



OFFICIAL COMMUNITY PLAN

Emerging Directions

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INTRODUCTION

The *Official Community Plan (OCP)* is the City’s highest level planning document, setting the overall growth vision and direction for the community over the next 20 years. The City has completed Phases 1 and 2 of the *OCP* review process, which included extensive community outreach – community input, stakeholder workshops, inter-governmental meetings, Council workshops, etc. Phase 3 is currently underway, i.e. Create the Plan.

Building on the work from Phases 1 and 2, the *Emerging Directions* document focuses on key policy ideas for Whitehorse. The *Emerging Directions* document is set as a precursor to the draft *OCP* and introduces the following big moves within the *OCP*:

- Toward Reconciliation
- Climate Action
- Conservation of Natural Areas
- Strong Downtown and Liveable Neighbourhoods
- Toward a Sustainable Mode Share
- Targeting the Right Supply of Housing
- Intensifying Employment Areas

HOW TO USE THIS DOCUMENT

The objective of this document is to seek community feedback on the major policy moves being considered for the next *OCP*. Based on community feedback on this *Emerging Directions* document, the City will begin drafting the next *OCP* which will be put for further public input and consideration by City Council in 2022.





1. TOWARD RECONCILIATION

1.1 DESCRIPTION OF THE THEME

The City of Whitehorse was established on the traditional territories of the Southern Tutchone and Tagish Kwan peoples of Ta'an Kwäch'än Council and Kwanlin Dün First Nation. These First Nation governments are original signatories to the first *Umbrella Final Agreement*. Ta'an Kwäch'än Council and Kwanlin Dün First Nation signed their final agreements in 2002 and 2005, respectively. They have made significant contributions to the heritage and social, cultural, spiritual and economic wealth enjoyed in Whitehorse. For generations, people of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and Ta'an Kwäch'än Council have lived along the Yukon River and in present-day Whitehorse.

Whitehorse is also home to citizens of many other First Nations as well as Métis and Inuit populations. Yukon Bureau of Statistics estimates that the Indigenous population in the Yukon was 8,591 in 2020. Of this total, 4,867 (56.7%) resided in the Whitehorse area, accounting for 14.7% of the Whitehorse area population.

Strengthening and improving relationships with Indigenous communities and enhancing public awareness of Indigenous history, including the experience of residential schools, has been a long-standing issue across Canada. Moving toward Reconciliation provides a way to help all cultures within our community foster new relationships, heal from the past, and move forward with shared understanding and respect. Planning staff from each government meet regularly to discuss and coordinate planning initiatives.

According to Reconciliation Canada:

“Reconciliation is an opportunity for all Canadians to renew relationships, based on a shared understanding of our histories and our cultures and walk a path together for a shared tomorrow. To ‘reconcile’ is to weave a stronger and more vibrant social fabric, supported by the unique and diverse strengths of Canadians and their communities.”

1.2 ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT APPROACH

In June 2018, the City signed a *Declaration of Commitment* with Kwanlin Dün First Nation and Ta'an Kwäch'än Council. The intent is to find shared projects and generally strengthen the relationship between the three governments. This signed commitment is the first of its kind in the Yukon.

The current *OCP* recognizes the need for positive communication and updates to the *OCP* as KDFN and TKC confirm their intended land use for their lands.

In May 2016, the City released an Action Plan, *Moving Forward Together*, that addresses several of the Truth and Reconciliation Committee's 94 Calls to Action and a subsequent progress update in 2018.

KDFN and TKC are major land owners within Whitehorse. Increased collaboration may allow new opportunities within Whitehorse which can benefit all.

1.3 POLICY DIRECTIONS

- 1.3.1 Continue to acknowledge and foster First Nation's connection to place in Whitehorse.
- 1.3.2 Actively participate with First Nations citizens and all Whitehorse residents in the process of truth and reconciliation.
 - a. Establish reconciliation framework; work in-depth with First Nations peoples in its creation.
 - b. Continue to implement relevant *Calls to Action*.
 - c. Support a meaningful project to recognize residential school history.
- 1.3.3 Strengthen ongoing collaborative relationships with Ta'an Kwäch'än Council and Kwanlin Dün First Nation as set out in the *Declaration of Commitment*.
 - a. Continue to collaborate with Ta'an Kwäch'än Council and Kwanlin Dün First Nation to support each First Nation as they plan and develop their land.
- 1.3.4 Support Ta'an Kwäch'än Council and Kwanlin Dün First Nation as they advance the planning of their lands.

- a. Ensure the *OCP* remains flexible and adaptable in responding to First Nation needs. As planning for First Nation Lands occurs, amendments to the *Official Community Plan* may be identified. The process of a change in land use and the subsequent change in designation is subject to the *Self-Government* and *Final Agreements*.
- 1.3.5 Collaborate with other governments toward reflecting heritage that celebrates First Nations in the Whitehorse region.
- a. Support First Nations with place renaming initiatives.
 - b. Recognize the special importance of the Yukon River for both Ta'an Kwäch'än Council and Kwanlin Dün First Nation and coordinate efforts along the riverfront, as feasible.





2. CLIMATE ACTION

2.1 DESCRIPTION

From disasters to economic inequity, cities around the world are tackling the most pressing issues of our time. Our climate is already changing, both globally and locally. It's affecting our weather, environment, economy and health. Unless significant efforts to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions occur, climate change will have serious and continued impacts on Whitehorse. Community planning and land-use decisions on a local level strongly influence the location and types of buildings where people live, work, and gather. Buildings, infrastructure and transportation are among the largest consumers of fossil fuels and consequently also the largest producers of greenhouse gases (GHG) and other emissions as described in the *City's Corporate Emissions Inventory Update (2020)*.

Adaptation and mitigation must be a part of strategic growth and development processes to help the City be better prepared and more equipped to handle natural and human-made disasters, protect human life, absorb economic, environmental and social impacts. While recent and projected trends in climate change will change the intensity, frequency, variability and duration of our climate patterns, not all impacts will be negative. In some cases (e.g., longer, warmer growing seasons), opportunities may arise.

Wildfire risk in Whitehorse is as high as ever due to several factors. Local topography, weather, and boreal forest influence fire risk. Human factors also contribute to risk: changing climate, minimal woodcutting within and around the city, ongoing fire suppression that inhibits periodic burning and forest succession. In addition to wildfires, the City anticipates a warming climate will influence soil conditions, precipitation rates, and the incidence of extreme events such as flooding. The reliability of the Alaska Highway as a critical link in the territory's food supply chain could be compromised by closures with increased frequency.

