

Phase 2: What We Heard



This report provides a summary of the information collected during Phase 2 of the Official Community Plan (OCP) Review – called *Whitehorse 2040*. Phase 2, “Explore New Concepts”, was about testing and exploring new ideas for the revised OCP including housing, transportation, and climate-change resilience.

This phase spanned the summer months from April to September 2019 and included extensive engagement. This included working with First Nations governments, internal City departments, stakeholder organizations, and the general public to understand their ideas, concerns, and visions of Whitehorse 2040. **In total, 850 people engaged with the OCP process during Phase 2!**

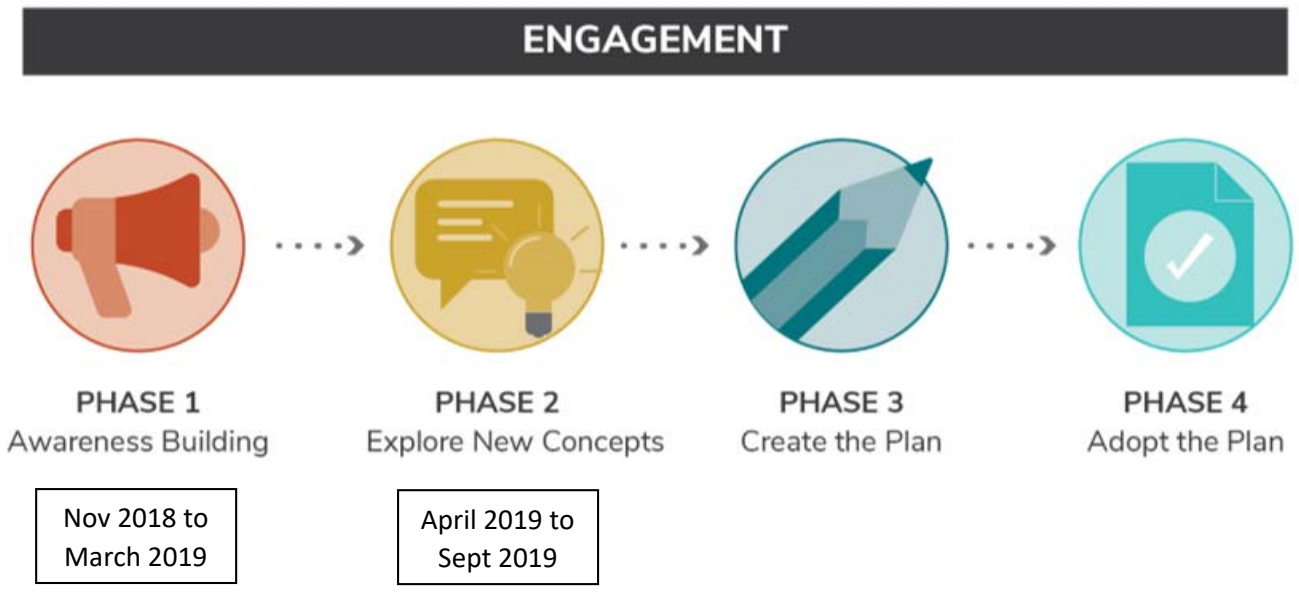
Results from Phase 2 will be used to begin shaping the new OCP, including policy directions on key topic areas. If you have any questions about this report or would like to provide feedback, please email us at ocp@whitehorse.ca. To stay up to date on the project, sign up for our e-newsletter at whitehorse.ca/ocp.

Background

What is an Official Community Plan?

Our Official Community Plan (OCP) is the City’s highest-level planning document. The plan focuses on land use, development, and conservation; however, it covers many other topics as well, including housing, recreation, transportation, and relationships with other governments. In order to achieve the objectives and goals outlined within the OCP, policies are established to guide the City. The OCP also provides direction to other City tools and documents, such as the Zoning Bylaw. After the OCP is adopted by City Council, work produced by City departments must align with the guidance provided by the plan. The document is also used by City Council to make decisions on important topics. While our OCP will plan for a 20-year timeframe, reviews of the document occur every 8-10 years to account for changing circumstances and trends. The current OCP was adopted by City Council in 2010. Recognizing that cities change between each OCP review, amendments can be made to the current OCP through a bylaw process, making it somewhat of a “living document”.

