserving groups
  - Indigenous-led partnerships
  - wrap-around services integration



# KEY INSIGHTS FROM PARTICIPANTS: DOWNTOWN

Downtown discussions focused on how different “layers” of Downtown function today and how they could evolve to better support a vibrant, people-centred area. Participants also explored priorities and opportunities that should inform land use and development decisions in downtown to help advance the broader downtown revitalization vision and goals.

## The anatomy of Downtown land use & built form (see ‘Downtown’ Map, pg. 25, #12, 13, 14):

- **The core of downtown:** Participants discussed the need for a central area that truly functions as the city’s centre with distinct physical and spatial qualities described as:
  - A central pedestrian plaza or open zone designed for activations such as community events and festivals.
  - Infrastructure to enable extended seasonal use, including heating systems, partial coverings, or enclosed features that make the space winter-friendly and active year-round.
  - Integration of green spaces and strong connectivity to the citywide walking and cycling network, ensuring accessibility and comfort for all users.
  - Strategic use of underutilized lands around the central area, such as contaminated or constrained parcels (e.g., gas-station sites), for structured or underground parking that supports downtown uses without occupying valuable land.
- **The layer surrounding the core:** Participants recommended that the blocks shaping the edges of this central core should become the focus of mixed-use intensification, combining street-level commercial activity (office, retail, cafes and restaurants, and experience-based or service-based commercials) with residential uses above to create a vibrant, people-centred downtown fabric. It was emphasized that encouraging integration of residential uses within this layer will contribute to downtown vibrancy and support local businesses by increasing daily foot traffic.
- **The outer layer:** Participants supported a clear transition from the mid-rise, more intensified downtown layer to the surrounding low-rise residential areas (see ‘3.1 Land Use: Residential - Central Residential Area’). Themes raised included:
  - Gradual change in building height, scale, and density to maintain compatibility with adjacent residential streets.
  - Preserving pedestrian and cycling continuity between downtown and surrounding neighbourhoods.
  - Establishing guidelines that support visual coherence and compatible streetscape character at the downtown edge.

**Development of vacant and underutilized parcels:** Participants expressed strong interest in approaches that encourage or require development of vacant parcels and neglected properties within the downtown core. Insights shared included:

- Support for a combination of enforcement tools and flexible, incentive-based approaches to motivate landowners to develop long-standing vacant lots.
- Consideration of targeted tax measures for vacant or deteriorated properties, especially those near the core.
- Interest in establishing development timeframes for City-sold parcels, with resale requirements if owners do not proceed within a defined period.

**Flexibility on eligible adaptive reuses:** Participants also stressed that encouraging and supporting the reuse of existing downtown buildings is a critical complement to discouraging demolition or prolonged vacancy, as it can help activate underperforming spaces and diversify downtown activities. They noted that adaptable and flexible land use permissions are essential to make this feasible, provided that new uses remain compatible with the overall character, function, and ‘vibe’ of Downtown.

**Housing mix and tenure diversity:** Participants emphasized the importance of enabling mixed-income and mixed-tenure housing options in downtown residential uses. Views diverged on how this should be achieved:

- Some supported mandatory requirements to secure affordability and housing diversity in new developments and redevelopments.
- Others, including landowners, developers, and investors, cautioned that rigid obligations could discourage investment or create additional administrative burdens.

**Clear, predictable, and effective Incentive frameworks:** Many participants favoured incentive-based approaches as a more realistic way to encourage private-sector participation in housing and mixed-use development. They noted that incentives such as density bonuses, fee reductions, tax deferrals, or expedited approvals may be effective entry points.



Participants also stressed that different parties interpret “incentives” differently, and that City should engage with these groups to clarify what supports actually de-risk investment rather than assuming that policy tools alone will suffice. (See ‘3.2 Housing: Partnership and Collaboration.’)

One suggestion included subsidy incentives to encourage developments that integrate a spectrum of affordability and inclusion (affordable housing, senior, or student housing) near downtown core, recognizing the area’s proximity to essential community services and supports. (See also ‘Housing Diversity, Affordability & Attainability.’)

**Demonstrated City commitment to downtown revitalization:**

Across discussion, there was recognition that policy, incentive or enforcement tools alone are insufficient to catalyze Downtown revitalization as envisioned. There was a shared recognition that private investment is unlikely to move first, and visible, early City participation is needed to build market confidence. Key points shared by participants included:

- Identification or acquisition of strategic parcels by the City to develop pilot or demonstration projects.
- Publicly funded or partnership-based projects were seen as the necessary catalyst for private-sector participation.
- Early public investment would help resolve the dilemma described by participants: the cycle in which a sense of safety and vibrancy is needed to attract investors, but investment and activity are also needed to improve safety and perception.

**Accountability for property upkeep in the Downtown Core:**

Participants identified a need for stronger mechanisms to ensure the upkeep of downtown properties to a standard that reflects and contributes to a lively and vibrant core. They emphasized the importance of tools and mechanisms that support maintaining clean, safe, and well-kept buildings and façades. Participants favoured incentive-based supports that help offset refurbishment costs, rather than relying solely on strict design controls that could deter participation. They also noted that bureaucratic hurdles may discourage property and

business owners from engaging in improvements, underscoring the need for simple and accessible approval processes for capital repairs and refurbishment projects. However, there was also strong emphasis that some level of enforcement may still be necessary to ensure accountability among relevant groups.

**Reinvestment in existing Downtown housing:** Participants emphasized the need for targeted reinvestment in existing residential and supportive housing buildings in the downtown core. They noted that improving the condition of these buildings would significantly enhance the quality of life for tenants while also contributing to a safer, more vibrant overall downtown environment.

**Land use efficiency and parking strategy:** Participants raised concerns about allocating valuable downtown land for surface parking lots. They emphasized the need for a downtown parking strategy that limits surface parking in the downtown core area and supports more efficient land use. Suggested approaches included introducing paid on-street parking, with fee structures scaled according to proximity to the downtown core.

The following themes emerged during land use discussions but might extend beyond the scope of land use designation. Participants felt, however, that they are essential considerations for Downtown planning and should inform future policy directions:

**Community essence and design considerations:** Participants highlighted the importance of design elements that support safety, aesthetics, and community identity. This included:

- Interest in improved design guidelines for new development, including landscaping and building features that enhance safety.
- Demand for amenities such as balconies, parks, and play spaces in downtown residential buildings.
- Support for artist collaborations in building exteriors to strengthen cultural expression and visual vibrancy.

### Integration of social well-being into Downtown planning:

Participants noted that Downtown functions simultaneously as a business and cultural centre and as a place where vulnerable populations seek support. They cautioned that policies should avoid framing these roles as mutually exclusive, emphasizing that revitalization and safety must progress in tandem, supported by both social and physical interventions. Key ideas shared included:

- Adopting place-based approaches that integrate social well-being into planning and design; for example, locating public toilets, sheltered gathering spaces, and community service hubs within active streetscapes rather than in isolated zones.
- Introducing “compassion-action training” for residents (as seen in Kelowna and Vernon) and developing a Community Ambassador Program to reduce reliance on police and security presence by offering a friendlier, support-oriented public role.

**Downtown as a civic and community hub:** Participants also want Downtown to function as a forum for civic engagement. They noted a need for policies that support, encourage, or enable community stewardship and leadership over different aspects of downtown (e.g., shared ownership, safety, experience of unhoused people).

One recommendation was to use the public library as a pilot project, expanding it into a multifunctional venue combining

a café, meeting spaces, art studios, and community rooms, thereby creating an accessible setting for residents to engage in local governance and civic dialogue.

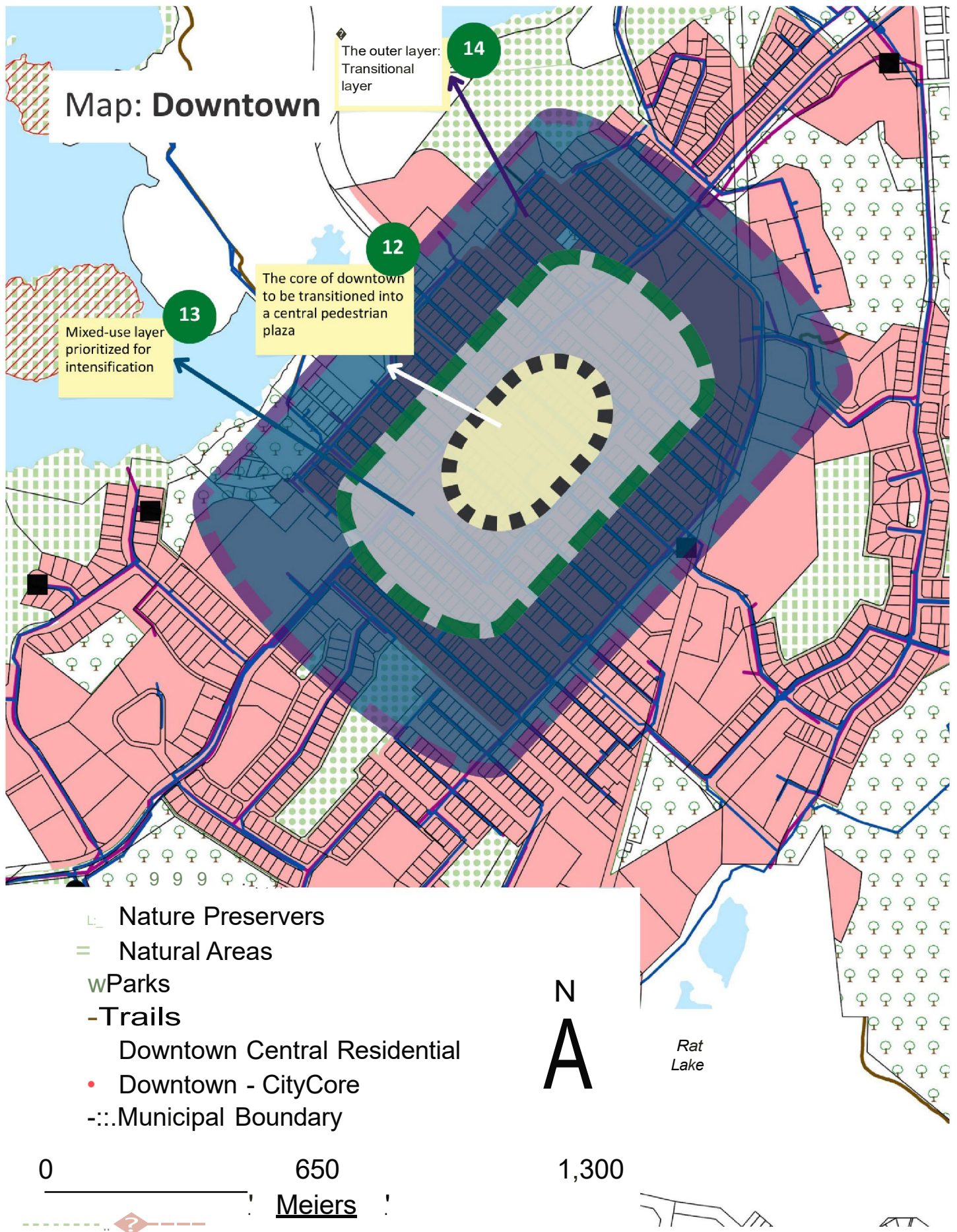
Participants also expressed interest in seeing the Visitors Centre become a distinctive architectural landmark with a welcoming and visible public presence in the Downtown core, building on the vision for a central zone that is visitor-friendly, pedestrian-focused, and experience-oriented. At the same time, some expressed concern that locating the facility downtown may not be compatible with current downtown realities, pointing to tensions between a socially complex environment and a downtown characterized as a place for economic and social activity.



### Example referenced:

Participants referenced Vancouver’s Commercial Drive for its mix of character, commercial presence, and various forms of social housing, and suggested there may be something for the City of Yellowknife to learn from the approach applied there.

They also referred to the City of Toronto’s [Social Development, Finance and Administration division \(SDFA\)](#) as a model to explore as it relates to enabling community stewardship and leadership.



## | LAND USE & INTENSIFICATION: DOWNTOWN |

# GUIDING DIRECTIONS FOR POLICY & PRACTICE

The following directions synthesize participants' input into high-level guidance to inform land use policies for the Downtown area:

- Prioritize **infill and redevelopment** of vacant, underutilized, and deteriorated parcels in and near the core before supporting further peripheral expansion.
- Adopt strategies that promote **land use flexibility and adaptive reuse** of existing buildings, aligned with Downtown Revitalization goals.
- Focus **mid-rise mixed-use development** on blocks surrounding the central area, with active street-level commercial uses and residential above.
- Prioritize **mixed-use development** over single-use zoning throughout Downtown, particularly in the core and transitional layer, with an emphasis on integrating community services and enhancing Downtown experiences.
- Use height, density, and design guidelines to establish a **gradual step-down** from intensified Downtown areas to surrounding low-rise neighbourhoods.
- Maintain continuous pedestrian and cycling connections across Downtown.
- Introduce a **coordinated mix of incentives and enforcement tools** to encourage reinvestment in vacant, underused, or deteriorating properties in and near the core.
- Establish **predictable, incentive-based tools**, developed in collaboration with landowners and developers, to support mixed-income and mixed-tenure housing forms, including affordable, senior, and student housing, near essential services and supports. (*See also 'Housing: Housing Diversity, Affordability & Attainability.'*)
- Introduce **property standards and façade/landscape policies/guidelines** for the core to raise the baseline of building upkeep and appearance, supported by enabling tools and, where needed, targeted enforcement.
- Restrict new **surface parking** and shift toward structured or underground parking, complemented by **demand-based on-street pricing** that supports efficient land use and a more walkable, human-focused Downtown.
- Integrate **social well-being considerations** into Downtown land use and public-realm policy.
- Identify and reserve **strategic Downtown sites** for civic, cultural, and demonstration projects that can anchor

## | additional insight |

Additional feedback was emphasized when the first draft of this Report was shared with participants for validation purposes, as follows:

- Downtown policies should integrate harm-reduction, trauma-informed design, safe public spaces, and accessible drop-in services.
- "Revitalization" must avoid displacement of vulnerable residents and instead embed equity, rights-based housing, and social inclusion in zoning and redevelopment standards.
- Require early City investment in demonstration projects to catalyze private support while centring social organizations.



# KEY INSIGHTS FROM PARTICIPANTS:

## OLD TOWN

**Discussions about Old Town focused on its role as Yellowknife's most historically distinctive neighbourhood and the unique land use considerations that come with preserving its character while supporting its evolution.**

Participants explored opportunities to enhance Old Town as a culturally vibrant, pedestrian-oriented district while addressing long-standing concerns related to land use compatibility, waterfront access, housing pressures, and the stewardship of key public assets. The following themes summarize the insights shared:

**Heritage character and sense of place:** Participants expressed a shared view that Old Town is Yellowknife's most distinctive area and requires planning and development approaches that protect and strengthen its unique historical and cultural character. There was shared emphasis on policy directions that make better use of Old Town's existing assets, including its historic charm, lake views, small-town feel, and local retail and food destinations, to transition Old Town into a destination for both residents and visitors that celebrates the essence of Yellowknife's heritage and community life. Participants placed strong emphasis on protecting the Pilot Monument landmark and preserving its prominence as a defining feature of Old Town.

**Pedestrian-oriented public realm and mixed-use main corridor:** A major theme focused on transforming Old Town into a pedestrian-friendly district, with wide multi-use paths for walking and cycling, pedestrian plazas, and gathering zones along Franklin Avenue (the main access route) and adjoining streets leading to signature rock formations and the Pilot Monument. Participants described several key characteristics of this re-envisioned corridor:

- The pedestrian-centric spaces were seen as strong opportunities to host place-based events, markets, and festivals celebrating Yellowknife's culture and identity.
- Support for mixed-use development along the corridor, combining commercial, residential, office, and community-serving uses, with active street-level functions such

as cafés, restaurants, art studios, and local shops to encourage foot traffic and support local businesses.

