

Building a walking-focussed Downtown

Input to 2026 proposed Downtown Trail Plan, February, 2026

"It's simple: people will walk if we create places and spaces where they want to walk. Unlike standalone promotional campaigns, improved walkability generates lasting increases in walking rates. It transforms behaviour."

2016 Canadian National Action Strategy for Walking

A wilderness city's Downtown needs walkable connected neighbourhoods and greenspaces, a vibrant all-day commercial centre, denser housing choices for those who want to live more without needing vehicles, a focus on economic drivers, tourism, hiking, biking, in a vibrant happening neighbourhood.

Walking, being in nature, often tops surveys of both residents and visitors and the City talks about hundreds of kms of trails, however, this isn't the vibe in much of Downtown, excepting our three paved paths (Millennium, Waterfront and Lower Escarpment.)

Over the years, the City focused mostly on neighbourhood-area trail needs, developing trail plans and building trails short *drives* away from Downtown. We have recreation centres a short *drive* up the hill at the CGC, or the Nordic Centre, or the arena, also just short *drives* away. More short *drives* get one hiking at Macintyre Creek, Chadburn Lake, Fish Lake, Spirit Canyon. We're converting our small local Long Lake into a popular beach scene with a more parking, again only a short *drive* away. And we continue to focus on creating wider roads to help people *drive* Downtown. And some still feel the answer to life is another bridge to *drive* to and from Riverdale at rush hours.

Downtown vitality and commerce

Hotels, restaurants, shops, pharmacies, bars, banks, cultural centres, studios, conference centres, museums, event spaces, movie theatre, dental and medical clinics, gyms, business offices, galleries, grocery stores — are pieces of a "vibrant downtown." Workplaces also abound for big corporations like electricity and phone companies, governments — federal, territorial, First Nation and City. Downtown needs are special.

Employees, small business owners, restaurant staff, artists, shop clerks, servers, volunteers, office staff, doctors, patients, lawyers, clients, dentists, police... Many live in the suburbs and commute, most by driving, a few by bus. Many live Downtown, some because they don't want to drive all the time, some want to live in a vibrant neighbourhood and some can't afford suburban living.

These people have many errands in a day, meetings, appointments, meals, drop off kids, shopping. Clearly Downtown needs to be walkable. It has to be enjoyable, a chance for fresh air, a stroll by the river, meeting friends, adding to the vibe. It's obvious that to have a vibrant, strong business community, we need more people living, walking and recreating here.

Not-shown trails and outstanding issues WITHIN proposed Downtown Trail Plan boundary

- ◆ **Missing showing:** proposed iconic First Nation pedestrian bridge from the Visitor Reception Centre to the Hospital
- ◆ **Missing showing:** bike corridor rails-to-trails along RSW and Front St. to make Millennium and Waterfront trails safer to walk
- ◆ **Missing showing:** east-west, north-south greenway park-like streets shown on Downtown Plans through the years
- ◆ **Missing showing:** the trails in the new City operations area, long used by residents such as from Valleyview

As WhitehorseWalks, I've been working on the assumption that most of Downtown's trails are in the area between the Hospital and Long Lake in Chadburn Lake Park and in the area around and south of Riverdale. To encourage use as a walking destination, I've created a set of self-guided trails, a booklet of botany and am currently researching a self-guided Lichen Walk, all set in the Hospital area.

The goal of this Plan and survey is much too little. Most trail walkers must leave the area boundary to hike.

In 2023, I submitted a suggestion for a [Whitehorse Centre neighbourhood-level](#) plan. I'm addressing the current Downtown Trail Plan concept in light of my 2023 submission. I've crafted this response to show Downtown as the hub of an integrated network of neighbourhood hiking trails, along the river, up Grey Mountain and past the airport neighbourhoods to McIntyre wetlands.

I think a limiting factor for Trails is they only get an annual \$100,000 budget. Compared to the City's vastly larger transportation and organized recreation budgets which routinely have multiple multimillion dollar line items, this is not realistic or fair.