Where are we in the OCP Process?



What We've Done in Phase 2

First Nations

Meetings have been regularly held with staff from Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council throughout *Whitehorse 2040*. The same staff meet approximately monthly, and this is referred to as the OCP Review Working Group. Meetings are used to discuss OCP issues of interest to First Nations, opportunities for collaboration, and First Nation citizen engagement. In total, **five working group meetings** took place during Phase 2. Furthermore, two TKC-citizen-specific public engagement events were held in August 2019. Staff had informal conversations with TKC citizens to discuss opportunities, challenges, and ideas. In total, feedback was received from **six TKC citizens**.

Input received from First Nations citizens and staff will be included in an upcoming First Nations What We Heard document, after additional engagement with First Nations citizens and staff has been completed.

Stakeholder Organizations

A lunch hour meeting was organized at the Gold Rush Inn for members of the Chamber of Commerce. This meeting occurred in July and engaged **26 Chamber members**. City staff prepared questions based on city growth to generate discussion. This meeting was a chance for Chamber members to give their comments and concerns on the themes that were brought forward.

General Public

Phase 2 engagement with the general public started with neighbourhood-specific mapping workshops in early summer. In total, **seven workshops** were held and engaged over **60 people** with the OCP process. The workshops allowed the public to map out what they envision their neighbourhood to look like in the next 20 years, highlighting areas of opportunity, challenges, and ideas they want to see implemented. General summaries of what we heard are provided, additionally, the Appendix to this document includes staff-made maps that present all of the ideas heard.

A public ideas workbook was launched in late June and was open until early August. The workbook was made available online and in hard copy, and consisted of 21 questions pertaining to major growth in Whitehorse over the next 20 years. A total of **eight pop-up engagement events** occurred during Phase 2 at the Fireweed Market (2), Canada Games Centre, Rotary Park, Millennium Trail, Independent Grocer, Shipyards Park, and Main Street. They were used as tools to promote the workbook to those who may not have access to the online version and to provide the public with an opportunity to speak with the City. The pop-up events engaged over **50 people**. In total, **679 completed workbooks** were collected during Phase 2. Additionally, a condensed questionnaire was distributed to select high school classes to gather youth input during this phase. A total of **54 completed high-school questionnaires** were received.

How this report is organized

Input is presented in 6 themes (used since the start of the review process): Housing, Transportation, Community Well-Being, Employment, Conservation, and Other Topics. Within each theme, input from different engagement groups is separated. General (non-geographic) results from neighbourhood mapping workshops are presented first; digitized versions of maps can be found in the Appendix.



Housing

1. Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce Workshop

Q: What housing types should be prioritized for new builds?

- range of housing types needed
 - apartments
 - residential complexes
 - multi-unit housing
- affordable housing is needed
 - affordable vs. social
 - mixed income housing
- housing diversity
 - accommodate growing families
 - accommodate pets
 - affordable vs social
 - zoning for mixed-uses
- green housing
 - passive solar neighbourhoods
 - self-sustaining possibilities (chicken coops, gardens and green houses, wells, etc.)
 - energy efficient and improved building standards
 - green retrofitting older housing stock

Q: Where should we consider allocating denser housing development?

- densifying existing areas (e.g. Downtown)
- housing in new areas (e.g. Long Lake)
- use wildfire fuel abatement zones to determine new housing locations
- housing wherever First Nations approve
- suggestion that the City could provide social and affordable housing

2. OCP Ideas Workbook

Q: We heard you say that you prefer increased density over increased sprawl. Where should we consider allowing denser housing development? (check all that apply)

Near neighbourhood cores (e.g. grocery store)	67%
Along transit routes/busier streets	57%
On existing lots (change zoning)	51%
None, focus on building new urban subdivisions	25%
On green space lots within neighbourhoods (infill)	17%
Other	15%

Notable responses under the “other” category included densifying Downtown, infilling areas that are not greenspace (e.g. parking areas, unused buildings), remediating and developing contaminated sites, and allowing more housing units on existing lots.