- Interest in the redevelopment of underutilized lands, such as abandoned buildings and storage sites along Franklin Avenue, McDonald Drive, and Wiley Road, to support this vision, particularly by transforming the first impression of the area from an underused industrial corridor into a vibrant, pedestrian-oriented district.

(See 'Old Town' Map, pg. 29, #15, 16.)

**Parking and mobility considerations:** While many embraced a pedestrian-centred vision, mixed opinions were heard on a fully pedestrianized zone. Some supported it, while others emphasized the importance of maintaining reasonable vehicle and transit access. Participants also expressed concerns related to critical access needs, noting that parking remains a significant issue that limits the amount of time residents and visitors spend in the area. A frequently mentioned example was the need for convenient parking access near the public boat launch. Some participants shared ideas for repurposing underused parcels for visitor parking or other supportive functions, provided this does not undermine the pedestrian-oriented vision. Participants also recommended that the City undertake detailed, community-informed asset mapping to identify underutilized lands that could be repurposed for parking and other mobility-supportive functions in Old Town.

**Removal or transition of non-compatible industrial uses:** Participants strongly supported phasing out industrial and storage activities that are no longer compatible with Old Town's evolving residential, cultural, and tourism-oriented character. This was framed as essential to reinforcing the pedestrian- and visitor-focused vision for the area, improving the overall public realm, and reducing conflicts between industrial and non-industrial activities.



#### **Enabling conditions and requirements for mixed-use growth:**

Participants noted that mixed-use intensification in Old Town is significantly constrained by current municipal servicing capacity and stressed that servicing upgrades are a prerequisite for realizing this vision. They emphasized that any plan to enhance or expand mixed-use development must be contingent upon expanding/enhancing municipal servicing strategy.

Participants also stressed the need for the City to take a proactive, strategic approach to redevelopment by using tools such as:

- Asset mapping to identify underutilized parcels with redevelopment potential;
- Land acquisition or land exchange to unlock key sites;
- Public–private partnerships to catalyze reinvestment; and
- Development control mechanisms, such as incentives or enforcement, to ensure lands support the long-term vision for Old Town.

**Waterfront access and views stewardship:** Waterfront access was a recurring concern. While participants appreciated the existing boardwalk plan, they expressed a strong desire to expand, secure, and clarify responsibility for public access to the waterfront in Old Town. They emphasized that the lakeshore is a defining element of Old Town’s character and must remain publicly accessible. Key considerations shared included:

- Securing or reclaiming public access to the waterfront through City-led land acquisition or partnerships where feasible.
- The need for clear monitoring and accountability mechanisms to prevent further privatization or encroachment that limits shoreline access.
- Ensuring the lakeshore functions as a continuous, connected public realm, including strengthened access along boardwalk segments and other shoreline paths.
- Recognizing that some portions of the shoreline fall outside municipal jurisdiction, reinforcing the need for coordinated action among all relevant authorities to safeguard access and ecological integrity.
- The need for policies that protect lake views, including height restrictions near the lakeshore and controls on over-intensification that could compromise public views or shoreline access.

**Addressing land speculation:** Participants identified speculative landholding and monopolization of property ownership as contributing to long-term vacancy and underutilization. They expressed the need for policies to discourage this practice. Suggested approaches included enforcement or regulatory mechanisms to ensure that property owners either develop, improve, or transfer their lands in alignment with the City’s broader goals for the area. Some participants suggested that City undertake a comprehensive community-informed asset mapping to identify priority parcels for redevelopment, public acquisition, or community-supportive functions.

**Housing affordability and attainability:** Housing affordability and attainability: Participants shared concerns about maintaining housing affordability in Old Town for both existing and future residents, particularly in light of the increasing trend of converting vacant units into short-term visitor accommodations. They suggested that the City consider incentive-based or regulatory tools to encourage mixed-income and mixed-tenure residential development, helping to protect long-term residential availability while maintaining compatibility with Old Town’s character and mixed-use vision. (*See also ‘Land Use: Housing Diversity, Affordability & Attainability.’*)

**Wayfinding and placemaking:** Participants emphasized the importance of reinforcing Old Town’s distinctive identity through consistent, place-appropriate design elements and activation strategies. They referenced several successful small-scale placemaking initiatives and expressed support for a consistent signage, wayfinding, and public-realm activation strategies that reflects Old Town’s cultural character and celebrates Old Town’s sense of place.

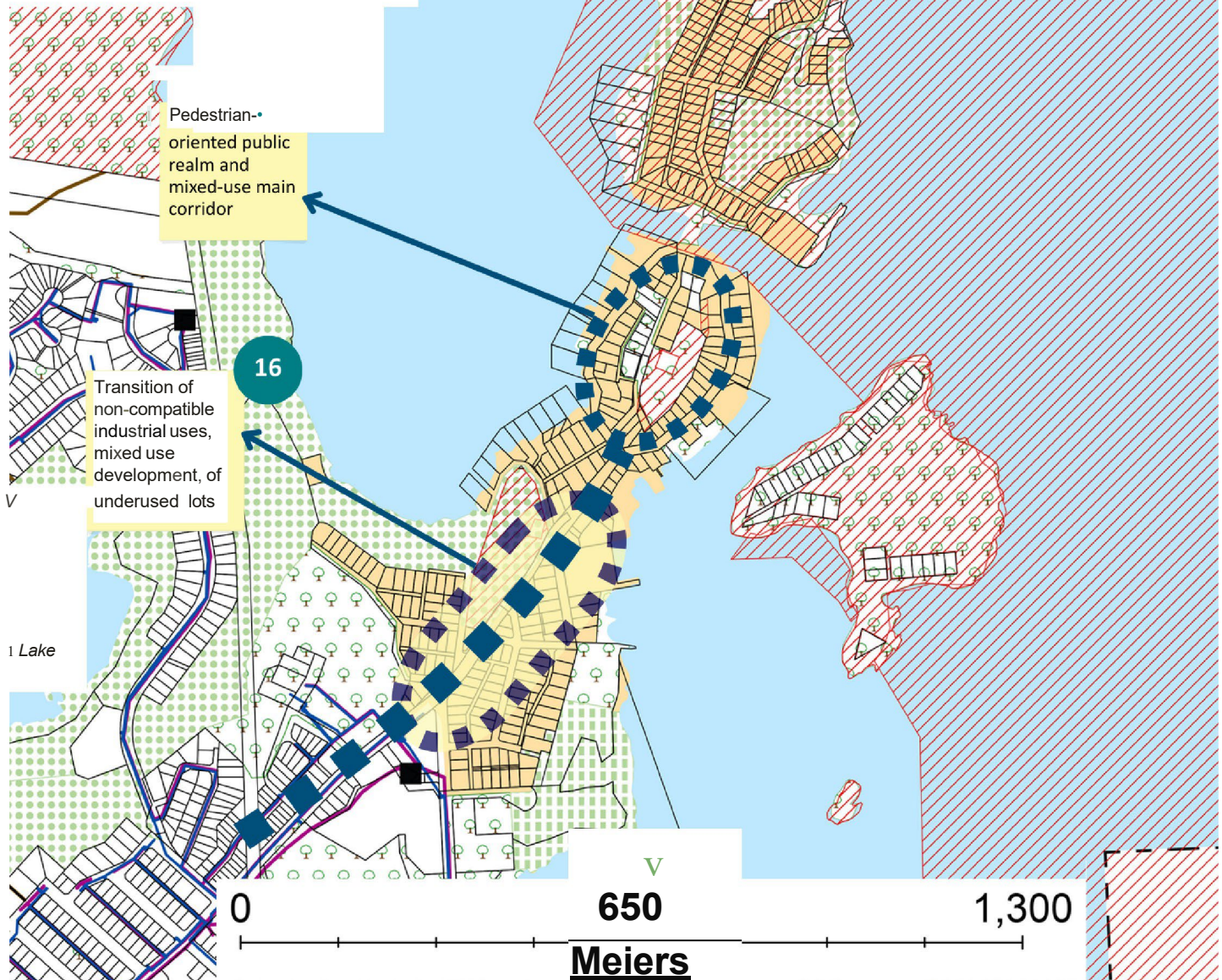


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YELLOWKNIFE

- D Property Parcels
- AKaticho (Interim Land Withdrawal)
- Water Mains
- Sewer Mains
- Lift Stations
- Water Pump House
- Lakes
- Nature Preservers
- Natural Areas
- Parks
- Trails
- Old Town
- Municipal Boundary

N  
**A**  
Old Town

## Map: Old Town



## | LAND USE & INTENSIFICATION: OLD TOWN |

# GUIDING DIRECTIONS FOR POLICY & PRACTICE

The following directions synthesize participants' input into high-level guidance for land use policy in Old Town:

- Establish a coordinated, **multi-party/partner planning framework** for the Old Town waterfront to align decision-making across key actors, ensuring unified approaches to waterfront access, land use compatibility, protection of view corridors, and safeguards against over-intensification or further privatization.
- Enable **Old Town's heritage townscape** through built-form, massing, and architectural expectations that respect historic character, protect key view corridors (including to the Pilot Monument and the lake), and avoid forms that overwhelm the existing scale.
- Plan Old Town as a **pedestrian-first, multimodal district**, with land use and built-form policies that prioritize walking, cycling, and transit over auto-dependence while still accommodating essential access needs.
- Enable/ encourage **mixed-use intensification along the main Old Town corridor** (Franklin Avenue and connecting streets), enabling compact, fine-grained combinations of commercial, cultural, residential, and community-serving uses at a scale compatible with existing character and servicing capacity.
- Encourage redevelopment of underutilized and underperforming parcels through land use permissions and criteria that favour **active frontages and continuous street animation**.
- Encourage/Incentivize **transition of industrial and storage uses** that are incompatible with envisioned Old Town's character (to light industrial or industrial designations).
- Prioritize **alternative forms of transportation**, including walking, cycling, and public transit, in all new developments and redevelopments.
- **Encourage mixed-income and mixed-tenure residential development** in the area through incentive and regulatory tools.
- Apply **consistent placemaking and wayfinding strategies** to guide public-realm and frontage design, ensuring that incremental changes reinforce Old Town's distinctive identity rather than diluting.

## | additional insight |

Additional feedback was emphasized when the first draft of this Report was shared with participants for validation purposes, as follows:

- Old Town land use flexibility must include space for culturally grounded programming, small social enterprise, and community-serving uses.



## KEY INSIGHTS FROM PARTICIPANTS: CAPITAL AREA

Discussions about the Capital Area focused on two key aspects:

- Its functional role as an area primarily designated for institutional uses and governmental buildings, and
- Its unique locations, particularly where this designation sits adjacent to two important lakes within the city.

### **Flexible, non-restrictive approaches to land use planning:**

There was a shared understanding among participants of the need to maintain some land reserves for city-wide institutional functions, including health, higher education, cultural, and governmental uses. However, participants emphasized that these lands should be planned with adaptability rather than rigidly restricted use permissions.

With this lens, participants noted that some lands within Capital Area appear underutilized, and could potentially contribute to addressing current housing limitations, mixed-use opportunities, and trail connectivity gaps. While many assumed that GNWT may resist expanding non-institutional uses, participants felt that a flexible planning framework, with clear compatibility safeguards, could support more efficient and purposeful use of land without undermining institutional priorities.

### **Cautious, community-centred approaches to developments near lakes:**

Participants consistently emphasized the importance of maintaining and enhancing public access to Frame Lake, particularly through the Frame Lake Trail system, ensuring its continuous connection to residential neighbourhoods in the east (Downtown) and the south (West Residential Area).

They also agreed that future institutional development near lakeshores (including Jackfish Lake and Frame Lake) should follow an environmentally cautious development approach, including adequate setbacks, buffer zones to protect ecosystem functions and, where possible, retain or enhance public access to the shoreline.

**Refined considerations to future developments:** A major concern expressed by several participants was the allocation of valuable land to large-footprint hotel developments. These projects were viewed as missed opportunities to introduce mid-rise, mixed-use developments (integrating residential uses) that could create a seamless neighbourhood connection between Niven and the Central Residential Area. Participants commented that these large-footprint buildings, with extensive surface parking areas:

- Disrupted trail continuity, limiting the potential for a fully connected walking and biking route linking Niven Lake Trail with Downtown;
- Compromised visual and physical permeability across the area; and
- Left pockets of strategically located land underused.

**Residential use within institutional contexts:** Participants expressed interest in enabling a broader mix of housing types within future Capital Area developments, where compatible with the area's primary institutional functions. They highlighted opportunities such as long-term care or senior housing near health facilities, student housing connected to educational institutions, and short- or long-term rentals integrated with hotel and hospitality developments. These were viewed as complementary uses that could help address housing and accommodation gaps while maintaining consistency with the designation's core purposes.

## | LAND USE & INTENSIFICATION: CAPITAL AREA |

# GUIDING DIRECTIONS FOR POLICY & PRACTICE

The following directions synthesize participants' input into high-level directions for land use policy within the Capital Area:

- Prioritize **land use flexibility** within the Capital Area, allowing a range of compatible institutional and complementary uses where criteria demonstrate compatibility with surrounding civic and environmental functions.
- Encourage development forms that use land efficiently and reflect human-scale built forms, **prioritizing mid-rise or appropriately scaled mixed-use formats** over large-footprint, single-use buildings.
- Introduce policies that **discourage the establishment of large surface parking lots** and other car-centric, land-consumptive development patterns.
- Ensure new development reinforces (rather than interrupts) existing **walking and biking connections** between Niven, Downtown, and other areas.
- Embed **visual quality, permeability, and active edges** into development expectations, encouraging built forms and site layouts that contribute to a cohesive public realm, minimize visual barriers, and create welcoming, people-oriented interfaces.
- Ensure lakeside-facing development follows **environmentally cautious design**, including shoreline buffers, setbacks, and protections for public access and ecological integrity.
- Enable **residential uses** that directly support institutional functions. (*See also 'Housing: Accessibility & Inclusion.'*)
- Require site designs that integrate **multimodal access**.



# KEY INSIGHTS FROM PARTICIPANTS:

## COMMERCIAL

Discussions about commercial land use focused on the characteristics, opportunities, and challenges of two main corridors: Old Airport Road (Old Airport Commercial Designation), Kam Lake Road (Kam Lake and Kam Lake South Designations). Participants reflected on how planning and policy directions could better balance economic activity, liveability, and connectivity in these areas.

### A. Old Airport Road

**Integrating residential uses & considering mixed-use:** A key theme emerging from this discussion was the significant potential to integrate residential uses as part of a broader strategy for smart growth, adaptability, and stronger connectivity between residential neighbourhoods. Participants said that large portions of land along Old Airport Road remain underutilized, often surrounding large-footprint commercial buildings or expansive parking lots.

They emphasized that these underused spaces could be re-envisioned as vibrant, people-friendly environments, helping to transform the area from an auto-oriented corridor into a more mixed and livable district. (See also *'Land Use: Growth' and 'Land Use: New Residential Designations.'*)

Participants also raised specific concerns about the section of Old Airport Road that separates the two parts of the West Residential Area (between Byrne Road and Range Lake; see 'All Residential Designations' Map, #4). They suggested that planning policies should allow this section to evolve into a more intensified mixed-use area, bridging the two residential zones and improving local connectivity. (See also *'Land Use: Growth - Alternative Suggestions for New Residential Designations, West Residential Area' and 'Commercial: Old Airport Road Areas.'*)

### B. Kam Lake & Kam Lake South

Discussions related to the Kam Lake corridor focused on light-industrial and large-format commercial structures and their relationship to nearby residential areas, as well as the lakefront. Participants reflected on how land use in this area could evolve to support both economic activity and community well-being.