2.2 ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT APPROACH

Climate change, and the host of challenges and opportunities it represents for the North is an important matter for the City of Whitehorse. Changes in temperature and precipitation have already resulted in subsequent shifts in landscape conditions and may increase the environmental stresses associated with

variable weather, such as drought, flooding, forest fire, and food and energy security. These issues were recognized by the City of Whitehorse when Council declared a Climate Change Emergency in September 2019. The *Whitehorse Climate Change Adaptation Plan (2011)* developed scenarios describing how climate change may affect the community. The *Sustainability Plan (2015)* encompasses a wide range of values, including a sense of community, high quality of life, nature, leadership, and the contributions of First Nations culture, the arts, and local business. The Plan embodies 12 goals and 41 specific targets that help identify a vision for a well-planned, self-sustaining, innovative community that is resilient to the impacts of climate change.

The decomposition of organic waste in landfills produces a gas which that is composed primarily of methane, a greenhouse gas contributing to climate change. Methane is 21 times more potent than carbon dioxide in terms of its potential impact contribution to climate change. Overall, 32% of waste was diverted from the landfill through local recyclers, composting, and other waste diversion programs in 2020. The City adopted an initial goal of 50% waste diversion from the landfill within the *Solid Waste Action Plan (2013)* and 65% diversion by 2030 within the goal of Zero Waste within the *Sustainability Plan (2015)*. With the building of the new compost facility and by moving away from a linear waste model of produce, consume, dispose and working towards a circular economy model, the City has shifted away from the idea of making a product 'go away' at the landfill to becoming a resource that can be used again by following a 4R hierarchy of rethink, reduce, reuse, and recycle/compost. Ideally, the cycle starts with waste prevention by redirecting and optimizing resources before they are considered waste, as planned in the *Solid Waste Action Plan (2013)*. Within this model, the City of Whitehorse is taking strides to meet our ambitious goal of increased waste diversion.

To contribute to increasing local food production, the City's *Local Food and Urban Agriculture Study (2020)* identifies opportunities to support a robust local food system that is sustainable, resilient, and accessible to all Whitehorse residents. This study builds on targets set out in the City's *Sustainability Plan* goal of Resilient, Accessible Food Systems. Implementing the study's potential actions can help to lead Whitehorse towards a more food-secure future over the next 10 years, and beyond.

The planning, preparation, and adaptation to wildfire is a collaborative and shared responsibility of the City, residents within and outside Whitehorse, risk managers, and decision-makers of various agencies and governments. While the way forward is organizationally and financially challenging, the *Wildfire Risk Reduction Strategy (2020)* aims to move the City of Whitehorse towards four key strategic goals:

- Organizational Preparedness;
- Encouraging and requiring FireSmart Canada principles on private property;
- Removal of forest fuels on public land; and
- Enabling biomass recovery of forest fuel.

While some actions will directly affect risk, many are foundational and set the framework for more measurable risk reduction. It continues to be necessary to take a comprehensive approach to wildfire risk reduction via the implementation of these recommended actions within the strategy, and consider these risks when planning for new development.

A critical relationship exists between land use and transportation to facilitate sustainable mode sharing. Strategic land-use planning can enhance the attractiveness, convenience, and safety of alternative travel modes. New investments in infrastructure and services are being planned to minimize travel distances and expand the mixture of land uses located nearby. Part of this strategy is seen through the implementation of the City's *Sustainability Plan* goal of Efficient, Low-Impact Transportation. With 11,200 new residents expected in the next 20 years, the City aims to increase active transportation and transit mode share by 55% by 2050. The *Transportation Demand Management Plan (2014)* proposes prioritizing specific active transportation routes during winter months and implementing a winter active transportation maintenance program to provide the community with a safe, connected active transportation network in the winter months.



2.3 POLICY DIRECTIONS

- 2.3.1 Develop Sustainability Action Plan and incorporate the City's existing corporate emissions inventory to help achieve the *Sustainability Plan's* corporate and community GHG emission reduction targets.
- a. Create a Community Emissions Inventory to determine levels of community GHG emissions to provide the quantitative information necessary to help decision-making process.
 - b. Seek opportunities to work with government, community and business partners to advance the transition to a low-carbon economy.
- 2.3.2 Develop Sustainability Action Plan to help achieve the *Sustainability Plan's* corporate and community Greenhouse Gas emission reduction targets.
- a. Monitor impacts of climate change on the city in support of mitigation and efforts for adaptation.
- 2.3.3 Support the development of an Accessible, Resilient Food System to reduce GHG emissions through imports and diversify food sources.
- a. Strive to implement the actions identified in the *Local Food and Urban Agriculture Study*, where feasible and in partnership with other organizations.
 - b. Take a comprehensive approach to integrating food and beverage production industries into existing or new commercial and industrial areas in Whitehorse.
 - c. Explore ways to encourage and support the establishment of thematic districts (e.g. 'Commercial Food Hub'), to encourage the 'clustering' of food and beverage production uses and communal processing and retail spaces in targeted areas of Marwell and Downtown.
 - d. Consider allowing agricultural land uses in all designations for local food production.
 - e. Allow for forest to be cleared as fuel breaks; allow agriculture in these areas.
 - f. Review potential agriculture designation expansion areas.
- 2.3.4 Strategically Reduce the Risk of Wildfires.
- a. Work strategically to reduce the risk of wildfire and work collaboratively with other governments to implement the *Wildfire Risk Reduction Strategy*.
- 2.3.5 Establish a Winter City Strategy.
- a. Create a Winter City Strategy and Guidelines for Whitehorse that explores opportunities for winter life, winter design, winter economy, and our winter story.
 - b. Encourage passive and winter city design considerations for lot layout and new developments that enhance urban design of our streets and public places.
- 2.3.6 Support the implementation of efficient low-impact transportation and densification (See *Toward a Sustainable Mode Share* on page 9)



3. TOWARD A SUSTAINABLE MODE SHARE

3.1 DESCRIPTION

A modal shift where a significant portion of Whitehorse residents take alternative modes of transportation over single-occupancy vehicles will improve community connectivity, physical health and reduce greenhouse gases, as well as City infrastructure costs, and household transportation costs.

The location of where we live and work and the services and infrastructure provided to these places directly impact our transportation choices and decisions. In recent years, developments such as Whistle Bend have had improved street design standards to encourage trips within the neighbourhood to be made by alternative modes of transportation. However, suburban areas in Whitehorse have generally seen a disproportionate investment in vehicle infrastructure over other transportation modes such as high-frequency transit service and infrastructure to encourage safe and convenient walking and cycling, particularly connections with other areas of the city.

In recent decades, cities across the globe have evolved their approach to transportation planning by creating more convenient choices to encourage trips via alternative modes. Humans are hardwired to follow the path of least resistance. If a more convenient option is available, it will influence people's choices and increase the likelihood of choosing to take alternative modes of transportation.