Q: We heard you say that although sprawl is less preferable to densification, developing new areas should be considered. Where should the next major urban area be?

South of Copper Ridge	49%
North of Long Lake	29%
None, focus on densifying existing developed areas	23%
South of Porter Creek, Porter Creek “D”	21%

The public could also suggest other locations. Notable responses included the Tank Farm, near Yukon College, the airport (by relocating it), and First Nation settlement parcels. There was a notable number of responses that opposed or had concerns with developing some of these areas (e.g. Long Lake and Porter Creek D).

Q: We heard you say that although urban residential areas should be the priority, we should still examine growth options in country residential areas. What options should we consider for housing in country residential areas? (check all that apply)

More housing in existing areas (e.g. smaller dwellings)	50%
New country residential neighbourhoods	44%
Expanding existing neighbourhoods into green spaces	20%
None of these	13%

The public could also suggest other ideas. Notable ideas included subdividing lots, smaller country residential lot sizes, and additional dwellings on each lot. A number of respondents voiced concerns or opposition to new housing in existing country-residential areas and expanding into nearby greenspaces.

Q: We heard you say that your strongest support for increased density is in the Downtown area. What changes should we explore in Downtown to increase density? (check all that apply)

Other zoning/regulation changes	65%
Increased building height allowances	46%
More financial incentives	41%
None of these	9%

Notable responses in the “other ideas” category included building on vacant/derelict lots through incentives or punitive measures, affordable housing options, removing parking requirements, exploring tiny homes or small unit sizes, density bonuses, more mixed-use zoning, and expanded residential options in Marwell. A number of respondents voiced concerns over building height increases, while other suggested modest height increases to respect the low-lying nature of Downtown.

Q: We heard you say that the type and quality of new housing is as important as the amount built. Which of the following ideas should we explore for new housing? (check all that apply)

Green building design	70%
Transit-oriented development	62%
Accessible/age-friendly	60%
Flexibility in meeting zoning requirements	41%
Focus on design/aesthetics	37%
Maximum size limits	34%
None of these	3%

Notable responses in the “other ideas” category included affordable housing measures, encouraging smaller homes/tiny houses, mixed-use zoning, rental housing, ensuring a mix of unit sizes within buildings, use of fire-resistant building materials, and building regulations to respond to climate change.

3. Neighbourhood Workshops

General comments and discussion on housing arising from the neighbourhood workshops included:

- country residential densification
 - allow subdivisions
- infill in existing areas and green spaces
- densify around busy roads
- density next to accessible green space
- live/work
- range of housing
 - tiny houses/smaller units
 - aging in place
 - control scale
 - condos

- apartments
- duplexes
- townhouses
- housing on federal land
- no more vinyl
- opposition to Porter Creek D
- positive response for development of the Tank Farm
 - coordinate design/trails with surrounding areas
- encourage FN land development
- housing that allows pets and has pet-friendly spaces nearby
- affordable and accessible housing
- green housing
 - self-sustaining energy
 - ecological house designs
 - solar power
 - green codes
- housing incentives



Transportation

1. Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce Workshop

Q: What new ideas should the City explore for transportation?

- incentivize transit and/or not driving
 - free bike use
 - free public transit
- better transit
 - Sunday buses
 - increased frequency
 - transportation hubs
 - suggestion for light rail transit system
 - types of buses (smaller, electric)
 - sustainable and renewable transit system
- more connected bike network
 - paths to connect City subdivisions
 - more available bike storage
- charging stations for electric vehicles everywhere

Q: We heard you say that you want transit to meet the needs of all residents. What do you think are the top three barriers to transit ridership in Whitehorse?