**Land use compatibility, flexibility and efficiency:** There was strong alignment that the Kam Lake commercial and light-industrial area is better suited for large-footprint operations than Old Airport Road. Participants viewed it as a logical location for transitioning industrial-type commercial uses (such as storage-related uses) from Old Airport Road, helping the corridor to evolve into a more community-oriented mixed-use area. Participants emphasized the need

to establish a clear buffer or transition zone between the West Residential Area and large-scale commercial/light-industrial uses, noting that the existing boundary is chaotic and underutilized. (See *'Growth,' Map, pg. 20, #10, and '3.1 Land Use: Alternative Suggestions for New Residential Designations - West and South of West Residential Area' for detailed discussion.*) They also called for encouraging transition of non-environmentally friendly industrial uses and integrating activity-based commercial uses (such as recreation, hospitality, and community-oriented developments), to create a vibrant, accessible district at the west side of Kam Lake. Strong emphasis was placed on developing existing vacant lots within the Kam Lake area before expanding into undeveloped lands southwest of the area (referring to the ~68-hectare designated area).

**Mobility and connectivity:** Participants generally agreed that improving access and connectivity for non-car users should be a key priority. Suggestions included expanding transit routes, adding bus stops and shuttle services, and improving lighting, signage, sidewalks, and bike lanes to make travel safer and more convenient for those commuting by foot, bike, or transit. They also stressed that, where investment is limited, the City should strategically prioritize infrastructure upgrades, focusing on targeted sidewalks, invest in wayfinding improvements, and put safety measures in place, in areas with the highest need. There was a strong call to extend the trail network along Kam Lake, following the positive example of the Niven Lake Trail, to connect with the broader community trail system.

**Environmental integrity and sustainability priorities:** Across the entire Kam Lake area, participants strongly supported protecting the environmental integrity of the lake, preventing privatization of the waterfront. A strong theme across discussions was the desire to establish an agricultural hub in the south west of the Kam Lake designation (the ~68 hectare land identified for future commercial and light-industrial uses). Participants viewed this site as a unique opportunity to advance food sovereignty and self-sufficiency goals for Yellowknife 2050.

Further, there was also strong interest in creating temporary community gardens or small urban farms on vacant or underutilized parcels, including spaces between large commercial/ industrial buildings.

## | LAND USE & INTENSIFICATION: COMMERCIAL |

# GUIDING DIRECTIONS FOR POLICY & PRACTICE

Key directions to guide land use policy and planning decisions for Commercial designations, supported by participants, include:

### Old Airport Road

- Prioritize, incentivize, and accelerate **mixed-use residential-commercial development along Old Airport Road**. Specifically, consider ground-level commercial and retail uses that promote foot traffic and family-oriented activity, with residential units above to enhance safety, strengthen community atmosphere, and support local businesses.
- Encourage the **relocation of industry-like or storage-related uses to designated industrial zones** (i.e., the Engle Business District) to free up land for neighbourhood-oriented, hospitality, and service uses that contribute to a human-scale environment.
- Facilitate **residential development proposals** from existing businesses, particularly where owners wish to live near their workplace or provide workforce housing, as an opportunity to help create a safer, livelier area that encourages the growth of community-level services and amenities.
- Address **connectivity gaps for non-car users** (including walking, cycling, and transit access) along Old Airport Road and within adjacent lands.
- Establish design guidelines requiring large commercial developments (“big box stores”) to create **more pedestrian-friendly surroundings**, reduce leftover or vacant parcels, and enhance landscaping and public comfort.
- Encourage **higher-density development along Old Airport Road** that integrates a diversity of housing and tenure types, and prioritizes affordability and accessibility to local services.

### Kam Lake and Kam Lake South

- Maintain Kam Lake as the city’s core area for **large-footprint light-industrial and commercial activities**;
- Introduce a **mixed-use transition zone between residential and industrial areas**, with policies and strategies that:
  - accommodate workforce housing;
  - provide community-level services;
  - encourage redevelopment of vacant or underutilized parcels; and
  - facilitate the gradual relocation of incompatible uses farther south or into designated industrial zones.
- Apply **incentives and regulatory tools** to encourage infill development and redevelopment.
- Adopt **flexible land use policies on the west side of Kam Lake**, alongside strategies that encourage transition of non-environmentally friendly industrial uses and support activity-based, community-oriented development.
- Integrate multimodal connectivity requirements into all new development and redevelopment projects, prioritizing upgrades in high-need areas.
- Introduce measures for all development near shorelines to **preserve ecosystem health and visual quality**, and to maintain and expand public access, and protect view corridors, along the west shoreline of Kam Lake.
- Enable and support **urban agriculture** within the future commercial and light-industrial expansion area (~68 hectares) and on vacant or underutilized parcels within the existing area.



# KEY INSIGHTS FROM PARTICIPANTS:

## INDUSTRIAL

Discussions on industrial land use centred primarily on the Engle Industrial Business Area. Participants explored how this area functions today, the suitability of various industrial and non-industrial uses, and the opportunities and constraints that should guide future planning, particularly the need for a clearer long-term vision for how industrial lands can evolve to meet community needs.

The discussion revealed broad support for policy and planning directions that promote efficient land use, minimize environmental and social impacts and ensure compatibility between industrial and adjacent uses. Participants' perspectives emphasized the following key themes, which can inform future policy directions:

### **Land use suitability and environmental compatibility:**

Participants agreed that the current industrial area is appropriately located due to its distance from the "living" parts of the city, but emphasized the need for stronger environmental protection.. Key recommendations included:

- Expanding buffer zones around lakes and natural features.
- Limiting industrial activities near sensitive areas to low-impact uses.
- Ensuring robust environmental measures for water and habitat protection.

**Potential alternative or complementary uses:** Some participants suggested evaluating undeveloped portions of industrially designated land for alternative or complementary uses. Agricultural uses were highlighted as a key opportunity, especially food-related production and processing. While Kam Lake and Kam Lake South were seen as more suitable for an agricultural hub (see Commercial, B- Kam Lake and Kam Lake South Designations), participants felt that select reserved areas within the industrial designation may also have potential. They emphasized the importance of consulting local growers, emergency management, and other relevant parties to determine whether portions of industrial land should be earmarked for agriculture-related activities or other community-serving, non-industrial functions.

**Infill and efficient land use:** Participants emphasized that efficient land use should guide future decisions in the industrial designation. There was strong support for prioritizing infill within existing industrialized lands, particularly underutilized parcels along both sides of Deh Cho Boulevard, before considering expansion into untouched areas. This was viewed as supporting more sustainable long-term growth.

### **Corridor interface and transitional mixed-use layer:**

Participants highlighted the need for special policies addressing the function of lands along the main access corridor in this area (Deh Cho Boulevard), to encourage shaping a mixed-use layer that would act as a buffer zone for the industrial uses at the back. Key characteristics and considerations shared by participants for this envisioned layer included:

- A more human-friendly edge with service-based commercial or business uses.
- Opportunities for intensification, including street-level commercial uses with potential short-term workforce accommodation on upper levels.
- Recognition that while industrial and residential uses are often seen as incompatible, policy tools could help manage this relationship in a way that benefits both employment and daily activity patterns.
- Participants noted that, due to the corridor's distance from community services and supports, any accommodation-focused uses should be oriented toward short-term workforce housing rather than long-term family living (see also '3.3. Workforce Accommodation').

### **Flexibility in use permissions and parcel configuration:**

Participants expressed support for maintaining flexibility and adaptability in both permitted land uses and industrial lot sizes. They felt this flexibility is necessary to accommodate evolving business models and operational needs, as long as appropriate controls remain in place to ensure compatibility and prevent conflicts between industrial and non-industrial activities.

**Environmental and visual quality:** Participants emphasized the need to ensure that industrial development does not degrade environmental or visual conditions. Policies were encouraged to ensure that all industrial activities adopt best practices to reduce environmental and community impacts. Emphasis was also made that although the area is labeled as industry, many will spend most of their time there as workers, and it is important to consider strategies that enhance the quality of open spaces in this area.



## | LAND USE & INTENSIFICATION: ENGLE INDUSTRIAL BUSINESS AREA |

# GUIDING DIRECTIONS FOR POLICY & PRACTICE

The following directions synthesize participants' input into high-level guidance to inform land use policies for Engle Industrial Business Area.

- Prioritize **infill and redevelopment of underutilized parcels**, especially along Deh Cho Boulevard.
- Strengthen **environmental protection measures** for industrial uses, including expanded buffer zones and clear limits on higher-impact activities near lakes, natural features, and adjacent uses.
- Support **flexible and adaptable land use permissions and lot configurations** that accommodate evolving business and operational needs while maintaining safeguards against conflicting uses.
- Enable a **transitional mixed-use layer along the main corridor** (i.e., Deh Cho Boulevard), including service-oriented commercial uses and short-term workforce accommodation where contextually appropriate.
- Apply a structured **assessment framework** to determine when industrial lands may be appropriate for alternative uses and emerging priorities without undermining the core industrial land supply.
- In particular, enable policy pathways for **undeveloped or reserved industrial lands to support food-sovereignty objectives** of the Community Plan, guided by clear criteria and informed by consultation with relevant parties.
- Enhance **visual quality, landscaping, and open spaces** in industrial areas. Ensure buffer zone policies are integrated with broader beautification and placemaking strategies so they function as intentional, well-maintained landscape assets.
- Integrate **industrial land use planning** with transportation strategies that improve worker access, including transit availability, active mobility connections, and road-safety enhancements as the district grows.
- Integrate clear **performance expectations** into the planning and development processes for new industrial operations, supported by balanced regulatory and incentive tools, to ensure ongoing accountability for minimizing operational impacts on environmental quality and visual character.

Participants also noted that although the area is designated for industrial use, many people spend most of their workday there, making it important to consider strategies that enhance the quality of open spaces and the overall ambiance in this area.

Proposed considerations/strategies included:

- Holding industrial operators accountable for minimizing negative externalities such as noise, visual clutter, and operational hazards.
- Improving visual coherence through beautification, placemaking, and enhanced open spaces.
- Ensuring that buffer zone policies are accompanied by specific regulations so that buffer zones do not become underutilized or neglected areas.

**Access, mobility and safety:** Participants raised concerns about the lack of alternative transportation options, particularly public transit. They emphasized that any plan to expand industrial areas should also consider accessibility for workers who do not drive. Road safety for all users was repeatedly highlighted, and participants discussed the need to improve bike and transit access and connectivity as the area grows.



## KEY INSIGHTS FROM PARTICIPANTS: RECREATIONAL

Discussions about recreational land use focused primarily on the area designated as the Recreational Hub, where participants explored both the gaps and opportunities associated with its future development. They viewed this area as having significant potential to model inclusive and forward-looking development, aligned with community priorities for housing affordability, sustainability, and efficient use of land.

**Flexible land use and mixed-use development:** Participants expressed support for adopting flexible land use strategies in this area that allow residential, recreational, commercial and compatible community uses to co-exist. The envisioned typology included recreational/commercial/community uses (foot-traffic anchors) at street level, with residential units on upper levels. Key points shared in support of this strategy included:

- The strategic location of this designation between two major residential districts (the West Residential Area and the Central Residential Area.) Participants envisioned that mixed-use development, with an emphasis on integrating residential components, could strengthen both physical and social connections between neighbourhoods.
- The potential to promote smart growth and make better use of existing municipal infrastructure.
- Recognition that recreational spaces function best when located close to where people live, helping maintain a human-scale character, encourage foot traffic, and enhance the area's vitality and safety.
- The view that integrating residential uses within mixed-use development could also help address housing diversity within the city.

**Activation, adaptive reuse, and mixed-use redevelopment:**

While participants supported the continued allocation of large parcels for major recreation or cultural facilities, they emphasized the need for policy directions that commit to activating underutilized lands around large-footprint buildings and encourage a more human-scale environment.

They pointed to several underdeveloped or underutilized properties, as key opportunities for pilot projects that could demonstrate how mixed-use redevelopment can revitalize this area. Participants called for early municipal investment and leadership in piloting such a project to establish a replicable model of mixed-use development.

Participants also expressed support for repurposing existing buildings rather than demolishing them, noting that adaptive reuse is both cost-effective and environmentally responsible. Specific ideas shared for the old pool site to be converted into a multi-use civic space accommodating a visitor centre, library, art gallery, or studios (uses that would draw residents and visitors, support local businesses, and enhance placemaking and beautification.)

**Mobility and connectivity:** Participants emphasized the need to enhance walking and biking connectivity, particularly linkages to the new Aquatic Centre, and to re-envision multimodal access throughout the area. They observed that pedestrian and cycling routes are currently fragmented and that the overall characteristics of the area lack the human-scale qualities that make spaces inviting and lively. They suggested that future planning and new development reviews should:

- Require multi-use paths and safe crossings;
- Ensure that car access and parking do not dominate or reduce the value of lands that could otherwise support mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented spaces; and
- Encourage alternative parking strategies, such as shared or structured parking, located away from main street frontages.

**Affordability and innovation:** Several participants emphasized that future residential/mixed-use development in the Recreational Hub should be encouraged or regulated to include affordable and diverse housing options and innovative building technologies. (See also *'Housing: Housing Diversity, Affordability & Attainability.'*)

## | LAND USE & INTENSIFICATION: RECREATIONAL |

# GUIDING DIRECTIONS FOR POLICY & PRACTICE

The following directions, synthesized from participants' input, are intended to inform land use policies for the Recreational designation:

- Support **flexible land use strategies** that enable **compatible mixed uses** within the Recreational Hub.
- Encourage **active, front-facing ground-floor uses**, with residential uses located on upper levels.
- Enable mixed-income and mixed-tenure **housing diversity** as part of future residential components to support affordability.
- Require **activation of underutilized lands** around large-footprint buildings as part of new development or redevelopment to establish a more human-scale environment.
- Encourage **adaptive reuse and repurposing** of existing buildings as a preferred approach before considering infill development.
- Support mixed-use **pilot projects** on underutilized properties to demonstrate replicable redevelopment models for this area.
- Strengthen **multimodal connectivity** throughout the Recreational Hub.
- Guide **active mobility, human-scale design, and placemaking** as core considerations for development and redevelopment in this designation.
- Require **parking and vehicular access to reinforce pedestrian-oriented environments**, including shared or structured parking located away from active frontages.

## | LAND USE & INTENSIFICATION: ACROSS DESIGNATIONS |

# GUIDING DIRECTIONS FOR POLICY & PRACTICE

Grounded on participants' input, key directions can be synthesized to inform land use policies across different designations, as follows:

- **Adopt a “redevelopment-first” approach**, prioritizing **infill, redevelopment, and activation of underutilized parcels** within existing development control areas before releasing or expanding new lands for development.
- Prioritize **land use flexibility** and incentives for **adaptive reuse across all designated areas**, replacing fixed lists of “permitted” uses with approaches that enable context-sensitive and multi-functional use of land. This would allow vacant or underused sites to be redeveloped for human-scale, mixed-use development that strengthens community vitality.
- Explore **flexible zoning requirements** to address priorities based on community needs (i.e., affordability, housing diversity, green spaces).
- **Prioritize intensification, mixed use, and housing diversity and affordability** in new neighbourhood and subdivision developments.
- Allow for **integrating residential uses within other land designations** (commercial/light industrial, institutional, and recreational areas) to promote efficient land use, diversify housing options across the affordability spectrum, and create safe, lively, and accessible neighbourhood environments throughout the city.
- Ensure compatibility and feasibility of the above strategy, through a **case-by-case review process, supported by clear procedural guidelines and pre-application support/tools** that help City and developers identify opportunities and constraints early. Establish accelerated review pathways for projects that incorporate residential or community-serving components, supported by tools that reduce risk and encourage adaptive development proposals.
- **Support transitional mixed-use zones** at the interface between contrasting land uses (e.g., residential–industrial boundaries).
- **Enable flexible interim uses** (such as temporary community gardens, pop-up activities, or pilot projects) on vacant or remediating lands.
- **Develop a city-wide strategy to address monopolization and long-term vacancy** of strategic lands, using **incentives, regulatory tools, or acquisition mechanisms** to bring underused parcels back into productive use.
- **Embed human-scale and placemaking principles** into requirements of new developments/re-development, ensuring projects contribute to walkability, public life, and neighbourhood identity, rather than large-scale, car-oriented forms.
- **Protect public access to lakeshores and open spaces**, maintaining buffer zones that safeguard environmental integrity and preserve community access and scenic views, regardless of land use designation.



