



Looking into a future for Downtown Whitehorse

Whitehorse is at the cusp of growth. This is a perfect time to look at the future of walking for people who are downtown. Many projects are happening for downtown. I want to ensure *recreational walking* is at the table.

- Pre-feasibility assessment in the NE Urban Containment Boundary (UCBN) expansion (Long Lake - Croucher Ck.)
- Robert Service Way (RSW) Area Plan (Ear Lake, airport south, RS Campground, Yukon River)
- Downtown – Marwell Land Use plans.
- Downtown Action Plan with a list of Top Actions.
- Airport Plan Update (APU)
- Downtown South Plan (DSP)
- Proposal for quarry beside Miles Canyon

“For the downtown to evolve beyond nine to five, (where workers arrive in the morning and leave at the end of the workday) more people need to live downtown. Without more residents, some businesses may not risk locating to downtown Whitehorse.”

Downtown Development Incentives
Assessment

In Hillcrest, I love that I can step out my door and walk in the woods, without driving. I like variety, longer hikes.

A good test for our wilderness city is whether we need to drive to get to our daily recreational walk in the woods. When we think healthy lifestyles and walkability, we mustn't only think of active transportation, wider sidewalks and snow removal, paved paths and street calming.

Clearly known walking routes from Downtown to the Canada Games Centre or the College – Arts Centre can make us more of a walking community. These active transportation routes are quite important for urban cyclists going to work, to school.

However, my focus is more on neighbourhood walking, recreational walking, in particular, connectivity to forests, to nature. Obviously, this is also very desirable for cyclists. In our modern busy world, family friendly walks can allow parents to re-introduce nature into children's lives — and vice versa!

Recreational walking is important for today's and future downtown residents, as well as those workers with a daytime break who seek daily exercise in nature. Often for walkers, the journey is as important as the destination. Whitehorse is a dream place to live, and lifestyles with close connections to nature can benefit some employment sectors, such as the knowledge sector.

A downtown question: Have you ever been at the wharf after an evening event, and watched the evening sunlight on the high clay cliffs across the river? Did you wish that you could easily cross over and walk the hills, go to Long Lake?

An exciting waterfront opportunity is to build a pedestrian bridge from downtown to the hospital, accessing the Long Lake, Magnusson and Grey Mountain trail network.

In winter, one could shelter from the biting winds along the waterfront by crossing to the forest trails on the east side.

As the Rotary Centennial Bridge did for the Millennium Trail, a downtown footbridge will not only be an iconic landmark, it will create foot traffic for Main Street and the waterfront from both locals and visitors. Could it make an artistic statement?

*“Top day activity while in Whitehorse:
Nature walk or hike.*

*“Enabler of longer visits: More events;
Less expensive overall; More activities;
More attractions open; Significant portion
of visitors indicated willingness to come
more often, spend more, stay longer
and recommend city more proactively
if additional day product and better
marketing were in place.”*

Tourism and Visitor Development
in Downtown Whitehorse

What else can we do? Designating a city-wide *Yukon River Trail* (YRT) on both sides of the river and then working to connect the many existing pieces will be popular.

Another priority will be to waymark our main trails, to the level that both residents

and visitors stay happily, confidently, not lost. Signage need not dominate the views.

More use of 'easier routes' to avoid trail conflicts, address needs of seniors and others with joint issues and, especially, to make trail surface sustainable. This will also allow many more loop walk possibilities for more people, such as family groups.

Finally, designating the Hepburn Tramway as a Historical Walk, connecting the Millennium Trail to Miles Canyon as part of the Yukon River Trail will firmly establish us as a walking destination.

Downtown residents are well-placed to be stewards of the trails on the East side of the river. Downtown, in conjunction with Riverdale and area schools, could work as a solid Yukon River East Trail Stewardship group. Could we develop more youth trail work groups like the Youth Achievement Centre?

Walking is easily the most common form of exercise. The city has spent a lot of energy building a major trail system across the river, a perfect walking destination. A pedestrian bridge can ensure these nature trails are solidly connected to Downtown.

Peter Long, *WhitehorseWalks.com*, April 21,
2017

UPDATE: May 17. I've expanded coverage a bit to be able to include Canyon City and American Laundry, the upstream terminuses of our two tramways!

NOTE: This is an actively updated map. To allow updating I must renumber points to keep them in order geographically.