3.2 ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT APPROACH

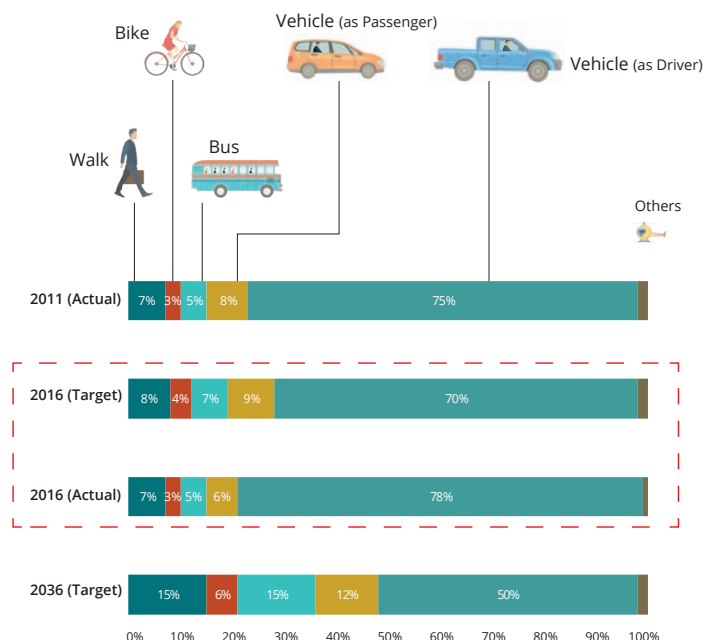
The 2016 census showed that close to 78% of people travelled to work alone in a vehicle. The City recognizes that it will face significant challenges if single-occupant vehicles continue to be the primary travel mode in Whitehorse. To accommodate the anticipated 11,200 new residents by 2040, the share of people travelling by alternative modes needs to shift significantly to alleviate pressure on the City's infrastructure. In 2014, the City created its *Transportation Demand Management Plan*, which identifies the challenges associated with increasing vehicle trips on public assets, personal costs, and greenhouse gas. The Plan aims to improve the efficiency of the transportation network and infrastructure by increasing the modal share of sustainable transportation systems.

The Plan also identifies objectives to improve the efficiency of the transportation network, encourage alternatives to single-occupant vehicle travel, and facilitate behavioural change by

increasing transit ridership, walking, cycling, winter active commuting, and car-pooling, reducing vehicle trips and GHG emissions, and reducing demand for infrastructure associated with vehicle travel.

As the population of Whitehorse increases, it will take an increased number of residents to switch to alternative modes to achieve the mode share targets. The *Whitehorse Sustainability Plan (2015)* includes directions to implement the *Transportation Demand Management Plan*.

In 2018, the City developed the *Bicycle Network Plan*, which aims to increase the number of people cycling as an alternative to driving through its implementation. The City recognizes that more trips made by cycling will result in a more balanced transportation system that supports a healthy and liveable community and is cost-effective and efficient in terms of the community's infrastructure investments. By installing paved paths totalling 33 km throughout the city in 2020, the commuter network across the City provides high-quality, sustainable travel options that encourage those who work or live in the area to make sustainable travel choices.



Transportation mode share: Targets and change over time

The *Downtown Parking Management Plan (2019)* recognizes that there is currently a significant reliance on vehicle parking throughout the city. Collectively, this creates a transportation system that does not fully capitalize on alternative and sustainable travel. The Plan includes a series of short-, medium- and long-term recommendations for parking management in the city.

In 2020, the City embarked on creating a *Transportation Master Plan*. The Plan will provide high-level direction and objectives for transportation over the long-term (20 years) and directions for specific transportation issues over the short- to medium-term (5 to 10 years).

Vision Zero is based on the Safe Systems framework that recognizes that road users make mistakes but seeks to ensure that mistakes do not result in severe injury or fatality. A wide variety of planning and engineering tools are readily available to significantly reduce the probability of collisions resulting in a severe injury or fatality.

3.3 POLICY DIRECTIONS

- 3.3.1 Prioritize decisions that reduce travel distances, move toward zero traffic-related severe injuries and fatalities, and facilitate a modal shift towards active transportation and transit.
- a. Place people first. Promote a more people-centric street design that is friendly towards pedestrians, cyclists and other non-motorized users.
 - b. Prioritize transportation investments to support and enable an increase in active transportation and transit mode share by 2040. Work to:
 - i Increase the share of commuting trips by active transportation (e.g. walking or cycling) to 21%
 - ii Increase the share of people travelling to work by transit to 15%
 - iii Decrease the share of people driving to work by 25% and increase the share of people travelling in a private vehicle as a passenger to 12%
 - c. Review the transportation network for areas that experience higher road safety risk and prioritize road safety improvements. Where possible, seek to combine road safety improvements with other existing capital projects.
 - d. Strengthen connections within and between neighbourhoods to provide direct access to shops and services, amenities, jobs and transit, while accommodating goods movement and emergency services needs.

- 3.3.2 Establish an overall transportation framework that strategically guides decisions that lead toward a safe, sustainable and equitable and efficient transportation system for moving people and goods.
- a. Ensure the land use goals and objectives of the City's *Transportation Master Plan* are aligned with the objectives of the *OCP*.
 - b. Promote diversification of land uses as a method to improve the transportation system and create 'complete neighbourhood's' that provide access to core neighbourhood services and amenities (See 5. Strong Downtown and Liveable Neighbourhoods on page 12).
 - c. Intensify land uses in strategic locations to support and encourage transit ridership, improve convenience for transit users and encourage a higher percentage of people making trips by transit.
- 3.3.3 Encourage the efficient use of parking resources and reduced parking demand while enhancing the livability and vitality of the downtown core.
- a. In areas with convenient transit service, consider relaxing parking requirements in new developments that achieve housing, job space, sustainability and transportation objectives.
 - b. Consider permitting cash-in-lieu for parking relaxations, city-wide, where commercial uses have on-street parking available and improved public space objectives are achieved.

Did you know?