Note that winter trail planning makes it hard to show possibilities. I couldn't easily take Consultant for a walking meeting behind the hospital to show its vast existing trail network. Couldn't show trails at City operations complex, Marwell wetland trails, Yukon River to Miles Canyon access, escarpment south trail, campground trail, airport perimeter trail.

Peter

- ◆ **Missing showing:** runway expansion meant to build a connecting, up-bikable/walking trail at Black St.'s Puckett's Gulch
- ◆ **Missing showing:** the Airport Perimeter Trail, one of the City's favourite walking spots for visitors and residents alike.
 - This hiking area, on the escarpment edge and one of Downtown's oldest trails should be a linear City nature park with an accessible, crushed gravel path. Add a second airport fence inland at spots not safe and walk between the 2 fences. Our two governments have steadfastly refused to negotiate moving the airport perimeter fence. While it borders the escarpment edge and is unsafe in a few short sections, recent runway improvements have seen paving the perimeter road inches from the fence — which can be right by the trail at the very edge. So, while deemed unsafe for people to walk, it's just fine for heavy airport equipment to drive!
 - Airport/City:* Please, as good corporate neighbours — at the unsafe spots, give the fence and road to the trail right-of-way, and build a new fence and road just at those spots. Put them far enough back to allow the inevitable escarpment sloughing over time. Cost is minimal, although would have been zero if it had been done during construction, as asked.
 - Ensure existing trail goes to the Highway at south end of airport. It's part of the City's Bike Network Plan.
 - Improve existing trail south coming down the esker and then down off the end of the escarpment to the dirt bike track. Next follow the existing trail along the powerline clearing and going through the woods behind the ball diamonds.
 - It's a great trail access to the Schwatka Lake area or looping across to the Millennium Trail.
- ◆ **Missing showing a defining neighbourhood characteristic :** Walkability. Here's a few of many walking issues Downtown. Note that except for those driving to a trail, most trails Downtown require us to use connecting sidewalks and streets.
 - Desperate need for rest-on-walk pedestrian crossing signals most places downtown. Currently it's a very poor system!
 - Lack of Second Avenue crossings such as at Keith St. and between Hanson and bridge
 - *Downtown Residents Association* has a list of missing sidewalks that needs addressing
 - example: no sidewalk to walk from Save-on to bus stop at Quartz to Home Hardware.
 - Often street signage is placed low, at head height, on poles on the walking part of sidewalks
 - Need green N/S and E/W walkable / active transportation streets: Black, Hawkins/Hanson, Third, Fifth
 - Vehicles often run red lights; some even ignore pedestrians in intersections.
- ◆ **Misses discussing Winter:** Downtown walking is treacherous with snow, ice, windblown drifts. Walks start on sidewalks.

Complaint-driven + property owner's responsibility does not work. People have to walk down edges and middle of streets because sidewalks are sheets of ice! Absolute worst place are the icy crossings at intersections. Sloped alleys are a killer. There should be, at a minimum, machines that grit every corner and lane, as often as they need doing, for ALL of Downtown's streets.

 - Downtown walkability should be City priority. Again, Third, Fifth avenues should be guaranteed to be walkable, bikeable
 - Need a priority, always walkable, 365/7 loop: Waterfront, Millennium, Lower Escarpment trails are the obvious choice
 - Can't easily access:
 - Waterfront trail from most of Front St.
 - We want winter tourism yet one can't get to the Visitor Info Centre from the Waterfront Trail
 - bad access to new Riverside Grocery across the three-part RSW intersection because railway doesn't clear its sidewalk!?
 - Lumel-KDCC-Raven Hotel connection to Waterfront Trail is a maze of tiny winter paths, almost animal tracks
 - Qwanlin Mall walking is poor: access to sidewalks across snow piles, icy parking lot, uncleared sidewalks, YG's Whitehorse Elementary doesn't clear its sidewalks making getting to mall and its slippery lot even more difficult
 - Can't easily access Millennium Trail at Fourth Ave. (summer problem also); Yukon Housing and railway don't clear their sidewalk
 - Very poor at Second/Fourth bend when businesses don't clear their sidewalks