Loop walking trails: http://www.whitehorsewalks.com/_loops/LoopWalkingTrails.html

Active elder hikes: http://www.whitehorsewalks.com/_loops/ElderActiveWalkingLoops.html

Hepburn Tramway: http://www.whitehorsewalks.com/_walkingIdeas/HepburnTramway.html

Downtown walking ideas: http://www.whitehorsewalks.com/_walkingIdeas/DowntownMarwellWalking.html

Proposal for quarry beside Miles Canyon:
http://www.whitehorsewalks.com/_docs/2017/BuildingAquarryatMilesCanyon.pdf

Coloured numbers on overview map show places that present opportunities to make walking better. Essentially, I try to incorporate the Trail Plan's vision, in conjunction with the vision of a walking community – walking destination.

DOWNTOWN

- 1:** Build a pedestrian bridge (with character) from downtown to hospital — connect with broad network of trails.
- 2:** Try making 2nd & Main a scramble pedestrian crossing (traffic, then all pedestrians take turns.)
- 3:** Downtown South Plan (*DSP*) speaks to many walking opportunities.
- 4:** *DSP* suggests an eventual entrance to 6th, and connection to Millennium Trail.
- 5:** *DSP* calls for creating and paving south end of Lower Escarpment Trail (*LET*).
- 6:** *DSP* calls for staircase up to airport escarpment.
- 7:** Help! Paved connector to staircase gets very slippery with ice in spring and small rocks at other times. Reroute? Railing?
- 8:** Discourage people cutting across the neat switchback trail and ruining community work.
- 9:** Identify and pave north end of *LET* to Downtown Urban Gardens.
- 10:** Create a Spook Creek trail to connect Waterfront Trail to *LET*.
- 11:** Pave section of Waterfront Trail.
- 12:** Extend Waterfront Trail thru Marwell to Marwell Wetlands, then connecting to Whistlebend, all as Yukon River Trail (*YRT*).
- 13:** Facilitate connector trail across Marwell to Mountainview Dr. connecting to college.
- 14:** Make nicer connection from Marwell up to behind arena.

AIRPORT, ABOVE AIRPORT

- 1:** Airport Escarpment Trail falling off edge; Airport Plan Update (*APU*) must move fence over.
- 2:** Is large concrete slab kid safe (*APU* or city)?
- 3:** Proposed paved path to proposed staircase.
- 4:** Examine feasibility of a switchback down to Spook Creek.
- 5:** Can a staircase/switchback go up to new City Operations Bldg.?
- 6:** Ensure that scenic loop trail around operations building property is salvaged from project.
- 7:** Ensure pedestrian access to new City Operations Bldg.
- 8:** Ensure pedestrian access to new City Operations Bldg.
- 9:** Need safe pedestrian crossing to Valleyview, above-the-airport and Canada Games Centre.
- 10:** Need safe pedestrian crossings to hotels, restaurants, Hillcrest and above-the-airport neighbourhoods.
- 11:** Need safe pedestrian crossing to weigh scales, rock gardens and above-the-airport trails.

- Pre-feasibility assessment in the Northeast Urban Containment Boundary (*UCBN*)
- Robert Service Way (*RSW*) Area Plan
- Yukon River Trail (*YRT*)
- Downtown South Plan (*DSP*)
- Lower Escarpment Trail (*LET*)

- Airport Plan Update (*APU*)
- Robert Service Campground (*RSC*)