## 3.2 Housing

The housing discussion was structured around six key topics, informed by the Phase One engagement outcomes and the internal draft housing policy framework document (*see '3.0 Summary of Findings'*). The six discussion topics were:

- Housing Diversity, Affordability & Attainability
- Efficient Use of Existing Infrastructure and Resources
- Accessibility & Inclusion
- Sustainability
- Community Essence
- Collaboration & Partnerships

The sessions largely included voices representing: seniors; private investment, local business and commercial investors; real estate; environment and climate; active transportation; and affordable & accessible housing; as well as citizens generally interested in policy direction. Participants brought a good understanding of different levels of government relationships.

One theme that emerged strongly from Phase One that was included within the policy discussion as its own topic was “community essence;” specifically, how policy directions can enhance and express a unique Northern sense of Yellowknife in housing and the built environment.

Given the repeated emphasis on this theme during Phase One, it is presented as a potential new sub-policy area within the housing section.

# KEY INSIGHTS FROM PARTICIPANTS

## Housing Diversity, Affordability & Attainability

### Divergent views on addressing affordability:

Participants agreed that affordability must remain a central priority in future housing policy, but expressed different views on how best to achieve it.

- Some participants supported clear affordability requirements in all new developments; for example, requiring a set percentage of units to be part of a mixed-income model (affordable/subsidized rental and cooperative ownership mentioned repeatedly).
- Others cautioned that fixed percentage requirements may discourage developers or render some projects unfeasible. Instead, they proposed a flexible strategy that adapts to market conditions, site context, and feasibility while still aiming for meaningful affordability outcomes.

**Mix of housing types and development models:** Across differing perspectives, participants expressed the need for policy directions to expand housing supply to address different housing needs and improve affordability. Key areas captured include:

- a mix of housing types, including single-family, multi-unit etc.;
- diversity of development models within new projects (e.g. condominium, co-op and co-housing, private ownership, etc.);
- mixed-income, mixed-tenure development; and
- balanced intensification with focus on mixed-use developments and attainability.

### Understanding gaps based on actual demand:

Participants shared strong concern about relying solely on long-term projections or generalized growth estimates. They emphasized that immediate and mid-term housing development and growth strategies should be informed by data that reflects current and emerging demands, including:

- whether housing is appropriate in size,
- whether housing is in adequate condition,
- diversity of housing types (including single-family homes, multi-units, etc.); and
- the full spectrum of affordability and accessibility.

Groups highlighted by participants as currently underserved by the housing market include:

- single individuals, including single men;
- single women with children;
- essential workers and professionals (e.g., teachers, nurses, doctors); and
- individuals transitioning from shelters or temporary supports.

Most participants said that the City should play a stronger role in assessing and documenting the real housing needs of the community. For example, a main concern raised was that prospective expert workforce may not choose Yellowknife as a place to live because there is a gap in suitable housing for long-term planning (i.e., single-family homes). A key approach suggested to address this gap was collaboration with NGOs, housing authorities, landlords, residents, and developers. (See also *'Housing: Collaboration & Partnerships.'*)

**Housing culture:** Some participants said that resistance to moving away from single-family-home neighbourhoods stems from limited awareness of neighbourhood models that include diverse housing types and mixed-use development. They suggested that the City invest in education about opportunities related to other neighbourhood typologies and housing forms. They also noted the opportunities that alternative housing forms can offer, such as enhanced amenities, improved services, and more active public spaces.


**Non-market & community-based models:** There was strong alignment on the need for housing policies that enable non-market and community-based housing ownership models. In particular, participants highlighted cooperative housing as a proven and relevant model for Yellowknife to support affordability, long-term stability, and community resilience. Participants suggested several strategies and tools for the City to consider to support these models:

- City incentives for co-op or other community-based housing projects;
- Guidance resources, co-developed with non-profit housing providers, to help residents pursue co-operative models;
- Education and outreach, led by the City, to make co-op options more visible and better understood by the public; and
- Pilot projects, enabled by the City, to demonstrate feasibility and build confidence in non-market models, including situations where the City may take a more active role in early stages of development. (See also *'Housing: Collaboration & Partnerships.'*)



### Example referenced:

Participants pointed to practices in Calgary and Edmonton, where municipalities have played a significant role in enabling or developing affordable housing through partnerships with developers and neighbourhood-scale initiatives.



Participants strongly supported policies that enable “missing middle” housing, including garden suites, live-work units, multi-unit low-rise buildings, and rowhouses. They think it is important to have a policy that focuses on this (which can be dubbed a small-lot intensification policy), noting that it would help improve housing attainability across types, sizes, and cost ranges.

Participants also spoke to a perceived need for a more flexible and formally supported category of alternative “living” forms in Yellowknife’s housing policy. Examples raised included tiny homes, movable homes, backyard movable homes, and co-living spaces.

There was a shared perception that pursuing these models is currently difficult due to regulatory barriers. Participants noted that, unlike large-scale infill projects, small-lot and alternative housing projects in Yellowknife will be (typically) pursued by homeowners and small builders, who often cannot withstand lengthy, complex, or uncertain approval processes.

Participants discussed the need for policy tools that reduce regulatory hurdles and encourage, enable, or accelerate “missing middles” and alternative dwelling types that can address immediate housing needs while using land more efficiently. They emphasized the need for a clear and accessible support system for such projects. Ideas included: a simplified approval process, an accelerated review procedure, funding programs and financial incentives (e.g., fee or tax exemptions/reductions), and build-ready templates that reduce risk and streamline approvals. There was a suggestion that pre-approved design or permitting packages can be potentially co-developed with GNWT or NWT Housing. (*See also ‘Housing: Collaboration & Partnerships.’*)

**Land tools to advance affordability:** Participants referred to a range of mechanisms for managing land to improve affordability (i.e., land tools). They highlighted several approaches the City could adopt to expand access to developable sites and especially those suitable for non-profit, rental, and mixed-income housing, including:

- transferring land to non-profit builders or rental housing providers, as an alternative to market sale;
- dedicating underutilized public lands for affordable or mixed-use development;
- retaining or reclaiming lands sold but left undeveloped, and attaching conditions that support affordability outcomes;
- using long-term leases as a mechanism to reduce development costs for rental housing (while noting that

ownership housing on leased land may face cultural or market resistance);

- including conditions in land transfer or lease agreements related to:
  - good standing and maintenance of buildings,
  - timelines for development, and
  - long-term operational and management expectations.

There was emphasis on mobilizing land tools in conjunction with transparent criteria and policies for expectations regarding land disposition, development timelines, and mechanisms for addressing prolonged non-use.

**Comprehensive land inventory to both inform and back up housing policies:**

Participants recommended that the City undertake a detailed asset mapping process to create an inventory of the full spectrum of land assets that could be unlocked for housing, including:

- vacant parcels currently held by the City,
- aging structures,
- underutilized or partially developed lands,
- privately-owned lands that have not been developed after extended periods,
- lands sold by the City to the private market but not developed after a defined period,
- properties that present strong potential for infill or small-lot intensification, and
- parcels with incompatible uses ready for transition to a compatible designation.

They suggested that the City focus on identifying and prioritizing “low-hanging fruit” opportunities (parcels where development is most feasible, servicing requirements are manageable, or partnership opportunities already exist). They see an opportunity for these sites to serve as early demonstration projects, showing how coordinated public–private or public–non-profit partnerships can deliver new housing or mixed-use developments on underutilized land. (*See also ‘Housing: Collaboration & Partnerships.’*)

**Transitional and supportive housing continuum:** Participants noted a significant gap in Yellowknife’s supportive housing continuum, particularly the absence of “in-between” options for people ready to move from transitional housing to permanent homes. Without these intermediate steps, individuals remain stuck in transitional systems. They want to see the City champion a continuum-based approach through coordinated planning with service providers and community organizations to enable:

- co-living models with shared spaces and on-site social worker support,

- tiered pathways that allow gradual movement toward permanent housing, and
- integrated wraparound supports, including mental health, addiction recovery, adult services, and case management (navigators).

Participants supported the idea of conducting a cost-benefit analysis to demonstrate the long-term savings from investing in transitional and supportive housing.

**Economies of scale:** One recurring theme that emerged was that larger multi-unit developments can reduce per-unit construction costs, thereby directly influencing the affordability of units sold or rented. Participants viewed supporting these projects as a strategy for making housing more attainable in Yellowknife.



#### Example referenced:

Participants cited Helsinki and Vancouver as models of integrated transitional housing that include wraparound supports and tiered pathways to permanent housing.



#### Example referenced:

Participants referenced Calgary and Edmonton, where developers build entire neighbourhoods, enabling major cost efficiencies that support attainability or affordability.

## Efficient Use of Existing Infrastructure and Resources

**Infill, adaptive reuse, redevelopment:** Participants emphasized the importance of maximizing the use of existing infrastructure before expanding into undeveloped areas. They proposed that housing policies should prioritize and support:

- intensification and infill,
- adaptive reuse of vacant or underutilized buildings, and
- redevelopment of aging or under-maintained housing stock.

**Land use flexibility and adaptable zoning:** Participants noted that current zoning imposes constraints that hinder efficient land use. They proposed that the City develop land use policies that enable more flexible zoning, especially in new designations and transitioning areas, so that higher-density and mixed-use housing projects can be introduced from the outset. Participants also stressed that flexibility in land use, particularly policies that support infill and intensification, would better utilize existing infrastructure, reduce development costs, and support more efficient, sustainable growth across the city.

#### Incentives for redevelopment and mixed-use development:

There was strong interest in creating incentives for redeveloping vacant, underused, or deteriorating properties, including run-down buildings that could be intensified or repurposed. Participants saw opportunities for the City to support or incentivize multi-unit and mixed-use neighbourhoods, where housing is integrated with nearby amenities, services, and community functions.

#### Enabling opportunities for servicing optimization/expansion:

Participants proposed that the City adopt a more flexible approach to infrastructure and servicing solutions for new development (or redevelopment) proposals. For example, they suggested that developers who are willing to invest in or manage water services in currently unserved areas should be able to explore these options through negotiation rather than being rejected outright. (*See also 'Housing: Collaboration & Partnerships.'*)



## Accessibility & Inclusion

### Evidence-based research for accessibility policy:

Participants emphasized that accessibility policy must be developed through evidence-based processes with sufficient understanding of real conditions. They stressed that while the public can share lived experience, they cannot be expected to provide technical or regulatory solutions, given that accessibility involves significant technical considerations. They suggested that the “how” of accessibility-focused policy should be shaped through:

- on-the-ground research into actual accessibility needs across disability types,
- learning from other cities while ensuring external models are not copied directly to Yellowknife’s context, and
- testing and piloting approaches before regulations are finalized, to avoid costly or ineffective requirements. (See also ‘Housing: Collaboration & Partnerships.’)

Participants also emphasized the need for extensive consultation with disability organizations, housing providers, non-profits, and senior-supportive housing operators to ensure accessibility requirements are correctly interpreted and feasible for small builders, homeowners, and non-profit housing providers.

### Accessibility and equity across the housing spectrum:

Concerns were raised about the poor condition of some subsidized and supportive housing units, and the significant shortage of accessible units within the affordable housing spectrum. Participants noted that poorly maintained units undermine dignity and contribute to inequitable living standards. They emphasized the importance of policies that ensure accessibility and livability across all forms of housing, including subsidized, transitional, and supportive units.

### Understanding the full spectrum of accessibility needs:

Participants highlighted misconceptions and a general lack of shared understanding across the housing and development sector about what accessibility requirements entail. They stressed that accessibility requirements must be informed by a comprehensive understanding of the full spectrum of disability, including mobility, sensory, cognitive, and mental health, rather than narrow interpretations.

**Accessibility needs within the local context:** Participants shared concerns that accessibility-focused policies that inform planning and design regulations should reflect the lived realities of Yellowknife residents, particularly climate-related factors such as the need for safe, rapid evacuation

during wildfire events. Participants cautioned against applying standard approaches from other Canadian cities that may not reflect Yellowknife’s unique environment. They encouraged the City to consult directly with disability organizations and frontline service providers to develop a context-specific understanding of accessibility needs in Yellowknife.

**Aging in place & accessible unit supply:** Participants raised concerns for those growing older in Yellowknife and the limited availability of accessible units to support aging in place. They noted insufficient regulation to support the increase in age-supporting units in both new builds and retrofit projects.

Views diverged on whether a fixed percentage of accessible units should be required in new development to address this increasing need. Some supported minimum requirements, especially in large subdivision plans and in areas close to health and community services. Others cautioned that rigid targets could discourage development and recommended flexible, context-specific approaches.

**Accessibility policy linked to land use policy:** Participants emphasized the need to integrate accessibility-focused policies into land use planning where relevant, so opportunities in specific locations can be fully leveraged to create accessible units and aging-supportive housing. They highlighted locations within the Capital Area, where proximity to the hospital provides a strong rationale for allowing—and even mandating—aging-supportive housing and requiring accessible units within mixed-use developments.

Participants noted that these opportunities are currently constrained by existing land use permissions (e.g., residential uses not permitted in the Capital Area). They expressed strong support for the City taking proactive steps to explore the feasibility of this strategy (i.e., unlocking opportunities for accessibility-focused housing near health-care services) through coordination with key parties and partners, especially intergovernmental collaboration between the City and the GNWT. (See also ‘Land Use: Capital Area.’)

**Accessibility needs in retrofit projects:** Participants strongly agreed that accessibility and inclusivity requirements must also apply to retrofit projects, but stressed that retrofitting older buildings poses significant financial, technical, and logistical challenges. They noted that many retrofit projects are led by groups with limited capacity to absorb additional



regulatory burdens, including small builders, homeowners, rental providers, or non-profit housing operators. Participants cautioned that accessibility mandates for existing buildings could create hurdles unless paired with retrofit-specific supports, including:

- technical guidance and practical “know-how,” tailored to actors undertaking retrofit work;
- step-by-step guidance for navigating approval processes related to accessibility retrofits;
- financial tools that help offset the cost of accessibility upgrades, especially for affordable housing providers; and
- attention to tenant impacts, including situations where temporary relocation may be required.

#### **Policy backed up with capacity-building & implementation**

**supports:** Participants said there is a need for greater understanding across the housing sector and the broader public about why inclusive and accessible design is necessary and beneficial to the community as a whole. They suggested that the City’s role should extend beyond policy-making to building a supportive system that improves sector awareness and understanding, and makes compliance feasible in practice. Suggested strategies and tools put forward include:

- accessible handbooks outlining accessibility expectations for different scales and types of development (new builds, retrofits, multi-unit, mixed use);
- cost-estimation tools to help small-scale developers and retrofit projects plan for accessibility upgrades; and
- pre-approved accessible unit layouts that builders could adopt for different housing types.