290 km

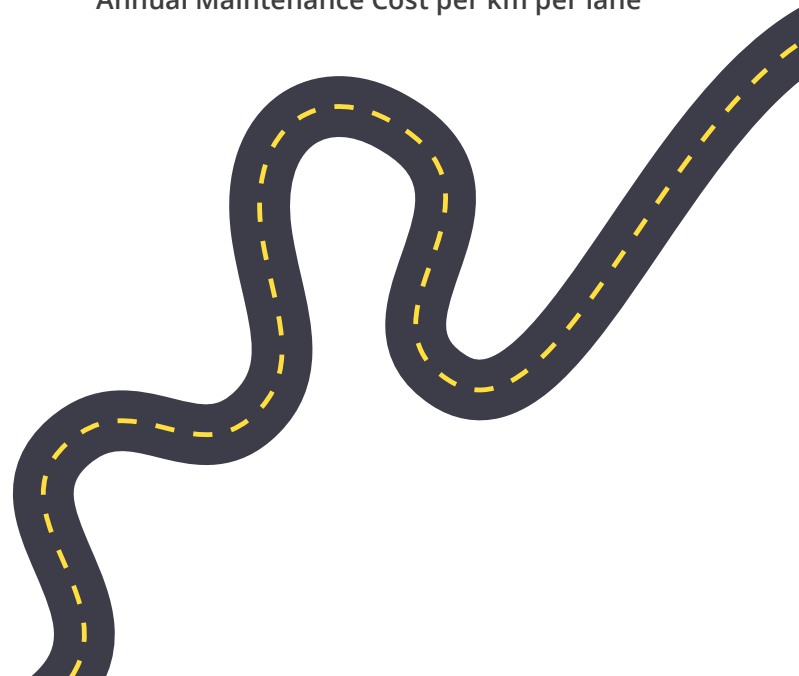
Total length of municipal road network

600 km

Total lane kilometres

\$15,000

Annual Maintenance Cost per km per lane





4. CONSERVATION OF NATURAL AREAS

4.1 DESCRIPTION

Whitehorse is within the Yukon River corridor. Eighteen notable creeks feed into the Yukon River within City limits, and the Takhini River forms part of the City's northern boundary. Whitehorse is 41,900 hectares in size, of which more than half is a natural area. Prominent mountains within Whitehorse include Mount McIntyre, Canyon 'Grey' Mountain, and Golden Horn Mountain. Whitehorse has five regional parks: Chadburn Lake Park, McIntyre Creek Park, Wolf Creek Park, McLean Lake Park, and Paddy's Pond/Ice Lake Park. These comprise just over 30% of the total City area.

4.2 ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT APPROACH

The City's *Sustainability Plan (2015)* states that protecting and enhancing the environment for its intrinsic value is important to a high quality of life for residents. A healthy environment provides ecological services (e.g. clean water, air, soil, and a stable climate) and economic benefits (e.g. recreational activities, tourism). The Plan includes targets to maintain current wilderness areas and retain or increase the size of regional parks (currently 12,655 hectares).

In 2014, the City adopted the *Regional Parks Plan* to set a 10-year vision and planning framework for the City's park system. The Plan identifies four overarching goals for regional parks to:

- Promote environmental health
- Promote outdoor recreation for human health and wellness
- Support community stewardship, education, and partnerships
- Improve accountability, planning, and management

In 2017, Council adopted the *Chadburn Lake Park Management Plan*, which identifies the park's significant role in protecting wildlife species and habitat and recreational activities and sets out a broad, long-term vision and management framework.

The *Parks and Recreation Master Plan (2018)* intends to set out a 10-year blueprint for the City by establishing commitments and priorities for parks and recreation service delivery, infrastructure and programming. The plan guides decision-making regarding parks and recreation. In addition to this work, the *Trail Plan (2020)* identifies strategic priorities to direct future initiatives, policies and actions over the next ten years for the City's approximately 233 km of mapped trails.

4.3 POLICY DIRECTIONS

- 4.3.1 Protect and promote a large percentage of the land base in Whitehorse as natural areas for conservation, recreation, and as a key component of our identity.
- a. Remove 'Designated Development Area' designation from the McIntyre Creek area (also referred to as Porter Creek "D"). Explore a new designation that recognizes the environmental and cultural importance of the area, along with other values. (See *Toward Reconciliation* section). Engage with Government of Yukon, affected First Nations, and Yukon University to establish McIntyre Creek Park, building on the conceptual park referenced in the 2010 *OCP*, and consider the social, cultural, ecological and economic impacts of potential transportation connections through the area.
 - b. Maintain a network of green connections.
 - c. Protect the integrity of ecosystems and biodiversity within Park areas.
 - d. As part of regional planning, examine opportunities for expansion of Regional Parks beyond City boundaries.
- 4.3.2 Ensure no new conversion of greenfield to country-residential areas on public land are permitted.



5. STRONG DOWNTOWN AND LIVEABLE NEIGHBOURHOODS

5.1 DESCRIPTION

A strong Downtown will deliver significant economic and community impacts across the city and region. Generally, the Downtown has an essential and unique role in economic and social development, creating a critical mass of activities where commercial, cultural, and civic activities are concentrated. This concentration facilitates business, learning, and cultural exchange.

The concept of a liveable neighbourhood is centred on meeting the basic needs of all residents within the neighbourhood. It should feature a range of housing options and core shops, services and recreation opportunities, cultural and childcare facilities in a comfortable walking distance to each other. A liveable neighbourhood should be well-connected and accessible by streets, pathways, parks and plazas, convenient for people walking, rolling and cycling, and accessing transit to key destinations – whether it's work, school, healthcare, a wander along on the river, or an evening with friends' Downtown.

5.2 ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT APPROACH: DOWNTOWN

Whitehorse is the economic and commercial hub of the Yukon. It contains a diverse range of urban elements and land uses. At just over 200 hectares, Downtown Whitehorse has an estimated 6,500 people working and over 3,000 people living within this area. Downtown has strategically been the focus of commercial investment. This central cluster has grown into a critical mass of regional attraction drawing power that supports businesses and services of all sizes. It should not be underestimated that this strategy to intensify Downtown Whitehorse, which has become a critical factor in achieving the successful identity that Whitehorse has today. Many small- to medium-sized municipalities across North America have been irreparably damaged by a lack of forethought in the planning, resulting in a corridor approach of highway-oriented development.

Whitehorse has mostly concentrated its retail and eating and drinking establishments downtown and in core neighbourhood locations, limiting the amount of new growth of these uses along the Alaska Highway.

Over the past ten years, Downtown Whitehorse has attracted many new commercial and residential developments. More than 380 homes have been issued development permits in Downtown from 2016 to 2020 alone (21% of total). This growth in the downtown population has resulted in more people living closer to where they work, the services they need regularly and supporting Downtown businesses. The opportunity to live in a

well-connected and serviced Downtown has reduced the need to use a vehicle for short trips and generated a more vibrant Downtown through pedestrian activity and public life.

In 2018, the City created the *Downtown Plan* to inform the *Official Community Plan*. The Plan has a 10-year horizon and provides an action-oriented strategy and vision for a vibrant and healthy Downtown.

Completed in 2015, the *Community Economic Development Strategy* responded to a need to participate in actively promoting economic development efforts for the sustained and continued growth of our population and economy.

The *Whitehorse Sustainability Plan* identifies a target to increase the number of people living in Whitehorse's most established neighbourhoods as a means of remaining compact and creating full-service neighbourhoods. A vibrant, mixed-use Downtown encourages active transportation, local businesses, civic pride, and tourism.