Convenience	86%
Routes	73%
Reliability	32%
Cost	16%
Comfort	12%
Safety	8%

Notable responses under the “other” category included lack of shelters, need for technology upgrades, lack of Sunday service, lack of evening service, length of routes, poor connections, and no service to country residential areas.

Q: We heard you say that you want improved alternative transportation infrastructure. What are your top three priorities to make Whitehorse’s alternative transportation network better linked?

Multi-use paved paths	66%
Separated bicycle paths	63%
Bike lanes	38%
Sidewalks	31%
Bus-only lanes	21%
Bus/bike-only connections	20%

Notable comments under the “other” category included winter maintenance of pedestrian facilities (e.g. clearing), safe crossings across busier roads, HOV lanes, bus shelters and stations, and e-bike or snowmobile options. A number of respondents also indicated that the focus should remain on automobile travel.

Q: We heard you say that main roads need to be safer for pedestrians. How can we best improve the safety of main roads?

Improved pedestrian crossings	59%
Improved sidewalk infrastructure	44%
Traffic calming	36%
Better lighting	25%

Notable comments heard under the “other” category included improved snow clearing, better enforcement, reduced speed limits, public awareness campaigns, radar and red-light cameras, and increased left-turn lanes.

3. Neighbourhood Workshops

General comments and discussion on housing arising from the neighbourhood workshops included:

- more connected bike network
 - rails to trails
 - bike tourism
 - active transportation links within neighbourhoods to other areas
 - bike lanes
- safer highway crossings and intersections
- traffic calming expansion
- pedestrian connections between neighbourhoods
- increased pedestrian infrastructure
 - more sidewalks
- lowering highway speed
- roads built to accommodate frost heave
- treed/noise buffers from arterial roads
- slowing down traffic
- high interest for second bridge across Yukon River, although some opposition
- widening of existing bridge over Yukon River
- improved transit
 - greater frequency
 - smaller buses
 - electric buses
 - incentivize taking the bus/not driving
 - bus lanes
 - Sunday buses
- transit hubs
- ride share programs
- zoning requirements for pedestrian-friendly developments
- renewable energy

4. High-School Survey

One of the three high-school survey questions asked students for perspectives and ideas on transportation:

Q: *Where in Whitehorse is it difficult to get around, and how can we make it easier and/or safer?*

- Riverdale
 - second bridge to Riverdale
 - Riverdale traffic
 - school traffic in Riverdale

- more lanes at FH Collins
- double lanes in Riverdale
- more ways to access Riverdale
- less schools in Riverdale
- opposition to the francophone high school
- Transit
 - electric buses
 - Sunday bus service
 - more frequent bus service
 - better bus connections
 - 20 min bus service
 - better bus in Whistle Bend
 - overall improved bus system
 - routes and times for school buses poorly designed
 - later bus service
- Traffic
 - traffic on Mountainview Drive
 - too much traffic
 - less cars overall
- Other
 - walking bridge from Main Street to the hospital
 - Skytrain
 - bike rentals across town
 - carbon tax



Community Well-Being

1. Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce Workshop

Q: How can the City best invest its resources to improve the mental health of all residents?

- provide safe places for people with mental health issues to stay
- support the agencies, groups, and people that are doing work in mental health
- mental health education
- increase access for all residents

2. OCP Ideas Workbook

Q: We heard you say that wildfire is one of your biggest concerns. Which fire protection-related strategy do you support the most?

Property maintenance requirements	54%
Fire-resistant exterior building materials	39%
Fire-resistant plants for landscaping	26%

Respondents were given the opportunity to list other strategies. Notable comments were firesmartering on private and public land, more public education, fire-breaks, incentives for fire-smartering or proper property upkeep, and commercial harvesting opportunities.