There was strong alignment that approval processes for developments proposing accessible units should be accelerated, and implementation should be supported through:

- incentives such as density bonus programs to help justify or offset upfront costs;
- financial support programs, such as special funds and grants that lower financial barriers for both new developments and retrofits; and
- accelerated approval pathways for projects that incorporate accessibility features.

Participants viewed these tools as part of a long-term, City-led capacity-building strategy to embed inclusive and accessible design in Yellowknife’s housing culture, rather than treating it as a compliance burden. They also highlighted the importance

of federal funding and encouraged the City to explore opportunities for pooling resources into support programs for the sake of advancing housing accessibility. (*See also ‘Housing: Collaboration & Partnerships.’*)

**Pilot projects and best practices:** Participants felt that ‘pilot projects’ and ‘best practice projects’ are effective strategies for demonstrating how accessibility requirements can be implemented affordably and effectively. They suggested that the City co-invest in or subsidize pilot projects that model feasible accessibility improvements, noting that such demonstrations have the power to reduce uncertainty for developers, small builders, and non-profit providers.

**Shared and social spaces for inclusion:** Participants emphasized the importance of shared and communal/common spaces in multi-unit buildings and multi-building developments, noting that these spaces can play an important role in supporting social inclusion and quality of life, particularly for seniors, single individuals, and those in supportive housing. They suggested that:

- shared spaces should be required or strongly encouraged in new multi-residential developments,
- smaller private units become more feasible when paired with shared amenities, and
- building layouts should be designed to support social interaction, safety, and residents convenience.

(*See also ‘Housing: Community Essence.’*)



## Sustainability

In discussions about sustainability, participants' feedback primarily focused on energy efficiency and green building design. The way conversations unfolded suggests that sustainability might have been interpreted narrowly, or that concerns around sustainability are narrowly focused on select priority areas. This highlights the need for the City and relevant parties to invest in capacity-building, awareness-raising, and education within the housing sector and among the public on the broader scope of sustainability strategies and their connection to long-term community resilience and well-being. The following sub-themes summarize participants' insights:

### **Divergent views on energy-efficiency building requirements:**

Participants expressed differing opinions on whether future housing policy should include minimum energy-efficiency or green building requirements for new multi-unit or mid-rise developments.

Some supported introducing such requirements, noting the importance of improving energy performance and aligning with broader sustainability goals. Others—particularly those connected to real estate, development, and affordable housing—cautioned that mandatory requirements could compromise project feasibility or the appetite for investment due to increased upfront construction costs. It was noted that higher building costs could translate into higher unit prices, negatively affecting affordability.

Across these discussions, there was strong alignment that any new policy direction related to green building or energy efficiency requirements must be carefully evaluated and coordinated with relevant parties, including potential developers and the non-profit housing sector and GNWT-related parties, to identify mechanisms that minimize the risk of discouraging future development and to manage cost implications that could affect affordability. (*See also 'Housing: Sustainability - Balancing requirements with flexibility.'*)

**Climate-responsive and resilient design and planning (scale of buildings and neighbourhoods):** A widely shared view among participants was that future housing policy should embed parameters that ensure new developments are appropriate for northern conditions (referred to by some as “Northern solutions”) and aligned with the City's Climate Action Plan. Participants stressed that these strategies (and solutions) must be context-specific to Yellowknife's micro-climate, seasonal

extremes, and environmental risks. Several references were made to other principles of green building design, with an emphasis on their direct influence on the quality of life and a concern that these aspects might be dismissed within an energy-efficiency-focused policy framework. Key aspects shared included:

- use of locally appropriate or locally sourced climate-resilient materials,
- environmentally-friendly and fire-resistant building materials,
- access to natural light and natural ventilation,
- access to open spaces and shared spaces, and
- indoor air quality.

There were recurring references to the need for climate responsiveness to extend to the neighbourhood scale. Participants pointed to the need for directions (i.e., policies) that encourage/facilitate climate-responsive planning in new developments (subdivisions) and downtown revitalization. Specific opportunities referenced included district energy systems and utilidors as strategies aligned with climate-resilient neighbourhood design and broader goals in the City's Climate Action Plan. Participants acknowledged that some of these elements may require longer-term planning horizons before they can be fully regulated.

**Respecting land:** Participants said that new developments (of any scale) should be required to respect and retain the natural features of a site wherever possible, especially:

- on land near water bodies,
- on sites with exposed rock formations, and
- in undeveloped areas with distinctive topography.

While participants did not propose specific regulatory mechanisms, they viewed this expectation as particularly important for large-scale developments, new subdivisions, and major infill developments (i.e., large sites), where the risk of large-scale alteration (e.g., blasting or significant grading) is greatest.

**Balancing requirements with flexibility:** There was strong alignment that new sustainability-related housing policies must balance expectations (i.e., regulatory frameworks in design and planning of housing projects) with flexibility to support innovation, adaptability, and responsiveness to urgent housing needs. Some participants highlighted flexible policy as the best approach to minimize the risk that over-regulation would



compromise affordability. These conversations led to a shared call on flexible sustainability policies that:

- provide direction on sustainable design and planning without over-regulating building form or construction methods; and
- remain practical for different development scales and contexts.

Similar concerns were raised about the impact of energy-efficiency and retrofit requirements on rental housing providers and tenants. Participants noted that energy retrofits could result in temporary tenant displacement during upgrades. They emphasized that sustainability requirements affecting renovation or retrofit projects should be sensitive to the operational capacities of affordable housing providers and the impact on the well-being of tenants who may be affected by required improvements.

**Lifecycle cost evaluation for energy-efficient and climate-responsive design:** Participants noted that future (sustainability-focused) housing policy should be grounded in a clear lifecycle lens, so the upfront costs of energy-efficient and climate-responsive measures can be weighed against long-term operational savings, particularly reduced household energy bills and lower operational costs for housing providers. At the same time, there was an overall recognition that supporting tools are critical to help developers, non-profit housing providers, and homeowners understand these long-term savings. Examples referenced included simple cost-benefit calculators, life-cycle analysis scenarios, and evidence-based examples demonstrating long-term savings.

Some participants raised concerns that private developers who do not retain operational responsibility after units are sold may find it discouraging to justify the upfront cost of energy-efficient design. In these cases, they emphasized the importance of incentives tied to the lifecycle value of sustainability measures. Energy-efficiency bonus programs were cited as one mechanism to help offset initial expenses. In particular, there was a recurring suggestion that the City consider incentives for multi-unit housing projects that meet defined thresholds of energy-efficient or sustainability-focused

design, provided such incentives are paired with broader sector capacity-building to ensure feasibility in practice.

For rental housing and single-family homes (where owners directly benefit from lower utility costs), participants said that making lifecycle savings visible could serve as a meaningful incentive, especially when paired with targeted practical and financial tools that help homeowners and rental providers manage up-front costs. *(See also 'Housing: Sustainability - Sector capacity building.')*

**Sector capacity building (tools, incentives, and enabling conditions):** Participants discussed a need for tools and supports that make sustainability requirements practical and achievable, particularly for small developers, homeowners, and non-profit housing providers who often face uncertainty about what practices are acceptable or feasible in Yellowknife. They stressed that early sustainability policies should prioritize enabling conditions rather than rigid or punitive requirements, given that the housing sector is still developing technical proficiency in sustainable and energy-efficient design.

Participants suggested several mechanisms for the City to adopt to support implementation and reduce administrative, financial, and technical burdens in particular for non-for-profit housing providers:

- Clear guidelines that outline acceptable and northern-appropriate sustainability practices within the Yellowknife context;
- Educational materials that build general sustainability literacy, separate from financial considerations;
- Approval-process tools that clarify how sustainability requirements apply in practice;
- Pilot and demonstration projects across multiple scales (single-family, multi-unit, infill, and new subdivisions) to model feasible, northern-appropriate solutions; and
- Incentive-based mechanisms (specific examples referenced included density bonuses, accelerated approvals, and application fee reductions). *(See also 'Housing: Partnerships and Collaboration.')*



## Community Essence

**Human-centred planning and design:** Participants emphasized the importance of community character, aesthetics, and human-scale design in future housing development. They stressed that housing policy should support walkability, community-oriented streetscapes, and built forms that reinforce a strong sense of place.

**Open and green spaces:** Building on this, many participants supported introducing flexible open-space policies that set clear expectations for the provision of usable public and green spaces, while still allowing site-specific proposed ideas that respond to the character of each development. Two directions were repeatedly raised:

- Encouraging, or, where appropriate, requiring designs that work with the natural landscape (*see also 'Housing: Sustainability - Respecting Land'*); and
- Ensuring that green spaces are functional, accessible, and meaningfully integrated into site design rather than residual or unusable land, particularly in subdivision planning.

**Social connection and integration:** Across discussions, participants emphasized the social dimensions of community essence. There was recurring support for policy directions that incentivize or require the integration of shared amenities and community spaces in multi-unit residential developments, noting that these spaces play an important role in fostering community identity, social connection, and inclusion, especially in mixed-income housing developments. (*See also 'Housing: Accessibility & Inclusion: Shared and social spaces for inclusion.'*)

**City leadership in neighbourhood design:** Several participants suggested that achieving these outcomes may require greater City involvement. They proposed that the City establish a 'Community Planner' or similar role within the Organization (*see also 'Housing: Collaboration & Partnerships'*), who is dedicated to collaborating with developers and residents to shape the look, feel, and community orientation of new housing development projects at the neighbourhood scale (e.g., subdivisions).

## Collaboration & Partnerships

Participants said that the City plays an important role in shaping conditions for affordability through policy development and strategic leadership, and coordination across the wider housing ecosystem.

### **Strategic leadership to build foundations for collaboration:**

Participants expressed strong support for the City to act as a facilitator and convener for collaboration, bringing together the full spectrum of housing actors including local, territorial, and federal entities and housing authorities (CHMC and NWT Housing Corporation referenced), Indigenous governments and organizations, non-profit housing and social service providers (YWCA, Women's Society, Salvation Army, and Habitat for Humanity referenced), private developers, and financial partners. Several strategic actions were proposed to help the City build an actionable and coordinated system for implementing housing policies:

- Facilitate ongoing collaboration among key parties and partners through tables or working groups to align shared housing needs, priorities, and coordinated actions.
- Support collaboration on non-market housing models, including co-operatives, mixed-income housing, and supportive housing.
- Advocate to GNWT on land withdrawals, unlocking developable land, and coordinating on regulatory or policy barriers.
- Advocate to the federal government for infrastructure and funding support needed to expand affordable housing.
- Develop tools that support more equitable access for non-market housing providers, including guidance, standard documents, or land allocation mechanisms.

**Enabling an ecosystem for developer investment:** Participants stressed that addressing housing challenges also requires close collaboration with developers active in Yellowknife and the NWT. They noted that, while policy direction is important, developers need enabling conditions that make it feasible and attractive to build the types of housing the community needs. The dominant view was that supportive approaches, rather than punitive ones, would be more effective at this stage of



Yellowknife's housing market ("carrot not stick" approaches were repeatedly supported). Some noted that "develop by" requirements could help prevent long-term land banking. Key strategies identified for strengthening collaborative relationships with developers included:

- Working with developers early in the process to support shared problem-solving and identify mutually beneficial solutions, particularly for large-scale projects, in particular, by creating pathways/processes for developers to bring forward proposals for large pieces of land when they become available in the city.
- Providing clear, consistent, and proactively communicated incentives to help developers understand the full range of support available.
- Diversifying incentives to reflect the different needs of private developers and non-profit providers. Examples discussed included:
- Tax reductions for developments including affordable, cooperative, or low-income units, and incentives for multi-unit or larger developments to leverage economies of scale.
- Improving clarity and coordination in approvals, with several participants suggesting the creation of a developer liaison role within the City to streamline approvals and strengthen communication.
- Ensuring incentives align with what developers are prepared and capable of delivering, recognizing that effective incentives differ between private developers and non-market providers.

#### **Direct action in setting precedents for innovative housing partnerships:**

Across housing discussion topics, participants emphasized that innovation in housing delivery requires successful precedent-setting projects that demonstrate feasibility and build trust across the housing ecosystem. Many emerging models, such as long-term leasehold housing, non-profit-first land allocation, and new cooperative and mixed-equity structures, were viewed as promising, albeit challenging for partners to adopt without real-world examples. (See also *'Housing: Housing Diversity, Affordability & Attainability - Land tools to advance affordability.'*) Participants encouraged the City to take a more active role by:

- Initiating or co-investing in pilot projects that test non-traditional tenure, financing, or partnership models, with the intention that successful pilots would encourage broader uptake across the housing sector. (See also *'Housing: Housing Diversity, Affordability & Attainability - Non-market & community-based models'*);
- Drawing from successful partnership models in other Canadian municipalities, adapting relevant lessons to Yellowknife's context; and
- Developing an overarching investment strategy for specific areas, aligning City investments with GNWT roles to "build the environment that makes people want to invest."

## GUIDING DIRECTIONS FOR POLICY & PRACTICE

Strategic directions to inform policy have been extracted from focus group discussions, as follows:

### Affordability, diversity and attainability in housing

- Support a **balanced mix of housing forms**, including **single-family housing, missing-middle housing, and multi-unit development**, to respond to diverse household needs and life stages, and to address housing needs for workforce attraction and retention.
- Prioritize **mixed-income and mixed-tenure development** as a core affordability strategy, supported by flexible mechanisms that maintain feasibility across market cycles and project scales.
- Enable strategies that require or encourage the **allocation of deeply affordable or supportive units in downtown** and mixed-use redevelopment projects.
- Enable **non-market and community-based housing models**, paired with mechanisms that maintain long-term affordability and stability.
- Support development models that improve **feasibility and affordability through economies of scale, innovative approaches, and partnerships**, while remaining responsive to neighbourhood context.
- Enable **infill, adaptive reuse, and redevelopment of aging or underused buildings** to expand housing supply within serviced areas.
- Enable gentle density through **small-lot intensification and alternative housing forms**, ensuring these policies align with affordability and attainability objectives and are supported by clear, repeatable, homeowner- and small-builder-friendly processes.
- Mobilize land tools to **expand access to developable sites** suitable for affordable and mixed-income housing, including **reserving or prioritizing parcels for non-market, supportive, and transitional housing**.
- Allow **land use flexibility through more flexible zoning and adaptable municipal servicing approaches** (where such servicing solutions are proposed and carried by developers) for affordability-related projects to better utilize existing infrastructure and enable viable intensification and mixed-use development. (*See also 'Land Use: Guiding Directions for Policy & Practice.'*)
- Reduce approval uncertainty and **increase flexibility to allow for context-sensitive adaptation** where appropriate, particularly for large-scale projects where such flexibility can unlock innovative housing solutions aligned with affordability and inclusion objectives.
- Use **targeted incentive tools** (including tax/fee reductions, density bonuses, and accelerated approvals with early-stage problem-solving between City and applicants) to support affordable, mixed-income, rental, and non-market housing, with **incentives directed toward operators with demonstrated experience** supporting people with complex needs.

### Accessibility and inclusion in housing

- Promote housing forms and neighbourhood patterns that support **aging in place**, and inclusive design for people with diverse mobility, sensory, and functional needs.
- Coordinate **accessibility priorities with land use planning** by identifying areas where accessible and aging-supportive housing should be prioritized. (*See also 'Land Use: Capital Area.'*)
- Integrate accessibility considerations into **subdivision and neighbourhood planning** rather than applying them only at the building level.
- Differentiate accessibility expectations by **project type and scale**, with more defined requirements for medium- and large-scale developments, and more flexible, context-specific approaches for retrofits, small-scale projects, and homeowner-led improvements.
- Extend **accessibility requirements beyond unit design** to include shared indoor and outdoor spaces that support social inclusion in multi-unit and mixed-use developments.
- **Ensure accessibility requirements reflect Yellowknife-specific realities**, including climate conditions, seasonal mobility challenges, and emergency-evacuation needs. (*See also, 'Transportation & Infrastructure: Guiding Directions for Policy & Practice.'*)
- Support **expedited approvals and targeted incentives** for projects that deliver accessible and aging-supportive housing or integrate on-site or wraparound support services.