5.3 ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT APPROACH: NEIGHBOURHOODS

As Whitehorse has grown, it has historically accommodated population growth through new greenfield development by creating large areas for new housing. These suburbs have provided those who can afford it an opportunity for larger private lots with new homes and new infrastructure.

Although there are many benefits to this style of suburban lifestyle, suburban development commonly results in issues and challenges for residents and the City due to the significant amount of new land area and costs associated with accommodating the future growth. Issues and challenges include:

- the increasing difficulty in paying for new or maintaining existing roads, sewers and other public infrastructure;
- the rising cost of servicing land for new development;
- increased congestion on major roads connecting to new development areas; and
- limited reinvestment in older neighbourhoods.

Different forms of growth, such as greenfield, minor infill and major infill, have different impacts on City revenues, operating costs and capital costs. Increasing residential density increases the cost-effectiveness of providing roads, infrastructure, community facilities and social programs. It also increases the number of people who can contribute to the success of local neighbourhood stores and services.

As growth occurs, the need to provide capital infrastructure (facilities, land, vehicles and equipment, etc.) for a municipality's wide range of services generally increases. Several factors influence the amount of capital investment required. Typically, the amount, type and location of development are important in determining the nature of and the amount of capital investment needed. It is also important to remember that the City must fund the maintenance and replacement of the ageing existing infrastructure through property taxes, utility rates and external funding when available. The City plays an important role in influencing the pattern of growth through thoughtful urban planning and encouraging a range of choices for residents. Accordingly, to ensure strategic and sustainable development, the City must consider these objectives during future planning processes.

An important feature of liveable neighbourhoods is convenient access to services and amenities - retail facilities, grocery stores, parks and open spaces, schools, transit, etc. These services also require a critical mass of people within close proximity to make them viable. Encouraging mixed-income housing in close proximity creates opportunity to attract potential workers. The existing zoning in most neighbourhoods generally forbids most commercial uses, and past experiences indicate that commercial uses in low-density neighbourhoods are not successful as there aren't enough people close by to support these businesses. Some commercial services have been able to operate in neighbourhood commercial areas. These businesses have many homes within short walking distance; however, their success relies on a much larger customer catchment area that often requires the use of a vehicle.

5.4 POLICY DIRECTIONS: CITY-WIDE DEVELOPMENT

- 5.4.1 Pursue a compact development pattern that focuses higher density residential growth within strategic locations.
- Establish an Urban Core that permits higher density development generally within a 10-minute walk or bike ride of Downtown (See 5.7 Urban Core on page 14).
 - Establish Urban Centres in Whistle Bend, Takhini and McIntyre/Tank Farm that encourage each area to have the densest populations of any non-Downtown location.
 - Establish and encourage higher residential density on land adjacent to transit routes and within an approximately ten-minute walk of Urban and Neighbourhood Centres.
 - Support higher residential density on sites adjacent to transit routes and within an approximate 10-minute walk (800m) of Urban and Neighbourhood Centres.

5.5 POLICY DIRECTIONS: STRONG DOWNTOWN

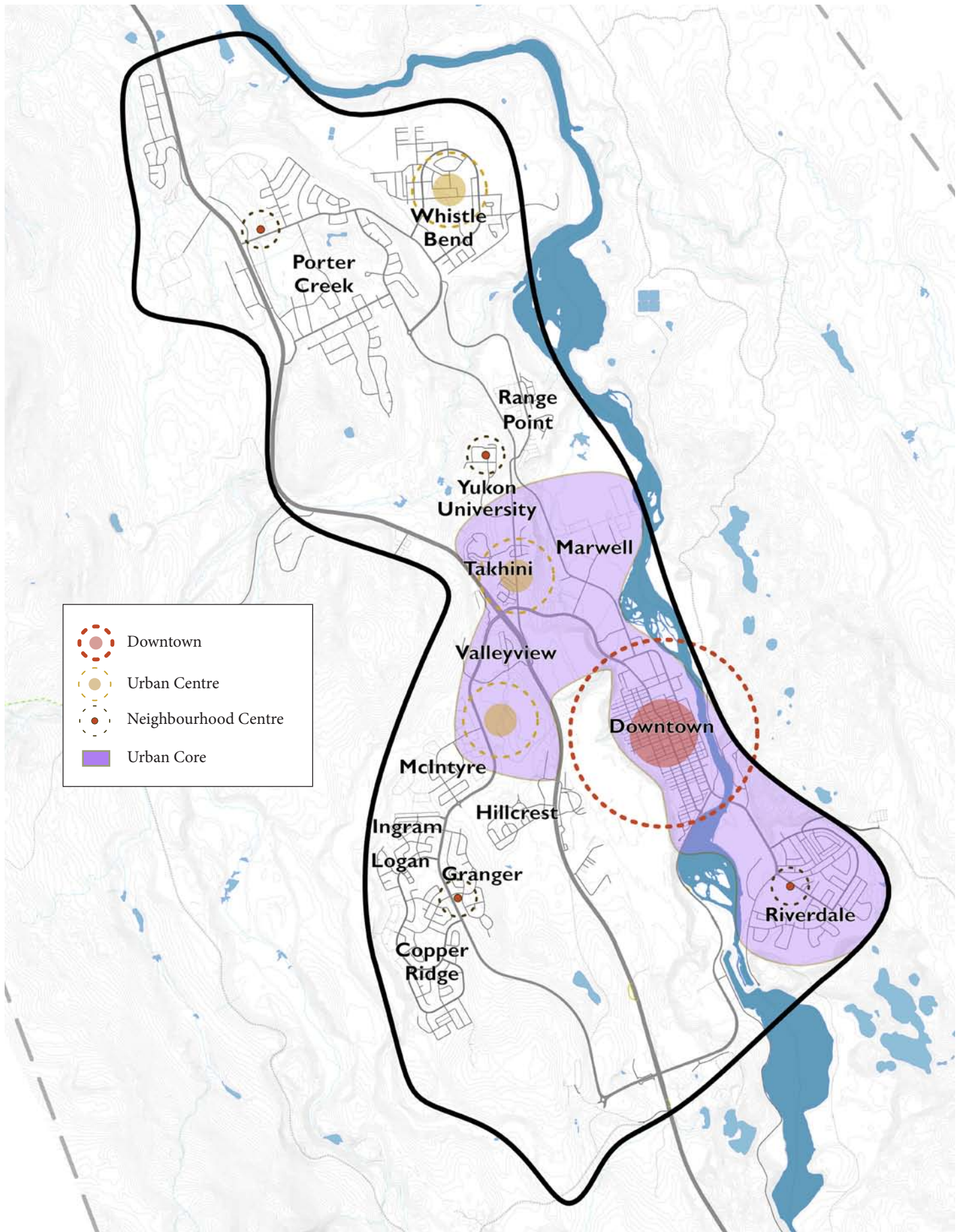
- 5.5.1 Support Downtown businesses, amenities and services by establishing an Urban Core boundary that focuses on new residential and commercial development within an approximately 10-minute bike ride (approximately 2.5 km) of Downtown.