Q: We heard you say that mental health is an important issue for all levels of government. How can we best invest our resources to improve the mental health of all residents? (check all that apply)

Affordable and accessible recreation options	74%
Natural areas	68%
Community gathering spaces	44%
Active transportation	40%
Community events	40%

Notable comments under the “other” ideas category included family-friendly spaces, supporting more low-income housing, reducing social isolation, intergenerational activities, affordable housing (as a stress reducer), quality childcare spaces, access to nutritious food, winter gathering spaces, and neighbourhood spaces and greenways.

Q: We heard you say that we need to integrate reconciliation with First Nations better into our OCP. How can the City, KDFN, and TKC best work together for the mutual benefit of all residents?

Respondents were asked this open-ended question. Some of the most frequently heard responses include:

- Renaming of landmarks, features, and buildings, and streets to First Nation names
- Shared events, festivals, and programs that support indigenous culture
- Finding common ground and working together on issues affecting First Nations and the City
- Communication improvements needed
- Sharing projects such as housing
- Implementing the Truth and Reconciliation recommendations
- Assisting with the implementation of self-government powers



Employment

1. Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce Workshop

Q: How can the City support emerging and existing business sectors?

- take advantage of omni-channel technologies
- make 'start-ups' easier (service, grants, better access to available resources)
- increased land available for business ownership and use
- regulations developed and enforced
- simplify the process of doing business in Whitehorse (online systems, reduce red tape)

Q: In what ways can the tourism industry be better supported by the City?

- increased tourism role for the City
 - new City department
 - more support
- promotion
 - supporting eco-tourism
 - more events/beautification
 - waterfront programming
 - Smart City – free wi-fi to support tourists

2. OCP Ideas Workbook

Q: We heard you say that you want more commercial services within walking distance of your home. What 3 services would you like to see in a neighbourhood centre/urban village?

Stores/restaurants	81%
Enhanced transit (e.g. bus shelter, express service)	59%
Gathering place	50%
Child care	40%
Professional services (e.g. health, financial, offices)	38%

A wide variety of other ideas were also heard. The most frequently heard responses include: recreational facilities/fitness centre, arts/cultural spaces, green space, pub, schools, small/micro/start-up businesses, branch library, boutique stores, community centre (e.g. like Heart of Riverdale), youth-oriented spaces, "all of the above", and also some lack of support expressed for densification/more commercial services.

Q: We heard you say that economic diversification is necessary. What 3 sectors of the economy should the OCP allocate more land for?

Green energy generation	70%
Tourism	49%
Agriculture	47%
Creative/cultural (e.g. artist spaces, galleries)	43%
Retail	25%
Construction	16%
Forestry	14%
Mining support/services	13%

Respondents were given the opportunity to list other sectors. Notable responses heard multiple times included housing, education/knowledge sector, health services, general industrial areas and manufacturing.

Q: We heard you say that we have untapped potential for increased tourism. What tourist amenities or facilities would you like to see in Whitehorse in the next 20 years?

This open-ended question generated 450 responses. A wide variety of input was heard. Some of the very most heard items include: more First Nations-related tourism, a modern movie theatre, return of the trolley or re-use of the trolley tracks for other purposes, improved/more cultural spaces, trails for mountain biking/hiking (enhancements, better promotion of, better connections between them and urban areas, etc), utilization of nearby lakes (transportation to, water tours, fishing facilities, etc), Downtown enhancements (RV park, better connections to, beautification, etc), waterfront improvements (more commercial development, enhanced natural features), and improvements to Takhini Hot Springs.



Conservation

1. Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce Workshop

Q: In what ways can we continue to enhance and protect our public and green spaces?

- clean spaces
- public green spaces equipped with amenities (garbage cans, toilets, lights, signs, etc.)
- controlled activity and enforcement in green spaces
- formally identifying and maintaining green spaces/trails
- utilizing spaces (programming, hubs, commerce, etc.)

2. OCP Ideas Workbook

Q: We heard you say that green spaces are of high importance to you. In what 3 ways can we continue to best enhance and protect our green spaces?