## Sustainable design and planning in housing

- Embed Northern, **climate-responsive design standards** aligned with Yellowknife's micro-climate and the City's Climate Action Plan.
- Balance **sustainability requirements with project feasibility and affordability**, factoring cumulative cost impacts on housing prices.
- Promote **landform-sensitive, context-specific design** that minimizes large-scale alteration and respects natural features, especially in new subdivisions and major infill sites.
- Use life-cycle cost analysis to frame the **long-term benefits of energy-efficient design**, supported by tools that help actors understand financial benefits over time.
- Explore **neighbourhood-scale sustainable development strategies** (e.g., district energy systems, utilidors) in large new developments and downtown revitalization, while evaluating their long-term affordability and resilience benefits.

## Capacity building, collaboration and partnerships

- Build **sector-wide capacity** before relying on rigid regulatory approaches, supporting different actors with access to tools, guidance, and foundational literacy in sustainability, accessibility, and innovative housing models.
- Develop practical implementation tools (including design guidance, technical handbooks, cost templates, pre-approved layouts, approvals roadmaps) to **make compliance practical and predictable**.
- Prioritize **incentive-based and enabling approaches** in the early phases of policy implementation, rather than punitive measures, as the housing sector builds the skills, systems, and capacity needed to deliver new standards.
- Use pilot and demonstration projects to **test emerging partnership models and non-traditional housing approaches**, reducing perceived risk and building shared confidence across the housing ecosystem.
- Establish **clearer touchpoints for developers**, such as a developer liaison role, and proactively communicate available incentive packages and supporting tools.
- Expand the **City's land tools**, including land acquisition, land deposits, long-term lease agreements, land disposition conditions (e.g., development timelines, maintenance expectations).
- Expand the City's **public partnership strategies** to support the delivery of supportive housing, downtown social infrastructure, and community-based service, including
  - formal **City-non-profit partnership agreements**; and
  - **standing advisory structures** that include frontline service providers in homelessness, housing, and safety, as well as Indigenous women's organizations.
- Strengthen **collaborative governance** through ongoing coordination with GNWT, federal partners, Indigenous governments and organizations, non-profit housing providers, and private developers.

## Community essence in housing

- Promote **human-scale, walkable, community-oriented design** in new housing developments, including designs that foster everyday social interaction and shared amenities.
- Use **built form, scale, and transition considerations** to balance intensification with livability, neighbourhood identity, and community cohesion.
- Adopt flexible open-space policies that secure functional, meaningful green and public spaces while allowing site-specific solutions.
- Integrate dedicated roles or processes (e.g., a community-planner function) to **guide subdivision and large-scale development projects** in alignment with neighbourhood character.
- Incentivize **shared and communal spaces** in medium- and large-scale housing and mixed-use developments.
- Encourage development approaches that **work with natural landscapes**, integrating topography, rock formations, and water-adjacent features into site design and the public realm.

## | additional insight |

Additional feedback was emphasized when the first draft of this Report was shared with participants for validation purposes, as follows:

- The Plan should encourage co-location of housing with training, food security, employment services, and community supports.
- Explicitly support "housing with supports" as a permitted use across mixed-use and transitional zones.



## 3.3 Workforce Accommodation

The focus group dedicated to Workforce Accommodation engaged participants in defining workforce accommodation, identifying the major financial, regulatory, and logistical challenges to establishing them, and exploring strategies to inform where workforce accommodation should be permitted, including consideration of incompatible land uses and potential mitigation measures. While participants of the Housing focus group referred to workforce accommodation in those discussions, this dedicated conversation allowed Facilitators and attendees to dive more into the details.

Note: The session was originally promoted under the “Work Camps” title. This was updated at the top of the focus group to instead use the language “Workforce Accommodation.”



#### **An updated definition of ‘workforce accommodation’:**

Participants said the City must clearly define what “workforce accommodation” means. They emphasized a preference for “workforce accommodation” over “work camps,” noting that perceptions of “work camps” remain negative even as the concept has evolved. They pointed to a definition that described workforce accommodation as “a facility constructed to provide housing for workers in complete dwelling units, typically for a related business and for an appropriate project, term, or seasonal purpose.” (They cautioned that, once the word “term” is used, it cannot be considered a permanent structure.)

#### **Workforce accommodation and the connection to local housing challenges:**

Participants discussed how workforce accommodation and local housing constraints are one and the same issue. They described how, because there is a lack of temporary housing, rotational and temporary workers occupy accommodations intended for permanent residents on an ongoing basis. Further exacerbating the problem, participants said property managers and landlords may prioritize companies because they offer guaranteed income, which pushes up costs and reduces availability for residents. They framed workforce accommodations as an important solution for reducing existing housing pressures by pulling project-driven demand out of the general rental and hotel ecosystem, noting that major projects requiring an external workforce have been the reality for the past many years and will remain so well into the foreseeable future.

They underscored Yellowknife’s short, intense construction season and the local employment base’s inability to fully meet demand which drives the necessity to hire outside workers.

**City-wide planning and economies of scale:** Participants said that a strategic, city-wide approach to planning and coordinating the placement and phasing of multiple workforce accommodations can create logistical efficiencies, support more strategic infrastructure and service delivery, and help meet anticipated needs tied to future industrial and infrastructure projects. They emphasized that shared services

and facilities across compatible or adjacent projects can create economies of scale, which reduces the overall footprint and resource consumption through options such as shared transportation, waste management, or power infrastructure.

Participants cautioned that small workforce accommodation are unfeasible to construct and operate, noting that once a work camp has at least 300 units, a provider can offer amenities that allow residents to stay in place without needing to go into the community. They say “open camps” also allow for accommodations to be rented to other companies that need to house workers, further supporting economies of scale (i.e., developing 400-600 beds).

**Social, cultural and safety considerations:** Locating dry camps separately from permanent residential areas was raised as an approach to mitigating social and safety risks associated with workforce accommodation. They said that having sites with amenities required for workers helps minimize a worker’s need to interact with the main community, which, as previously noted, is only possible with larger builds (300+ units).

Participants cautioned that in a small city, even if a camp is dry, workers can easily access alcohol off-site, so on-site security and strong operational standards are important.

They also described examples of culturally supportive amenities that reflect the evolution of workforce accommodation. Participants referenced approaches such as an “Auntie in Residence” model that provides counselling, friendship, and a sense of home for Indigenous workers on rotation, and shared that some operators host practices like Elders tea-time. In addition, participants said cultural orientation for work camp residents could be valuable, specifically, introducing people to the culture of the North as a way of supporting more respectful and positive community integration.

Beyond formal requirements, participants described corporate social responsibility as common among “good actors,” including community sponsorships and donations.



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## Defining workforce accommodation

The definition of a camp's temporary nature is not merely descriptive; it has significant regulatory and financial implications, specifically determining which building codes apply to the structures.

- **Impact on Building Code Enforcement:** The duration, or "term," of a structure's use determines which building code applies, posing a core policy challenge for municipal and provincial bodies.
- **Code Application:**
  - *CSA Compliance:* Truly mobile, short-term, or modular structures may be regulated under the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) codes, which are generally applied to prefabricated units.
  - *NBC Compliance:* Structures deemed to be of a longer or more permanent nature are often subject to the National Building Code (NBC) requirements. NBC compliance often entails more stringent site preparation, foundation work, and materials, thereby increasing costs and complexity.
- **Jurisdictional Clarity:** Policy must provide a clear definition of what constitutes "temporary" versus "permanent" in the context of site accommodation to offer industry certainty on compliance requirements.

When asked, "When we talk about 'Workforce Accommodation,' what does that mean to you?" participants shared the following words:

- accessible
- complete dwelling units
- constructed facility
- on-site housing for workers
- rotational employees
- temporary
- turnkey full service
- worker accommodations

**Factors related to land use:** Participants had mixed opinions about potential strategies to inform "where" workforce accommodation should be permitted in the updated Community Plan. Some thought they should be allowed both on-site and off-site, depending on their size and other specific requirements, while others said they should be allowed only on the land where activities are happening. Kam Lake was noted as a location distant from the main Yellowknife population and beneficial for keeping workers external to the Yellowknife community. Some spoke to the importance of community engagement; to engage with the community before a proposed work camp may be designated.

**Service infrastructure:** Participants discussed infrastructure impacts and servicing expectations as key considerations in planning for workforce accommodation. They said that placing accommodation in a serviced area could require significant upgrades, particularly where older infrastructure is already near capacity. They also emphasized that infrastructure such as trucked water and sewer would generally be the responsibility of the proponent (not the City). Participants described practical site requirements such as graded lots with fill for dust control, trucked water capacity for daily needs and fire suppression, and reliable power options (generated or highline).

**Economic impacts:** Participants highlighted several direct and indirect economic contributions associated with workforce accommodation. They said camps can direct procurement through local businesses, and repeatedly linked workforce accommodation to housing-market stabilization. They added that stable workforce accommodation can support local participation in apprenticeship programs and employment pathways tied to major projects. Participants also noted that if employers cannot bring needed workers in, construction costs can compound.

## | WORKFORCE ACCOMMODATION |

# GUIDING DIRECTIONS FOR POLICY & PRACTICE

The directions below distill participants' input into high-level land use policy guidance and municipal practice for Workforce Accommodation:

### Socio-cultural considerations

- Require **clear security and operational management expectations** for workforce accommodation sites.
- Prioritize policy language that recognizes **culturally supportive amenities and orientation practices** as part of good operator standards.

### Communal and municipal services

- Embed policy language that recognizes **purpose-built workforce accommodation** as a mechanism to pull project-driven demand out of the general rental and hotel ecosystem.
- Adopt a standardized city-wide framework with **site-specific flexibility**, providing consistent criteria for assessing workforce accommodation while addressing cumulative impacts from multiple small projects across the city.
- Consider how to **direct camp placement away** from residential areas and city centres where feasible.
- Define **infrastructure responsibilities** for workforce accommodation sites.
- Encourage **local procurement** and **community contributions** where appropriate.

### Definition of workforce accommodation (location, siting, nature of)

- **Define** “workforce accommodation” clearly in the Community Plan Update.
- Align building/approval language with **temporary and modular realities**. Clarify how the City will interpret National Building Code (NBC) vs. Canadian Standards Association (CSA) pathways for temporary/modular units.
- Consider siting criteria that allow **on-site and off-site camp approaches** depending on project context, size, and functional need, while ensuring compatibility with surrounding land uses and community impact.
- Explore **designating or guiding preferred locations** (where appropriate) to increase predictability for industry and reduce ad hoc siting conflicts.

### Mitigating land use conflict

- Promote economies of scale and shared-use models that **enable or encourage “open camp” or multi-user** approaches where appropriate.
- Require **early engagement** for proposals with potential neighbourhood or city-wide impacts, particularly for new or expanded sites.



## 3.4 Environment & Climate

While the City is developing a new Climate Action Plan (CAP) for 2026-2036, the CPU's Phase 2 "Environment & Climate" focus group aimed to direct discussions to the policy level, building upon the robust focus on the protection of the city's green and blue assets that emerged from Phase 1 engagement activities.

Participants included experts from the environment and climate fields, with a deep understanding of the environmental and climate planning challenges that the city faces.

Many emerged themes from the "Environment & Climate" focus group intersected with those from "Infrastructure & Transportation."



# KEY INSIGHTS FROM PARTICIPANTS

Participants emphasized that addressing climate challenges is essential to the city's long-term affordability, identity, and livability. Many felt the city could become a leader in climate action and preparedness, but noted that it would require a shift in attitude to tackle climate change.

## **Ecosystem-based planning for green and blue spaces:**

Community feedback from Phase 2 Focus Groups echoed themes from Phase 1 engagement: that Yellowknife's natural setting is a core asset, directly tied to resident well-being and northern identity. Conversations emphasized a shift toward an ecosystem-level approach to planning and to the development of policies and regulations for Yellowknife's environmental landscape.

Participants opposed analyzing green and blue spaces solely through a development lens and urged the City to consider Yellowknife's environment as an entire ecosystem (rather than piecemeal protection). While participants overall said they were not opposed to development, they urged the City to protect and grow Yellowknife's current green and blue spaces. They called on the City to establish a baseline of Yellowknife's green and blue spaces, including a green space-type inventory or an urban forestry inventory, as well as mapping ecological corridors, to clearly identify and understand the local ecological composition. They said this could involve first identifying flora and fauna species, potentially sensitive areas, and the landscape's connectivity.

In calls to protect and/or expand all existing green spaces and parks, solutions proposed included creating no-development zones and buffer zones, and some suggested that environmental impact assessments be required before developments can move forward. Some emphasized the importance of these considerations near ecologically sensitive lands, while others added that it is important across all land, regardless. Participants highly value these spaces and were opposed to building on them before building on vacant spaces, such as in the downtown. They advocated for prioritizing development on empty lots (even if not City-owned) over building in existing or potential green space.

Participants value Yellowknife's natural environment as integral to their quality of life, mental well-being, and northern identity. Green spaces and trails are viewed as essential for recreation, physical health, and community retention, while the surrounding water bodies are valued for ecological health and as a fundamental source of life-support systems (water quality and security). They say that, within the identified green

network, land use should be restricted primarily to compatible passive activities such as trails, recreation, urban agriculture, and wildfire mitigation.

Participants also pointed out that accessibility to water is diminishing in the community, and there are only a few access points to Great Slave Lake. While participants acknowledged that Great Slave Lake is not within the City's jurisdiction, they noted that the shoreline is within its boundaries and, with that, emphasized a desire to see improved access. There were suggestions for robust riparian protection policies (i.e., using setbacks of varying distances, 10 m, 30 m, 100 m) around all waterways.

## **Essential utilities, water security, and hazard areas:**

Participants raised concerns about the reliability of water and sewer systems due to aging infrastructure and permafrost thaw, and asked how the City will address increased droughts or large amounts of heavy snow in winter. They see an urgent need to manage wetlands and slopes (not just water bodies) and to implement specific buffer zone policies governing which types of development can occur near waterways, and said concerns about localized flooding in Old Town reinforce the need for these measures. Participants also noted that infrastructure planning must prevent development in high-risk hazard areas (steep slopes, wildfire zones, unstable permafrost). Finally, participants said there is a critical need to enforce water-related regulations as they come into effect.

**Pollution and contaminated sites:** Participants called for mandatory screening measures for all major land use proposals, including requirements for environmental impact-type studies (EIS) and Species at Risk screening, Environmental Site Assessments (ESA), and air and noise studies for new industries near sensitive land uses.

They also felt the City should prioritize identifying contaminated sites, saying that policy is needed to restrict the development of sensitive land uses within contaminated sites and to ensure compatibility with adjacent development. Energy, building resilience, and climate-ready development: Participants wanted to see new developments proactively considering climate change. Some ideas shared included:

- installing heat pumps
- using climate-appropriate siding and materials
- incorporating FireSmarting in building designs,
- incorporating electric vehicle charging stations and bike sheds.



Additionally, participants addressed how in-town lakes (Frame, Rat, Niven, Kam, etc.) are deeply affected by development and reinforced the idea that regulations regarding buffer zones, for example, should be enforced.

When it comes to development, they wanted to see environmentally friendly buildings across the city, with particular care for water bodies. Regulations and incentives for developers engaging in environmentally responsible work were some suggestions put forward, coupled with strict enforcement for those who fail to comply. Nova Hotel was referenced as an example of a wetland bird area where no enforcement occurred during construction before permits were obtained.