Downtown proposed Trail Plan observations

- ◆ **Plan boundary:** Too little on offer. For instance, it only considers trails on west side of river. There's a misguided belief that the Riverdale side of the river had a trail plan all to themselves so don't need to look at trails there. In reality, trail process was about motorized vehicles, not neighbourhood walking so Riverdale still just a neighbourhood of great potential walking.
- ◆ **Downtown has a vehicle problem:** So many drive to Downtown, compounded by imperfect parking when they get here.
- ◆ **What's really needed is a core hiking trail network:** Identify longer hiking trails starting and ending Downtown. Map needs to be ambitious. For instance, it could include an escarpment trail that would include No Shirt, No Service. Or a loop with the Dream Trail. It should drive bits of trail work. Map could easily be started using a few knowledgeable volunteers like myself.

- ◆ **Downtown trail needs:** shows the need of a recognized trail network. People like to walk most days in a variety of places, mostly not driving. We need waymarked, forest trails especially *out of winter winds*. Also, forest trails are often not slippery.
 - In addition to residents, trail users will include City operations complex users, CGC users, people hanging out at the airport, above-the-airport neighbourhoods, the to-be-built-one-day-soon southern UCB expansion past Copper Ridge
 - People who want to come Downtown by trail — from the north of town like Porter Creek, Whistle Bend, Takhini, new Range Point neighbourhood; and from the Whitehorse South neighbourhoods; of course there's Riverdale and the new northern UCB expansion areas
 - Hospital people would love fast walkable access to Downtown and Downtown folk want walkable access to the Hospital and its trails
 - University folk will love access to a Yukon River Trail and ability to go Downtown by staying along the river
- ◆ **Tourism:** A consultant on the last Downtown Plan said that we should consider the economic value of trails. Not having a hiking trail network with a Downtown hub hampers tourism, which hampers Downtown vitality. A pedestrian bridge will have Downtown commercial — restaurants, Main St., night life — at the Visitor Information Centre end and the Hospital — staff, appointments, visits — and great Hospital–Long Lake hiking at the other end.
 - Much tourist material promotes the Yukon's beautiful scenery, offering drivable adventures: Miles Canyon, or, 'only a short drive away' is great hiking in Haines Junction, or up the Dempster, or the Silver Trail, Dawson, Skagway... Some materials barely mention Whitehorse, never mind hiking. We should be thinking along a stay-another-day theme — meet locals, get a hotel room or B&B, eat out, music and entertainment, and hike on trails you can walk to, even take a bus.

Tourists could stay longer and spend more, with authentic experiences; we should map neighbourhood trails and bus stops with tourists in mind; focus on stay in Whitehorse with minimal driving, hiking from Downtown, neighbourhoods

 - We need a re-evaluation of tourism. Generally hiking is good from many Whitehorse neighbourhoods. Downtown spontaneous hikers will love trails like the Hospital Ridge Trail directly across from Downtown.
 - Residents from other neighbourhoods will use trails in their trips downtown, as part of their day's events downtown.