Enhance wildlife corridors	61%
Remove potential wildfire fuel	56%
Restore degraded areas (e.g. wetlands)	55%
Increase protection of regional parks	47%
Plan for more recreation amenities	37%
Expand boundaries of regional parks	31%

A wide variety of comments were heard under the ‘other’ category, with many residents suggesting additional protective measures, and several others using this space to caution against excessive greenspace protection. E.g. *“with the city growing, more development will need to happen. Make sure that this city doesn’t become just one big nature preserve.”*

Ideas for greenspace protection heard multiple times included: more garbage cans / bear-proof garbage cans, better/more signs, education/communication, establish permanent greenspace protection, increase density and/or green areas within already-developed areas (so as to put less pressure on large greenspaces), increase accessibility, limit/ban ATV usage, ensure that multi-use/motorized trails are “close to home”, enforce existing bylaws, provide more/better trails, and “all of the above”.

Q: We heard you say that you are concerned our large nearby green spaces may make us vulnerable to wildfire. Do you have concerns about any of the potential fuel management activities occurring in green space areas?

Respondents were asked this open-ended question. The question listed potential fuel management activities “that are being considered over the next 20 years”:

- Fuelwood harvesting
- Removal of old growth forests through various methods
- Increased access to forested areas by equipment

358 responses were received, and the most frequent response was “no concerns”, from 37% of respondents. Some of the most frequently heard concerns include:

- Removal of old-growth forests / Don’t cut representative old growth areas
- Impacts to forest ecosystems / wildlife habitat
- Increased motorized/other recreational usage of areas where trees are removed

- Lack of enforcement / no punishment for careless behavior
- Compromise to our wilderness city character
- The length of time it takes for newly-planted deciduous trees to grow
- Lack of education and/or informing residents of what is happening
- Lack of firesmarting on private property
- Don't use forest clearing as an excuse for urban sprawl
- Also do better evacuation planning

In addition to concerns, many residents suggested other fuel management measures. Some of the most frequently heard ideas were:

- Allow small-scale cutting (i.e. personal use for residents) of standing dead and/or green wood
- Work closely with jurisdictions surrounding the City
- Allow (more) prescribed burning
- Work with First Nations
- Follow best practices / consult with professionals / be responsible

Q: We heard you say that you are concerned about the unknown impact of climate change. What would be the most effective investment to increase Whitehorse's climate resilience? (check one)

Alternative energy production (renewable energy)	57%
Transit/transportation	39%
Housing (energy conservation)	32%
Low-carbon City services	17%
Reducing immediate risk to known hazards	17%

A wide variety of comments were heard under the 'other' category. Some people stated that they wished they could pick more than one option. Some of the most-heard responses (not reflected in the choices the survey already gave) include: declare a climate emergency, already have clean air / we are not the problem, denser City-building, plastic-bag ban, stop fertilizing City parks, education about climate change, don't widen the Alaska Highway for cars, water conservation, use local natural gas (instead of trucking it in), don't idle City vehicles.

3. High-School Survey

The high-school survey asked students a question about climate change.

Q: *What climate change impacts have you noticed in Whitehorse?*

- invasive animal species - deer/bugs
- forest fires
- smoke
- early summer
- shorter winter
- warmer weather
- more rain
- less rain/low water
- less snow
- higher water
- humidity
- hotter summers
- warmer winters
- microplastics in snow
- too warm for ice sculptures
- more dramatic weather
- more litter



Other Topics

1. OCP Ideas Workbook

Q: *We heard you say that we should all embrace winter more. What winter city strategy should we focus our resources on? (check one)*

Winter recreation	45%
Improving snow clearing operations	39%
Buildings that better account for winter conditions	25%
More winter events	19%
Heated and/or upgraded gathering places	19%

By far the most-heard comments under the ‘other’ category were around snow-clearing of active transportation / sidewalk / paved trails, etc. Other notable comments included: bus shelters / more transit, programs for seniors, skating rinks (e.g. at City Hall), more programming at Shipyards Park (e.g. hot chocolate and fires), better shelters for vulnerable people, and more indoor facilities (notably most heard: indoor climbing gym).