Participants want robust environmental regulations on setbacks and noise mitigation, and mentioned other concerns, such as reducing air, noise, and light pollution, including establishing exterior lighting standards and enforcing minimum separation distances between industrial and residential land uses.



### Example referenced:

Tucson and Pima County, Arizona, was referenced as a relevant example for Yellowknife because of its strict outdoor lighting ordinances to control light pollution and protect the dark night sky.

### Shifting away from vehicles to public & active transportation:

Overall, intra-city transportation was viewed as one of the easiest and largest ways to make a big impact on the climate by reducing reliance on fossil fuels. They felt there should be a concentrated effort to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by focusing on sustainable mobility—not solely upon adaptation measures—and see the opportunity to influence people to choose public and active transportation over cars as a low-hanging fruit, particularly supported by improvements to the active transportation network and infrastructure. (See ‘3.5 Transportation & Infrastructure.’) Suggestions for experimental traffic interventions such as “pop up” new biking routes were proposed. Further, participants expressed a desire for bike lanes and sidewalks to be maintained year-round and to the same standards as roads.

Making downtown more walkable is another possible solution participants identified, including refinements such as changes to traffic light timing, as one example suggested. Promoting developments that do not require parking was also highlighted, as was banning parking along bike paths.

Car sharing was also identified as an integral part of the plan for environmental, climate change, and social justice reasons, with visions for a large, robust car-sharing program connected to the bus system. Plus, participants wanted to see electric fast chargers installed in high-traffic shops (like the grocery store) rather than in places less frequently visited (for example, a utility company across from the grocery store).

**Governance and long-term planning:** The topics of governance, communication, and transparency were discussed by participants, who shared a desire for transparency in how the City approaches planning, communication, and the speed of execution for environmental and climate initiatives, as well as clearer, more frequent communication on long-term strategic plans, capital budgets, and progress on environmental and climate initiatives.

Participants shared a frustration with the perceived slow pace at which the City administration implements important policy and infrastructure projects, particularly those related to sustainability. Some participants shared a concern that this CPU Phase 2 engagement was “just another planning exercise” to be completed and shelved.

There was an implicit call for the City to formally integrate a “climate lens” into its decision-making, ensuring that every significant policy or capital expenditure is evaluated for its long-term environmental and climate impact. Participants felt that climate action must be pursued from the bottom up (local control), stemming from the belief that top-down guidance from higher levels of government cannot be relied on.

Participants also felt that Yellowknife is in a position to lead by example and potentially challenge other municipalities to be more progressive on climate issues, especially given the shared suffering from northern climate impacts (like wildfires). They noted a need for more intergovernmental and NGO collaboration to support a safe, healthy, and livable community.

## GUIDING DIRECTIONS FOR POLICY & PRACTICE

Strategic directions to inform Environment & Climate policy, and broader Municipal practice, have been extracted from focus group discussions, as follows:

### Protecting sensitive ecosystems & managing natural assets

- Clearly **define the 'green network'** and its ecosystems, establish **no-development zones**, and adopt a framework to **manage all green spaces** (beyond parks) to maintain their integrity. Restrict land use primarily to compatible passive activities, such as trails, recreation, urban agriculture, and wildfire mitigation.
- Preserve wildlife corridors by **actively limiting habitat fragmentation** and protecting species.
- Introduce **riparian zones**, developed through strategies such as linear parks and passive recreational use of waterfronts, with reinvestment focused on maintaining and/or restoring natural water edges.

### Environmental protection from human-made hazards

- Introduce **mandatory screening measures** for all major land use proposals, including:
  - environmental impact-type studies (EIS);
  - Species at Risk screening; and
  - Environmental Site Assessments (ESA), air, and noise studies for new industries near sensitive land uses.
- Restrict the development of **sensitive land uses** within contaminated sites and manage compatibility with adjacent developments.
- Formalize **anti-light-pollution requirements** through exterior lighting standards that protect safety, night skies, and habitat health.

### Land use & growth management

- Prioritize **infill and underused sites** for development before converting any existing or potential green space.
- Provide **development incentives/bonuses** for projects that incorporate robust, low-carbon design (e.g., high-efficiency heat pumps, climate-appropriate siding).
- Amend zoning bylaws to be able to have new residential developments with **little or no parking** included, and incentivize developers to include **bike sheds** and **electric vehicle charging stations** in new building designs.
- Include **"complete streets" design requirements** (e.g., permeable paving) in all planning guidelines.
- Maintain green spaces to **enhance community resilience** and **carbon sequestration** in all planning decisions for greenfield development.

### Natural assets & ecosystem services

- Develop and implement a formal **Permafrost Management Policy** to guide all land use decisions and infrastructure placement.
- Conserve and protect natural **climate buffers** (wetlands, riparian zones, forests) and establish an ecological network map.
- Develop best practices for **water management** (e.g., stormwater) and actively enforce any new water-related regulations.

### Resilient infrastructure & buildings

- Set a **climate-ready baseline** for new development that normalizes low-carbon and fire-resilient building practices.

### Sustainable transportation & mobility

- Prioritize **year-round active transportation** infrastructure and maintenance as a climate policy tool.
- Embrace and enable **lower-car development patterns** by adjusting parking policy in appropriate areas and protecting cycling networks from conflicting parking and design choices.
- Integrate **car sharing with transit planning**, and locate **EV fast charging** where daily life happens.

## | additional insight |

Additional feedback was emphasized when the first draft of this Report was shared with participants for validation purposes, as follows:

- The Plan should explicitly recognize the role of Indigenous land-based healing programs and ensure they are protected within land use designations, not treated as recreational add-ons.
- Access to nature should be considered a health determinant, especially for residents recovering from trauma, homelessness, or addictions.



## 3.5 Infrastructure & Transportation

Key areas of focus within the “Infrastructure & Transportation” focus group session included:

- Water supply and waste water services
- Storm water management
- Solid waste & the circular economy
- Active & public transportation
- Parking, and
- Roads & motorized vehicles

This focus group included participants from the environmental, renewable energy, finance, and tourism sectors, as well as active transportation advocates, experienced researchers, and designers.

As previously noted, emerged themes from the “Infrastructure & Transportation” focus group intersected with those from “Environment & Climate.”

# KEY INSIGHTS FROM PARTICIPANTS

**Water supply and wastewater services:** Participants discussed the need for a clearer understanding and planning of Yellowknife's water servicing models, including trucked, piped, and above-ground systems. They highlighted interest in comparing the financial and environmental impacts of trucked water against municipal piped systems and pointed to opportunities to reduce Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions, such as by switching to electric service vehicles.

Several participants referred to above-ground servicing as a useful precedent, citing the successful utilidor system in Inuvik as an example. They suggested that similar systems could serve as an alternative to rock blasting and to buried pipes that are vulnerable to permafrost degradation, and encouraged the City to consider where above-ground options may be appropriate.

Participants further suggested that the City assess investments in a municipal pump and lift station, emphasizing the importance of aligning water capacity forecasts with projected population increases within the Community Plan Update, noting this would help avoid unnecessarily overshooting current needs and strike a balance between prudence and future-proofing.

In discussing the planned expansion of right-of-ways (ROWs), participants suggested finding efficiencies by planning where utilities sit within the ROW, specifically targeting significant corridors (areas anticipated for development) so that increased utility capacity or additions can be implemented without disrupting the immediate use of the corridor itself.



## Example referenced:

Inuvik's above-ground water servicing was referenced for their above-ground utilidor system for water and sewer services and for mitigating the degradation of permafrost, as it prevents ground movement from damaging buried pipes.

**Stormwater management and snow clearing:** Participants discussed stormwater management in relation to winter infrastructure. Noting that the City has been seeing a greater volume of snow, they raised concerns about contaminated snow from road salting. There is a significant desire to reduce the environmental impacts of snow-clearing practices throughout the city, and, as heard in subsequent discussions, to implement specific buffer zone policies governing which types of development can occur near waterways.

Participants called for greater efficiency and innovation in snow removal practices. They referenced other jurisdictions, such as Oulu, Finland and Montreal, as useful examples of best

practices in handling deep snow and ice. For example, some said that compacting snow on sidewalks (vs scraping it off and adding salt) can be safer for pedestrians.



## Examples referenced:

**Montreal** was cited as a municipality that has developed highly organized and efficient protocols for large-scale winter operations, including coordinated snow removal, hauling, and disposal. **Oulu, Finland** was referenced for prioritizing the winter maintenance of its active transportation networks (pedestrian and cycling paths).

**Winter safety and mobility:** Winter mobility more broadly was identified as a priority. Participants stressed that active mobility infrastructure should function year-round and support multiple modes of travel. They highlighted the importance of policy and maintenance standards that keep sidewalks, trails, and other active transportation routes cleared and treated to the same standard as vehicular roads, so that walking and cycling remain realistic options in winter.

Safety considerations were also raised, as participants pointed to snow buildup at driveways and hard curb ramps, particularly on steep slopes, as a source of hazardous ice and difficult crossings. Rolled curbs were proposed as a design standard for new and renewed infrastructure to improve pedestrian and cyclist safety, and to reduce dangerous icing and slope-related issues.

## Solid waste, circular economy, and low-carbon design:

Participants encouraged the City to focus on minimizing waste entering the landfill and to move beyond reliance on existing landfill capacity. They saw opportunities to incentivize waste diversion among businesses and residents, including exploring options for commercial food waste diversion and composting programs.

Waste-to-energy technologies and heat recovery were also discussed, with participants suggesting that the City evaluate the district energy systems currently in place. They noted that development incentives or bonuses could help promote robust, low-carbon building design, such as the use of efficient heat pumps and climate-appropriate siding, and connected these ideas to Environment and Climate discussions, YK 2050 objectives, and the need to reduce reliance on diesel.

Participants said the City has a role to play in clearly communicating circular economy objectives. They suggested that the City clearly explain why waste reduction and diversion matter for achieving YK 2050 goals, and how residents will



benefit. They recommended straightforward public education campaigns, supported by convenient infrastructure such as well-placed recycling stations and clear signage, to rebuild trust in the system and encourage more people to take part in diversion programs. Further, they wanted to see the City lead by example by embedding communications and policies in the Community Plan that support waste reduction, reuse, and recycling as core objectives for municipal operations. They also pointed to the City's role in shaping permitting requirements for large construction and demolition projects as an opportunity to support circular practices.

**Municipal and recreation infrastructure, safety, and accessibility:** Participants shared their desire for enhanced infrastructure and the animation of public spaces to improve perceptions of safety and foster community connections. They emphasized the need for placemaking initiatives, focusing on both physical improvements and the activation of public spaces to encourage year-round use. They also pointed to the need for the design and maintenance of recreation facilities and public spaces to reflect Yellowknife's climate for this same reason.

For example, participants highlighted the need for investments such as bus shelters, better signage, and improved lighting to keep public spaces and trail networks usable during the coldest and darkest months. One participant noted that Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) infrastructure—such as better lighting and clear sightlines in public spaces—is a foundational element in creating safe and accessible areas within the city, including downtown.

Additionally, discussions included the connection points for arrival at municipal recreation infrastructure, such as the experience of walking, biking, or driving to the new city pool. Participants emphasized the City's role in both planning and maintaining recreation infrastructure, and that these connection points should consider how facilities and public spaces are accessible to people of all ages and abilities.

**Trail signage, lighting, and data:** Trail signage was identified as a “big problem” for trail users. Participants described current signage as inconsistent and sometimes poorly maintained, making navigation difficult for visitors and new residents and negatively impacting the overall user experience. They suggested that the Community Plan include policies that adopt comprehensive, city-wide trail signage standards to manage potential conflicts among user groups. Participants also highlighted the need for improved, year-round lighting along trail networks and connection points to support

safe, equitable, and sustainable multi-modal movement. They noted that better lighting would encourage more people to choose active transportation options, especially during the winter months, and would extend the usable hours of the trail system during short daylight periods.

They said that it is important for the City to collect data to guide trail investments. Participants felt that implementation deserves as much attention as initial planning, and suggested that the City collect and use data on trail usage, safety incidents, and user satisfaction during and after upgrades or new builds. This information was seen as essential for refining policies, standards, and future investments.

**Active transportation connections:** Overall, participants shared a desire to reduce car dependence and see safe, appealing pedestrian and cycling connections as a solution, particularly when discussing priorities for new developments. They emphasized the need for walkable and bikeable neighbourhoods, with funds (from the City or developers) dedicated to trail development and planning.

There is a desire to see connectivity between neighbourhoods and the downtown core to encourage more dependence on active transportation. Participants identified specific opportunities for improved or additional connections, including routes between Northland, the hospital, and Niven Lake. In related Land Use discussions, other groups pointed out opportunities to improve walking and cycling connections along major roads (Kam Lake Road, Range Lake Road, and Old Airport Road), and pointed to safety as a priority when it comes to connection points throughout the city (i.e., where roads and trails meet).

Safety “hotspots” for people walking and cycling were a recurring concern. Participants identified particular crosswalks and intersections, especially in winter, where snow and ice increase risk. They reiterated the potential of rolled curbs, previously discussed in the context of snow removal, as a tactical design change that could improve safety at driveways, walkways, and crossings.

Additionally, participants suggested that the City explore ways to strengthen linkages within Yellowknife's municipal trail system and, where possible, connect local routes with regional recreation networks, citing the Galloping Goose on Vancouver Island as an example of how regional trails can support tourism and broader connectivity.

### **Cycling maintenance, infrastructure & considerations:**

Participants stressed the need for secure and accessible bike parking, along with clear and well-maintained cycling paths, as basic elements of a more bike-supportive city. They saw these investments as part of a broader effort to normalize and support active transportation.

Parking requirements in new developments were also examined through this lens. Participants noted that when new land is dedicated to large vehicle parking lots, such as those associated with the new municipal pool, there is an opportunity to enhance active transportation infrastructure in parallel. They suggested balancing parking needs with accessible trail connections, bicycle parking, and public realm amenities such as trees and seating that make walking and cycling more appealing.



#### **Example referenced:**

NYC's High Line was cited as an example of how trails can become signature public assets that enhance mobility and public life.

### **Connecting public transit and active transportation networks:**

Participants underscored the importance of integrating transit planning into land use decisions from the outset to facilitate effective connections between transit and residential areas. They noted that development plans should anticipate future transit routes and include density thresholds that make service viable, along with traffic and safety measures that accompany land use intensification.

Participants saw opportunities to improve system efficiency through investments and integration with the active transportation network, making it easier to reach transit stops on foot or by bike in all seasons. They called for more and better-designed bus shelters that provide real protection from the Northern elements, particularly during extreme cold, emphasizing that comfortable, accessible stops are essential to a usable system.

### **Optimizing transit service and advancing climate goals:**

Participants suggested integrating car-sharing at new transit nodes and creating a central hub offering more frequent service to key destinations, such as the airport. They also raised the idea of adding on-demand service to areas not currently regularly served by public transit, including Kam Lake, Giant Mine, and other parts of the city.

Participants noted that advancing the City's Climate Action Goals on vehicle emissions relies on providing a reliable and convenient alternative to personal vehicles. Other actions proposed included optimizing routes and schedules, integrating car-sharing services, and offering free transit for youth under 18 as ways to increase ridership. Some suggested that the City invest in real-time movement data and resident-mapping apps to support data-driven decision-making.

**Efficient roads and complete streets:** Participants understood the policy direction towards "complete streets" and expressed a shared desire for the city's transportation networks to be complete and connected for all ages and abilities, and for all seasons (pedestrian, cycling, transit, and vehicles). The discussions underscored a desire for this approach to become the standard rather than a project-by-project choice. Echoing "Environment & Climate Change" discussions, participants suggested that permeable paving be incorporated into design requirements for complete streets.