- 5.5.2 Keep Downtown vital by continuing to encourage a broad mix of uses, including additional residential developments.
- Retain Downtown's focus as the primary employment and cultural area for the city and region by directing major office development and cultural facilities primarily into the Downtown.
 - Review policies and regulations to facilitate an increase to the number of people living Downtown to ensure a critical mass of people living and working in the area to support a thriving downtown.
- 5.5.3 Review Downtown height limits to support a strong and vibrant Downtown.
- Consider strategic floor area and building height increases to incentivize the delivery of City objectives while ensuring the Downtown experience is improved overall.
- 5.5.4 Reinforce Main Street district as a central destination in Whitehorse that is welcoming and comfortable for people of all backgrounds, ages and abilities.
- Retain Main Street as Downtown's primary retail high street and ensure a vibrant mix of retail, office, entertainment, arts, cultural and institutional uses, supported by a range of programming efforts.
 - Enhance Main Street as a vibrant commercial village with a continuous row of small, engaging storefronts, low building heights, significant public realm and gathering spaces.
- 5.5.5 Collaborate with landowners to undertake development planning for large, underutilized sites in the Downtown (e.g. Municipal Services Building, Fifth Avenue and Rogers Street etc.) to deliver on City objectives.

5.6 POLICY DIRECTIONS: LIVEABLE NEIGHBOURHOODS

- 5.6.1 Establish an urban structure that optimizes transportation networks, intensifies land uses and creates opportunities for new jobs and homes in vibrant nodes of development that complements a strong downtown.
- Urban Centres – to be the most densely populated areas outside of the Downtown.
 - Support transit investment and the viability of new neighbourhood-serving commercial uses, by establishing three Urban Centres with additional homes and retail and service, including minor office above the ground floor.
 - Neighbourhood Centres
 - Establish four neighbourhood Centres to support additional commercial and transit services and encourage additional homes within a 5-minute walk of these areas
 - Support higher residential density on sites adjacent to transit routes and within an approximate 10-minute walk (800m) of Urban and Neighbourhood Centres.

5.7 URBAN CORE



6. TARGETING THE RIGHT SUPPLY OF HOUSING

6.1 DESCRIPTION

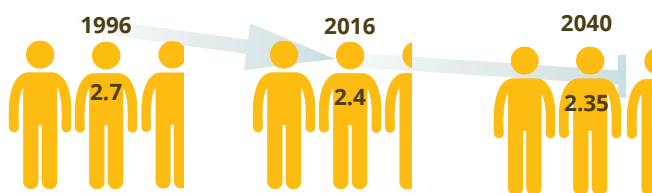
In 2019, Canada recognized housing as a human right within Canadian legislation through the *National Housing Strategy Act*. The Act states that housing is essential to the inherent dignity and well-being of the person and building sustainable and inclusive communities and a strong economy.

Whitehorse is facing significant challenges at all points along the housing continuum. The housing continuum consists of a range of housing options available to households of all income levels, extending from emergency shelter and housing for the homeless to market homeownership and rental housing.

Whitehorse, like most communities, has a diverse range of housing needs. These housing needs result from a broad range of household types and situations. The population of Whitehorse is expected to grow by approximately 11,200 people, to a total population of approximately 40,000 people by 2040. The Yukon Bureau of Statistics estimates that the average household size in Whitehorse is 2.4 people per household today and will reduce to 2.35 people per household by 2040.

Using the estimated average household size, we can assume that at a high level there is a need for an additional 6,400 homes in Whitehorse by 2040. This estimate considers:

- a 25% contingency for population fluctuations between 2020-2030,
- that usual residents are not occupying approximately 5% of dwellings, as indicated in the 2016 Census findings for Whitehorse, and
- the existing housing lag, which is the shortfall between units needed based on population growth versus actual units built based on housing completions data from CMHC.



Average Household Size (Yukon Bureau of Statistics, 2021)

6.2 ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT APPROACH

The City's role includes the planning and site regulation through the *Official Community Plan* and *Zoning By-law*. Land development is completed through collaboration with Government of Yukon. Through the *Land Protocol Agreement* (2006) guidance, the City works closely with the Government of Yukon to ensure the tools and resources required are available to ensure the delivery of these homes is achievable. Government of Yukon is responsible for the construction of most large scale subdivisions within the City. New government-led neighbourhood developments, such as Whistle Bend, take approximately 8-10 years to fruition from initial planning. These types of new development require significant amounts of planning and capital investment.

In 2020, the City received a record number of development permit applications for new homes within a calendar year. More than 500 residential units were approved, with 400 of these as new multi-unit style dwellings. Developments in Whistle Bend and Downtown accounted for 45% and 22% of new homes permitted, respectfully.

The *Housing Action Plan for Yukon 2015-2025*, is structured around Yukon's three housing system pillars – Housing with Services, Rental Housing, and Home Ownership. The Plan sets a course of action designed to guide governments and stakeholders towards a shared vision of stable, healthy, housed Yukoners in 2025. The City of Whitehorse contributes to the Implementation Committee, which aims to oversee plan implementation and provide advice, solutions, and recommendations to senior government officials on territorial housing issues.

In 2020, the City adopted an updated *Housing Development Incentives Policy* that aligns with municipal priorities and goals by targeting assistance to residential projects that either:

- Address gaps in the housing continuum; or
- Increase development in targeted locations.

The policy unlocks tools to provide financial incentives for residential developments that provide rental or supportive housing, small, high-density residential units and residential units near community services such as schools, parks and commercial centers.

Generally, the construction of new homes in Whitehorse has primarily been delivered through private development. The City can leverage private development to help meet the housing needs of the community.

In 2020, 143 projects were approved under the Development Incentives Policy, resulting in 158 residential units. These units include:

- 34 garden/living suites; and
- 121 rental/supportive housing units

CMHC reported 3,072 homes were completed in Whitehorse between 2006 and 2020. Of these new homes, 40% were single detached, 28% were row houses, 22% were apartments, and 11% of new homes constructed were semi-detached housing forms.

6.3 GROWTH STRATEGY

To accommodate the 11,200 new people expected in Whitehorse by 2040, the City proposes a growth strategy that prioritizes the delivery of new homes within existing neighbourhoods and an Urban Core within proximity of the Downtown.