Q: We heard you say that you need more things to do in a growing city. Considering our expected growth over the next 20 years, what new development/amenity would you like to see?

This open-ended question generated 449 responses.

A modern movie theatre was mentioned the most, with about 33% of responses citing it (often in addition to other items). However, it should be noted that the question itself gave the example of a movie theatre (along with a professional sports team and a Downtown concert venue). These other two examples were also mentioned often. Other frequently heard ideas included: a rock-climbing gym, a shopping mall (or generally more/larger retail options), more restaurants, kid/youth-oriented activities (e.g. arcade), more non-alcohol-based Downtown activities (in general), expanded skiing facilities, and a parking garage.

This question was intended to be generally about new developments/amenities, and not specifically about facilities that the City would provide. However, since the question was in a City-issued survey, many residents responded with a focus on City services. The most-heard responses of this kind included an expanded CGC (or another CGC), better bike paths, better transit, better/improved roads and/or traffic signals, another pedestrian-only bridge, and better parks/greenspace. Several respondents also expressed that they feel that the focus of City work should not be on items like new amenities/developments, or believed (incorrectly) this question to mean the City would be subsidizing these new developments. Also, many people responded with the general sentiment that we should be grateful for what we have.

Q: We heard you say that you are concerned about derelict/unattractive buildings and land. Which approach do you support towards addressing derelict/unattractive buildings and land? (check one)

Enforce property maintenance regulations	69%
Require additional design controls for new buildings	18%
None, current/rules/approaches are fine as-is	16%

Notable comments heard under the ‘other’ category included: support for tax-based measures (e.g. higher property tax for rundown buildings), tear down derelict buildings, make buildings have a Whitehorse / northern character, more funding for heritage properties, more incentives for redevelopment, specific buildings cited as eyesores (e.g. former Dairy Queen), focus on vacancies instead of appearance.

2. High-School Survey

The high-school survey asked students a question about the future of Whitehorse.

Q: How would you like to see Whitehorse grow in the next 20 years?

- Stores and Restaurants
 - fast food options
 - more restaurant options
 - mall
 - more retail options
- Recreation
 - climbing wall
 - kid/teen activity centres
 - gaming recreation (not video games)
 - more entertainment
 - lights and fencing at skate park
 - theme park
 - indoor skate park
 - better movie theater
 - laser tag
 - multi-sport arena
 - higher level competitions
 - sports facility with hardwood floors for volleyball
 - waterslides
- Education
 - Whitehorse specific education system
 - bigger schools
 - more available courses for students
 - more schools available to all students
 - opposition to high schools for specific groups
- Transportation
 - active transportation on White Pass tracks
 - economical transportation
 - wider roads
 - investment in roads/infrastructure
 - mass transit
 - better parking downtown
 - traffic control
 - electric cars
 - more transportation options
 - fix potholes
 - train to BC
 - rapid transit from Marsh Lake

- bus service to country residential areas
- more frequent transit
- Other
 - fix White Pass tracks and use for tourism
 - healthy economy
 - cleanest air in Canada
 - reliable internet
 - less restrictions on Wi-Fi
 - clean and environmentally friendly
 - issues with salvation army
 - diverse community
 - taller buildings
 - plastic free
 - infill to reduce deforestation
 - bear safety
 - forward thinking not reactive
 - bigger more accessible hospital
 - more doctors
 - more housing/population
 - bigger airport
 - free wifi
 - more internet providers
 - bigger downtown
 - retain small city feel
 - municipal recycling pick up
 - ban water bottles and plastic bags



Appendix – Neighbourhood Maps

The following pages contain a compilation of the ideas we heard at the seven neighbourhood mapping workshops that were held. At each workshop there were 2 to 4 different groups of people creating paper maps. In some cases, all of the information could be combined to be presented on one map, found here. In other neighbourhoods, people worked on different scale maps, so multiple maps are needed to portray all of the information.