SOUTH OF AIRPORT TO MILES CANYON

- 1:** Interpretive signage at Robert Service Campground (RSC) about Hepburn Tramway, White Horse Rapids, YRT.
- 2:** Trail connection between RSC and Schwatka Lake Road as part of YRT; paved? ditch? move Yukon Energy fence a bit?
- 3:** Avoid walking on Miles Canyon Road; create bypass trail thru woods to connect with River Marathon Trail.
- 4:** Celebrate Hepburn Tramway with a walking promenade for YRT alongside Schwatka Lake; lake side best if possible.
- 5:** Ensure this well-preserved section of Hepburn Tramway is not lost to development; brush out both ends of this section.
- 6:** Hepburn Tramway crossed face of Goat Trail Hill; find a way to keep restored tramway at an easy grade in this area; YRT.
- 7:** Between Goat Trail to below Viewpoint Hill needs to be less precarious feeling; remove trees crowding trail, rebench; YRT.
- 8:** Hepburn Tramway signage; stairs and trail down to pedestrian bridge not safe, nor accessible, especially in winter.
- 9:** Fix section of Hepburn Tramway as it comes down to Miles Canyon – brushing, rebenching; this is a key part of YRT.
- 10:** Interpretation opportunity for: lower terminus trail for Hepburn Tramway; forest fire regrowth and 1899 Yukon Telegraph; First Nation portage?; Can we avoid using area as a motorcycle play area.
- 11:** Brush end sections of both Hepburn Tramway and Escarpment Trail.
- 12:** Developing a gravel quarry above the canyon and tramway does not make sense for city's premier tourist destination; could also block future trail connectivity to south end of town.
- 13:** Creating a parking area will promote winter use of canyon trails; east side of canyon can be clear and dry in early spring.
- 14:** Ear Lake used to be very popular; an excellent park; one of few places that get warm enough to swim; has trash, glass and nails.
- 15:** Make trail connections through wooded area, up high slope.
- 16:** Connect back to Yukon Energy with trail through the woods.
- 17:** Connect over high viewpoint; use decommissioned quarries?; has the first spring blooms; nice spot to observe bird migration.
- 18:** RSW study is looking for ideas for the quarry now that leases have expired.
- 19:** Connect highway pulloff to ridge over Ear Lake.
- 20:** Connect Highway pulloff through woods and past quarries.
- 21:** Create low ground connection around snow dump, private land.
- 22:** Ensure APU reflects the long-standing year-round use of the Airport Perimeter Trail.
- 23:** Sandy descent road getting badly eroded with vehicle use.
- 24:** Toe Trail descending esker is fragile; vehicle use will cause it to fail; descending last part of esker needs help, such as a staircase.
- 25:** Need pedestrian crossing from ball diamonds to (RSC).t
- 26:** Make a clear trail through powerline corridor, crossing ditch; clear out cut willows.
- 27:** Need pedestrian crossing across Robert Service way (RSC).

EAST SIDE OF RIVER

- 1:** Building a little bridge adds to the charm of walking the Millennium Trail.
- 2:** Need an 'easier route' coming down from top of Dam Hill.
- 3:** From Chadburn Lake Rd., create a safe descent trail to the power line from the viewpoint looking over Riverdale.
- 4:** Yellow Trail North needs 'easier route' leaving parking lot.
- 5:** Lower Canyon City is nice trail by water; think tourists! Route the bad sections back from the edge.
- 6:** Scramble on Upper Canyon City trail not nice; trailhead map understates difficulty.
- 7:** Canyon City trail signage is inadequate.
- 8:** Hidden Lakes East near south end needs an 'easier route'.
- 9:** Hidden Lakes West needs 'easier route'
- 10:** Fix up slippery Peewee Hill descent.
- 11:** The hiking trail needs 'easier route'; allow full use of scenic route.
- 12:** Your Trail needs an 'easier route' fix.
- 13:** El Camino has very steep section and needs 'easier route'.
- 14:** Make a switchback up start of Magnusson at big hill by kiosk.
- 15:** Pave Riverdale Perimeter Trail.
- 16:** Needs an 'easier route' from RIP going up Upper Boogaloo.
- 17:** Needs a trail to avoid using the Grey Mountain Road to climb the hill.
- 18:** A little trail work (rebenching) will allow a scenic route. Could FH Outdoor Ed help?
- 19:** Need winter connection through snowdrifts to switchback up Crocus Hill by traffic lights; park bench or 2, landscaping.
- 20:** Proposed paved connection from bridge to Hospital Road as part of YRT.
- 21:** Design new hospital trailheads, trail entrances, to encourage awareness of great walking trails from hospital front door.
- 22:** This would be a great site for park benches, a viewing kiosk.
- 23:** Fireworks hill; needs a though cleaning; park bench, viewing kiosk.
- 24:** UCBN would call for YRT on cliffs, and along river.
- 25:** UCBN could have a possible pedestrian bridge crossing river to Shipyards Park.
- 26:** UCBN likely needs a road bridge to Marwell; a wide walkway would encourage pedestrian use.
- 27:** Connect Long Lake trails to Fat Tire Fever skipping road.

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