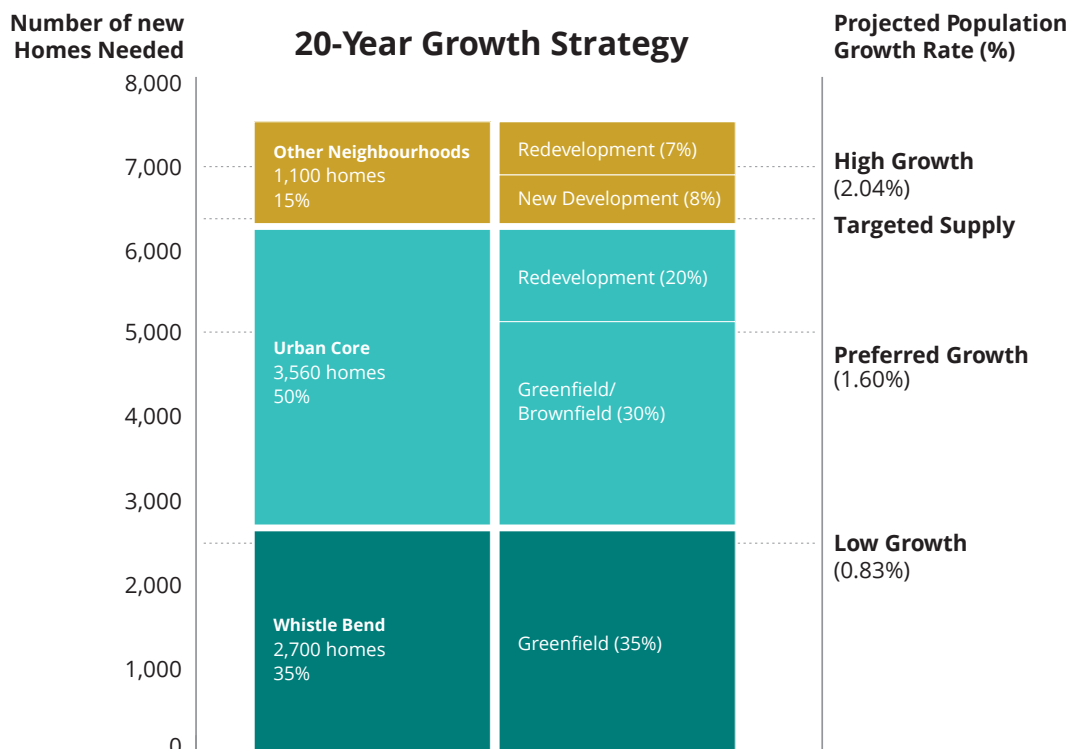
The City expects that the build-out of the remaining areas in Whistle Bend will supply 35% of the new homes needed by 2040. New development areas such as the Tank Farm and redevelopment opportunities within the Urban Core can accommodate an additional 50% of dwellings required to accommodate a growing population. It is expected that the existing neighbourhood areas of Whitehorse can accommodate the balance of new homes needed through infill projects that are already planned for and redevelopment opportunities.

Greenfield Development involves the creation of planned communities on previously undeveloped land. These areas require significant planning and capital infrastructure investment to service the area (e.g. the remaining future areas of Whistle Bend neighbourhood).

Brownfield Development is on any previously developed land that is not currently in use that may be potentially contaminated (e.g. the area referred to as 'Tank Farm')

New Development is located on vacant sites within existing neighbourhoods.

Redevelopment opportunities exist where existing sites are vacant or underutilized and redeveloped to include an increased number of homes on the site today.



The growth strategy builds upon what we heard from the community through previous rounds of engagement – i.e. preserve the City’s green areas for as long as possible. It also allows for opportunities on First Nations and private land where the government is not inadvertently competing with these interests. Many of the parcels are centrally located and would allow for a reduced commuting time, limiting the increase of community greenhouse gas fueled by growth.

Acknowledging that planning for a new government-led greenfield neighbourhood is expected to take 8 to 10 years, the City, in collaboration with Government of Yukon, will also advance the planning of the area South of Copper Ridge as a contingency to its growth strategy. It is recognized that such planning will need to involve KDFN, a major land owner in the area.

6.4 POLICY DIRECTIONS

6.4.1 Identify housing needs of residents and facilitate the development of a broad range of housing that addresses these needs.

- a. Support the implementation of the *Housing Action Plan for Yukon (2015-2025)*.
- b. Ensure the delivery of the right supply of housing to meet Whitehorse residents’ needs. Work with Housing Partners to undertake a Housing Needs Assessment for Whitehorse and update the assessment every five years to ensure the data and results best represent the current situation in Whitehorse.
- c. Consider new initiatives to deliver on City housing objectives by encouraging private development that includes market, non-market and supportive housing.
- d. Explore opportunities for new municipal tools to encourage more attainable housing across the housing continuum.

6.4.2 Follow a Growth Management Strategy that allows for 6,500 new homes for the projected 11,200 new people residing in Whitehorse by 2040.

- a. The Growth Management Strategy will include the following components:
 - i Completion of development within the Whistle Bend neighbourhood; and
 - ii New and redevelopment opportunities with a focus on the Urban Core, and to a lesser extent, other neighbourhoods (See 5.7 Urban Core on page 14).
- b. For new residential areas in the Urban Core, ensure a minimum density of 20 homes per hectare, on average.
- c. As a contingency, create a new master plan for area south of Copper Ridge and continue to monitor population growth and status of other developments to determine if and when it is needed to be developed.
- d. Reserve the area north of Long Lake for future development.

6.4.3 Continue to work with partners to undertake actions that increase the number of secured rental housing units.

- a. Identify and consider barriers to the development of secured rental units, including the consideration of impacts of short-term rentals.

6.4.4 Research and make recommendations regarding alternative land tenure and ownership options.

6.4.5 Develop more flexible zoning that allows a greater variety of housing types and forms.

- a. Review and update regulations to allow smaller housing styles.
- b. Encourage a range of accessible housing options and continue to promote the construction of accessible housing, including ground-floor single level units.

6.4.6 Support First Nations, Government of Yukon and private development initiatives through coordinated efforts and master planning processes for future growth.

6.4.7 Require master planning for greenfield/brownfield residential sites to ensure coordinated planning approach and a minimum of 20 homes per hectare, on average.