Routes to and around schools were singled out for particular attention, as participants highlighted the need for planning and policy that acknowledges the routes used by school-aged children and families, including sidewalks, crosswalks, and cycling and trail connections.

A participant proposed tactical urbanism techniques to encourage traffic calming as part of the City's annual street updates. Traffic calming, particularly in residential areas and near schools, was identified as a key policy opportunity to manage vehicle speed and volume, aligning with the goal of creating a safe and equitable transportation network.

Traffic signals were viewed through the lens of walking and cycling. Participants noted that push buttons can be inconvenient or difficult for cyclists to use, and that current signal timing can result in long pedestrian crossing times. They felt that signal design and logic could be adjusted to better reflect the needs of people walking and cycling, rather than prioritizing vehicles.

Participants also spoke about the value of trying new approaches on a small scale before making major changes, suggesting that the City consider dedicating staff to test experimental traffic interventions, document their outcomes, and use these findings to guide future policy and investment decisions.

## | TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE |

# GUIDING DIRECTIONS FOR POLICY & PRACTICE

The following directions summarize participants' input as it may inform policy and practice related to Transportation & Infrastructure:

### Water supply and wastewater treatment services

- Adopt a **servicing decision framework** that requires the City to compare trucked, piped, and above-ground options using consistent criteria: lifecycle cost, GHG implications, permafrost risk, and service reliability.
- Enable **above-ground systems** where they reduce long-term risk and disruption, and update subdivision and capital guidelines to reflect where buried systems are no longer the most resilient option.
- Link **major water and wastewater investments** to population thresholds and corridor growth priorities.
- Embed **future utility space requirements into corridor design early**, particularly along significant development corridors, to reduce repeated disruption and improve cost-efficiency over time.

### Stormwater and winter infrastructure

- Address the **downstream impacts of snow clearing** near waterways, including the relationship between salting practices, contaminated snow, and aquatic health.
- Define **minimum service levels** for sidewalks, trails, and key active transportation routes to support year-round mobility.
- Standardize **winter-safe intersection and driveway design** (e.g., by requiring rolled curbs and other context-appropriate treatments in high-risk locations).

### Solid waste and the circular economy

- Establish a **diversion-first direction for waste policy** to guide infrastructure investments, service models, and incentives.
- Require **construction and demolition waste planning for large projects** and normalize expectations for reduction, reuse, and recycling to support a circular economy.
- Introduce **visible, reliable infrastructure alongside public education efforts**, so resident participation is supported by clear communication and practical ease of use.

### Municipal and recreational infrastructure

- Prioritize **renewal and modernization** of existing recreation facilities before new builds, aligned with lifecycle value and year-round utility.
- Institutionalize **safety-through-design expectations** using placemaking, CPTED, and non-carceral approaches to safety, including lighting, sightlines, accessible sidewalks, warming areas, and trauma-informed public space considerations.
- Define **"complete arrival" standards for civic facilities** so that access by walking, biking, transit, and driving is considered part of the facility's performance.

### Trails and active transportation connections

- Prioritize **city-wide connectivity** between neighbourhoods, the downtown core, and key destinations, while supporting feasible links to regional networks.
- Establish **system-wide usability standards** for signage and lighting to reduce navigation friction, manage user conflicts, and support safe year-round use of priority routes.
- **Track usage, safety incidents, and user satisfaction** for new or upgraded routes, and use findings to refine standards and investment priorities.
- Integrate active transportation into **major site planning**, for example, by requiring secure bike parking and accessible trail connections when approving large parking areas and new community or commercial destinations.

### Public transit

- Embed **density and corridor planning requirements** that anticipate future routes and reduce long-term service inefficiencies, for the sake of aligning land use and transit viability.
- Introduce **standards for northern transit** focused on reliable shelter design and safe, all-season walking and cycling access to stops.
- Enable **flexible service models** such as hubs, on-demand options, and integrated car-sharing where fixed-route coverage is limited, informed by real-time data.

### Efficient roads and complete streets

- Consider making complete streets the default operating rule for new and renewed infrastructure.
- Incorporate green infrastructure considerations to support runoff management and long-term system durability.
- Institutionalize iterative safety improvements through tactical urbanism and pilot programs, with a requirement to document results and scale what works, particularly near schools and in residential areas.
- Modernize street signal and crossing logic informed by the pedestrian and cyclist experience.

## | additional insight |

Additional feedback was emphasized when the first draft of this Report was shared with participants for validation purposes, as follows:

- The Plan should integrate safety design principles, including lighting, sightlines, accessible sidewalks, warming areas, and trauma-informed public space considerations (non-carceral approaches to safety).
- Transit expansion should prioritize routes connecting various points, including (but not limited to):
  - Downtown → Transitional Housing
  - Housing → Recreation and cultural land-based sites



## 4.0 What's Next

**Phase 3 is the final phase of the Community Plan Update engagement initiatives, set to take place in Spring 2026.**

When the Draft Community Plan Update is ready, the Engagement Team will work with the City to present key components to Yellowknifers as a validation exercise, through various modes (specifics to be determined, in person and online). This step is meant to reinforce a sense of community ownership and momentum, while also providing one last opportunity for the public to shape the final version of the plan. This last phase of input helps the Planning & Development team understand what resonates, where questions remain, and what adjustments may be needed to strengthen the Draft Community Plan Update, from the community's perspective.

# 5.0 Glossary

**Accessibility (Housing):** Refers to the manner in which housing is designed, constructed or modified (such as through repair/ renovation/ renewal or modification of a home), to enable independent living for persons with diverse abilities. Accessibility is achieved through design, but also by adding features that make a home more accessible, such as modified cabinetry, furniture, space, shelves and cupboards, or even electronic devices that improve the overall ability to function in a home.\*

**Affordability/affordable housing:** In Canada, housing is considered “affordable” if it costs less than 30% of a household’s before-tax income. Many people think the term “affordable housing” refers only to rental housing that is subsidized by the government. In reality, it’s a very broad term that can include housing provided by the private, public and non-profit sectors. It also includes all forms of housing tenure: rental, ownership and co-operative ownership, as well as temporary and permanent housing.\*

**City-sold parcel:** Parcels owned by the municipal government and sold to an external party.

**Climate change adaptation:** Actions that prepare for changes, related to climate change that are occurring, or are likely to occur, in the future. (*By-law no. 5007, City of Yellowknife Community Plan. 2019. s.7 Glossary of Terms, Definitions*).

**Climate change:** The present and future consequences from changes in weather patterns at local and regional levels including extreme weather events and increased climate variability. (*Zoning By-law 5045 (consolidated), City of Yellowknife section 2 Definitions*)

**Climate change mitigation:** Actions that reduce greenhouse gas emissions that cause climate change. (*By-law no. 5007, City of Yellowknife Community Plan. 2019. s.7 Glossary of Terms, Definitions*)

**Commercial:** Land used for businesses that sell goods or services, such as stores, restaurants, or offices.

**Core housing need:** A household is in core housing need if its housing does not meet one or more of the adequacy, suitability or affordability standards and it would have to spend 30% or more of its before-tax income to pay the median rent (including utility costs) of alternative local market housing that meets all three standards:

- Acceptable housing: Housing that is adequate in condition, suitable in size, and affordable.
- Adequate Housing: Does not require any major repairs, according to residents. Major repairs include those to defective plumbing or electrical wiring, or structural repairs to walls, floors or ceilings.
- Suitable housing: Refers to housing that has enough bedrooms for the size and make-up of resident households, according to guidelines outlined in National Occupancy Standard (NOS). For example, enough bedrooms based on NOS means one bedroom for each cohabiting adult couple, one for unattached household member 18 years of age and over and one for each same-sex pair of children under age 18. A household of one individual can occupy a bachelor unit (i.e. a unit with no bedroom).\*

**Ecosystem services:** Refers to the idea that nature itself provides valuable infrastructure and services to communities that need to be recognized, protected, and managed just like built infrastructure.

**Existing land:** Land that has been designated within the current Community Plan.

**Green and blue spaces:** Recognized as signature natural assets of Yellowknife, and are central to the local identity. (*Interchangeable with ‘natural spaces,’ including land and water.*)

**High-risk hazards:** Include wildfire, extreme heat events, drought, flooding, shoreline impacts and erosion.

**Household:** A person or group of persons who occupy the same dwelling and do not have a usual place of residence elsewhere in Canada or abroad.\*

**Housing continuum:** Concept used to describe the broad range of housing options available to help a range of households in different tenures to access affordable and appropriate housing. The concept enables moving away from a one-size-fits-all strategy, towards ‘the range of housing options available to different households on a continuum.’ The housing continuum encompasses homelessness, shelters and transitional housing, community housing, affordable rental housing, market rental housing, and homeownership.\*

**Housing policy:** Involves government actions to influence the housing market and achieve housing objectives.\*

**Housing tenures (types):** Single-detached, townhouses, apartments.\*

**Human-scaled:** Refers to the design of environments, objects, and systems to be proportionate to the average human body, prioritizing comfort, approachability, and ease of interaction over large-scale, automobile-centric, or overly monolithic designs. This concept aims to create spaces that feel natural and intuitive to navigate and inhabit, focusing on walkability, safety, sensory comfort, and encouraging social connection, rather than feeling overwhelming or impersonal.

**Industrial:** Land used for manufacturing, warehouses, factories, or other large-scale business activities that produce or distribute goods.

**Industrial Camp:** The term “industrial camps” refers to land or premises on which an employer, in connection with a logging, sawmill, mining, oil or gas operation, a railway construction project, a cannery, or a similar thing, owns, operates or maintains, or has established, permanent or temporary structures for use, with or without charge, by employees as living quarters...”short term industrial camp” means a industrial camp that operates for five months or less in any 12-month period” (Public Health Act 2012). *The Firelight Group with Lake Babine Nation and Nak’azdli Whut’en. Indigenous Communities and Industrial Camps - promoting healthy communities in settings of industrial change. 2017.*

**Infill:** Adding new buildings or homes within existing developed areas (filling the “gaps”).

**Infrastructure:** The basic physical systems that support a community, such as roads, water pipes, sewers, power lines, and internet.

**Intensification:** Urban (residential) intensification (or densification) encourages the development of property, site or area at a higher density than currently exists, through development, redevelopment, infill and expansion or conversion of existing buildings. The form and level of intensification will differ based on specific characteristics, such as location, history, community strengths, and preferences.

**Land use planning:** The process of deciding how land in a community will be used (such as for homes, businesses, parks, or roads) so the community can grow in an organized way.

**Land use policy:** The guidelines or rules that shape how land is developed or used in a community (for example, where houses, stores, or parks can go).

**Land use designation:** A label given to a piece of land that describes how it can be used (for example: residential, commercial, industrial, parkland).

**Mixed-income housing:** Any type of housing development (rent or owned) that includes a range of income levels among its residents, including low, moderate and/or higher incomes.\*

**Mixed use:** A type of development where different uses (i.e., housing, shops, and offices) are located together in the same building or area.

**Natural areas/spaces:** Refers to natural land and water spaces, interchangeable with ‘green and blue spaces.’

**New designated area:** A part of the city that has been newly set aside or labeled for a specific type of use, such as residential, commercial or industrial.

**Natural assets:** The naturally occurring features of the environment that provide direct or indirect benefits to communities, such as forests, wetlands, rivers, aquifers, soils, and green spaces.

**New land:** Land within the City’s development control that has not yet been designated.

**Non-market housing:** Rental or for-sale units provided to low and moderate-income groups at below-market rates, making them more affordable than private market options.\*

**Open space and recreation land:** Land used for recreational activities like organized sports, walking, hiking, cycling, and other types of recreational activities. In some cases, land is left undeveloped in a natural state for public use. (*By-law no. 5007, City of Yellowknife Community Plan. 2019. s.7 Glossary of Terms, Definitions*)

**Partners/partnerships:** Refers to the parties, other than the applicant, who provide monetary or in-kind support to a project.\*

**Passive use/Passive recreational use:** A term used to refer to activities such as walking, hiking, cycling, birdwatching and other types of recreational activities in open space and recreational lands. In some cases, land is left undeveloped in a natural state for public use.

**Resilient infrastructure & buildings:** Use less energy and emit fewer GHGs (mitigation), and are durable against climate hazards and extremes (adaptation).

**Sensitive ecosystems:** Areas of land, water, or habitat that are particularly vulnerable to disturbance or development because of ecological importance, rarity, or fragility.

**Services:** Essential community supports such as water, sewer, garbage collection, electricity, schools, transit, and emergency services.

**Signature rock formations:** Refers to the natural rock formations throughout YK, core to the city's identity and landscape.

**Smart growth:** A planning approach that guides the accommodation of population and economic growth in ways that use land and infrastructure efficiently while supporting environmental sustainability and community well-being. Smart growth emphasizes the use of underutilized lands; mixed-use and well-connected land use patterns; a range of housing options; walkability and access to services; coordinated land use and transportation planning; and the protection of natural areas, open spaces, agricultural lands, and environmentally sensitive features.

**Supportive housing:** Housing that provides a physical environment that is specifically designed to be safe, secure, enabling and home-like, with support services such as social services, provision of meals, housekeeping and social and recreational activities, in order to maximize residents' independence, privacy and dignity.\*

**Underperforming spaces:** Used within the context of the downtown, space and buildings that are not being used to their full potential.

**Underutilized/underused land parcels (also, 'underused' or 'unused' land parcels):** Underutilized land refers to property, often within urban areas, that isn't being used to its full potential, meaning it's vacant, partially developed, or used inefficiently. In the context of this report, this excludes natural assets and specifically refers to serviced areas.

**Vacancy rate:** The percentage of all available (vacant) units in a rental property.\*

**Vacant land:** Land without buildings or structures; a subcategory of underutilized/underused land.

**Workforce accommodation:** Differs from work camp, and means a facility constructed to provide housing for workers in the form of complete dwelling units, typically for related business for an appropriate project, term or seasonal purpose. (Zoning By-law no. 5045, City of Yellowknife 2022, s.2 Definitions.)

**Work camp:** Temporary and movable structures built to accommodate workers for a specific project or job. Typically, work camps are situated in remote areas with limited access to permanent dwellings. (By-law no. 5007, City of Yellowknife Community Plan. 2019. s.7 Glossary of Terms, Definitions)

**Zoning:** The detailed local rules that say exactly what can be built on a property (e.g., how tall, how close to the street, what kind of use).

\* Definitions referenced from [The National Housing Strategy Glossary of Common Terms](#)



Case Study:  
Kelowna, Vernon  
• compassion action  
training for all  
residents

Comment:  
re: Vis Centre  
location  
need to have  
positive &  
negative / more  
positive  
presence

policy?  
public toilets

Case study:  
Helsinki  
public space  
closures  
winter maintenance

Opps:  
community  
ambassador  
= positive presence  
(vs. police, security  
RMP)

bus shelters  
in @ every  
stop  
POLICY

policy:  
re: residential  
downtown, b/c  
then ppl d.t.  
are relying on  
those  
businesses

Opps:  
does intend  
to be 4 lanes  
convert lanes  
to green space

Community  
Forum where  
people can  
engage with  
governance

Secure bank,  
storage fees, 1 hr.

Hub  
- multi-as. (4)  
to study  
case  
engage in  
governance

- Property Parcels
- Akatico (Interim Land Withdrawal)
  - Water Mains
  - Sewer Mains
  - Lift Stations
  - water Pump House

Na  
Na  
Par

Down

## ntown - CityCore

# Appendix A

## Focus Group Decks

# Appendix B

## Focus Group Toolkits & Discussion Guides

# Appendix C

## Land Use & Intensification: Mini Cards