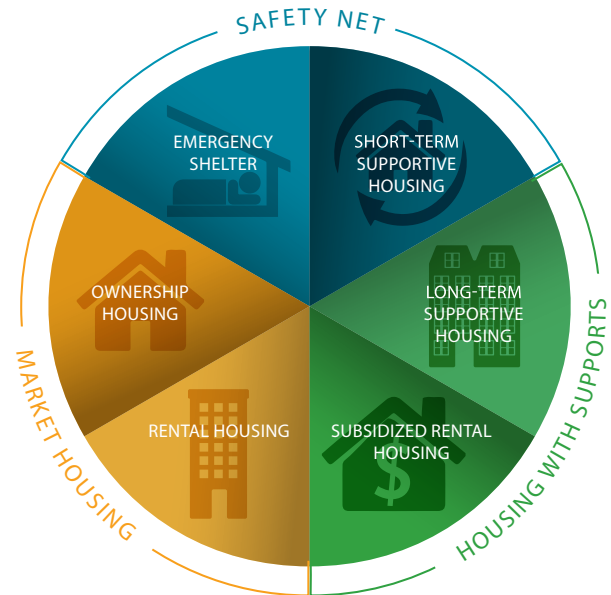
	Population Growth	Homes Needed	Annual Growth
2020 - 2030	5,900	2,750	1.8%
2030 - 2040	5,300	2,200	1.4%
Contingency		700	
Unoccupied Dwellings		300	
Supply Lag		450	
Total	11,200	6,500	1.6%

Includes an additional 25% contingency from 2020-2030, anticipated vacancy and existing supply shortage

Population and Household Growth

HOUSING CONTINUUM

In its most simple definition, the housing continuum is the range of housing available in a community. The term isn't intended to imply progression towards homeownership – it simply represents the full range of options that match people's needs and preferences with appropriate forms of housing and supports (if needed). Severe illness, loss of a partner, retirement, income changes, established savings, and evictions are examples of sudden lifestyle changes that can impact a person's housing needs, and their need to find suitable housing somewhere within the housing continuum.

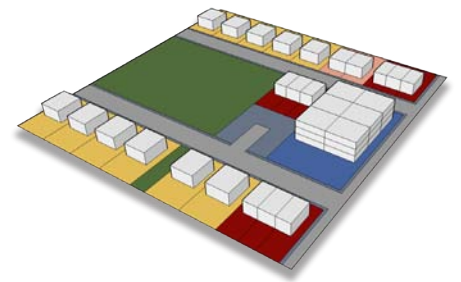
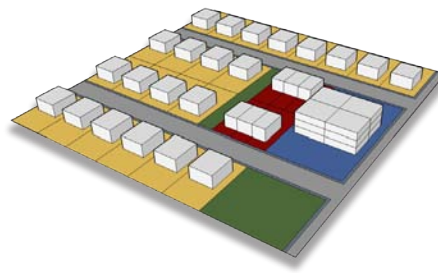
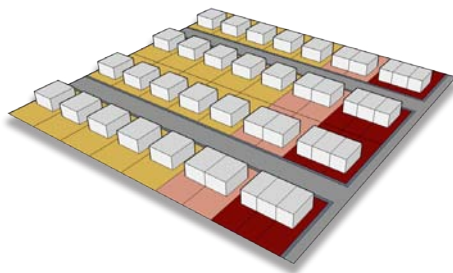


Wheelhouse variant of the Housing Continuum, CMHC, 2019

HOUSING DENSITY

The amount of housing within a defined area determines the ratio or density of homes. The three examples below show alternate configurations of residential development that achieve the same density of 20 units per hectare. Each configuration achieves a different mix of open space and housing types.

By requiring a minimum number of homes per hectare, we can ensure that the number of homes being supplied will meet the needs of a growing population, while allowing flexibility of each development to achieve a mix of housing needs and market demand.



EXAMPLE ONE

Area	2 ha
Single-detached	20
Semi-detached	6
Townhouse	12
Apartments	0
Parks/Open Space	0 ha
Total Units	40
Density	20 homes/ha

EXAMPLE TWO

Area	2 ha
Single-detached	22
Semi-detached	0
Townhouse	6
Apartments	12
Parks/Open Space	0.14 ha
Total Units	40
Density	20 homes/ha

EXAMPLE THREE

Area	2 ha
Single-detached	11
Semi-detached	2
Townhouse	9
Apartments	18
Parks/Open Space	0.46 ha
Total Units	40
Density	20 homes/ha



7. INTENSIFYING EMPLOYMENT AREAS

7.1 DESCRIPTION

Whitehorse is a growing city and the economic hub of the Yukon. A healthy local economy relies on an appropriate mix of employment space available to support growth in key business sectors and related employment levels and local spending. Retail, office, hotel and industrial spaces that support economic activities as well as land uses not traditionally sited within Downtown areas are a vital part of this mix.

7.2 ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT APPROACH

The City is engaged in economic development planning to improve the economic future and quality of life of its diverse residents. City policies need to be resilient to a range of external forces, build on existing strengths while also ensuring opportunities for growth in a broad range of economic sectors to match local needs and abilities. The City's *Community Economic Development Strategy (2015)* outlined the vision, mission, principles and goals for economic development in Whitehorse and provided the City with a work plan through to 2020. An updated *Economic Development Strategy* is needed to direct the next series of work.

The City needs to understand Whitehorse's capacity to accommodate its potential for future employment growth. To gain this understanding, the City needs to determine what exists today, what was recently constructed, market trends, and what could be built within City policy. The City's *Downtown Retail and Entertainment Strategy (2016)* identified the change in retail, service and office floor area since 2006, the current mix and projected capacity of key employment categories to 2026. It also summarized the inventory of the Arts and Entertainment sector in Whitehorse. Further to this work, the *Commercial and Industrial Land Study (2020)*:

- Assessed existing and future demand for commercial and industrial land within the city (excluding Downtown) through to 2040; and
- Identified options and alternatives to meet future demand with supply (i.e. policy and land use prescriptions).

7.3 POLICY DIRECTIONS

- 7.3.1 Support a low-carbon, inclusive and resilient economy for its residents, entrepreneurs and businesses.
- a. Create an updated *Community Economic Development Strategy* that clarifies the City's role, informs decision-making and outlines how the City aligns with and supports broader territorial economic development objectives.
 - b. Review the City's role in the tourism industry
 - c. Seek opportunities to work with government, community and business partners to advance the transition to a low-carbon economy.
 - d. Ensure economic diversity within Whitehorse, which recognizes the city as a year-round destination that results in the attraction of people to visit, live, work and play.
- 7.3.2 Ensure there is sufficient retail, office and industrial space available to accommodate job growth over the next 20 years.
- a. Work with partners to undertake a city-wide Jobs and Economy study to determine the economic needs and trends to plan for existing and future employment needs and economic conditions in the city.
 - b. Encourage intensification of underutilized land in existing areas.
 - c. Prepare an Alaska Highway land use corridor plan to determine the needs of commercial land uses along the Alaska Highway.
 - d. Continue to implement the Downtown and Marwell Plans.
- 7.3.3 Require master planning on future commercial and industrial development areas to ensure a coordinated planning approach.