Trails suggestions INSIDE proposed Plan boundary

- ◆ **North of Black St.:** A green switchback! Block people short-cutting the corners by making pole handrails, which would make trail use nicer during icy conditions. Sign for non-vehicle as just not suitable for bikes. A key fun component in next bullet.
- ◆ **Walkability for new City operations complex:** connect to airport, 2-mile paved path, downtown, Marwell, Big Box, waterfront
 - The City has a growing municipal complex perched on the escarpment. Let's offer the City staff the option to not drive to work if they live Downtown. It could be a great place to work if you could easily walk there, or walk in the forest over the escarpment on a crushed gravel path at lunch, coffee break. As a Downtown resident I hate driving to meetings there.
 - Connect existing trails down the powerline's cleared slope, connecting into 2-mile paved path, Industrial Rd. ...
 - Connect to the Airport side of the gulch by negotiating an access corridor to escarpment through Toyota/Dairy Queen
- ◆ **Connect Lower Escarpment Trail and Waterfront Trail near Quartz Wetland**
 - The odd bike path/sidewalk along Chilkoot Way awaits an accident. It's not attractive or safe feeling, especially in winter
 - Nicer: Follow Spook Creek's land allotment behind Honda, Subaru, Save-on, empty lot and make a little parkette; or
 - Behind Canadian Tire and Walmart, move YG fence north a few metres and make a pedestrian trail, w/ room for snow
- ◆ **Proposed trails on map**
 - Spook Creek gulch trail could be tough to maintain but is a neat walk; as well, connect up to the land by City operations
 - Connecting behind Builder's Supplyland, Northern Metallic and below the graveyard not likely to happen. Use the alley to get to Fourth at lights. Cross to a Spook Creek parkette, or stay on paved path up to lights at Chilkoot Way to cross.
 - Proposed trail near ball diamonds crosses highway twice! Stay on east of RSW on current trail to LNG plant. Look also at the esker trail coming down off the escarpment at the dirt bike course, along the power line and coming to Campground through the woods at foot of escarpment.
- ◆ **Bert Law Island trail:** It should be a fully accessible, crushed gravel; Clear with a light snowmobile groomer for winter
 - Do it properly; don't cut tree roots; float path above. Year-round use: don't block bridge access in winter.
 - Needs wheelchair path through the campground. Make accessible when campground closed. Allow winter access.
- ◆ **Connect Millennium Trail south along the Yukon River Trail:** *Yukon River Trail Marathon is a feature user of this stretch*
 - Go along RSW past YE, along YE access Rd, past the LNG plant. Then build a new trail entrance through the woods across from LNG plant, and go through the woods alongside railway tracks to the existing Marathon Trail farther along.
 - *Runners, bikers and walkers often go south from here.*

Trail connections walkable from Downtown OUTSIDE proposed Plan boundary

A hiking trail network befitting a *northern wilderness walkable winter City that wants a vibrant Downtown* would clearly look for solid walking opportunities from Downtown. The existing Plan boundary misses many the opportunities trail connections offer to multiple audiences. Think of a healthy physical walking holiday destination in Downtown Whitehorse.

- ◆ **A Yukon River Trail, a walking destination:** We have a tremendous opportunity to celebrate ancient First Nation routes between Lake Laberge and Marsh Lake
- ◆ **North**
 - The Plan wants trails in Marwell, proposes waterfront trail to Marwell (YES!), but ignores Marwell wetland trails?
 - Look at the popularity of the Connector trail from Copper Ridge to Porcupine Ridge. If we build a feature sidehill trail that goes up the escarpment at Marwell/Range Point, there would be a critical section of a Yukon River Trail towards Whistle Bend. This would be a popular Downtown destination trail, costing much less than the millions allocated for a bike path alongside Mountainview Drive (which will offer virtually no recreational walking value).
 - Residents of the new Range Point subdivision should be able to recreationally walk along the river, especially to be able to go Downtown by other than driving. A McIntyre Creek crossing of Mountainview Drive to the University and McIntyre Creek trails, would make this subdivision a destination place to live. It would allow University people to access Range Point, Whistle Bend, Yukon River, Downtown, making a loop walking trail between Downtown and the University.
 - It would provide commercial opportunities to businesses such as those proposed in the Marwell Plan a few years ago.
- ◆ **East side of Yukon River**
 - Currently, this is easily Downtown's nicest trail area — even more so with a footbridge at the hospital
 - Chadburn Lake Park's Hospital–Long Lake trail area in has walking trails all the way up Grey Mountain.
 - The people doing the Dream Trail should be helped to finish the initial ridge crossing. A follow-up trail should make a loop with a hiking trail back to the Magnusson area trails, avoiding the Grey Mountain Road and gun ranges.
 - The valley edge opposite the gun range hosts an amazing walk on the hill above *My Trail* but needs some trail working
 - A simple accessible crushed gravel trail between the Hospital buildings and the river, along the fence above Wickstrom Road would help people get a hit of nature. With a bridge this could be a Downtown treat to the walking challenged.
- ◆ **Southeast of Yukon River**
 - Downtown's trail area certainly includes
 - Riverdale, the fish ladder, Hidden Lakes, Chabburn/Chadden are all in Downtown's trail area with trails like Lower Riverdale, Dam Hill, Powerline, Heartbreak Hill, Upper Riverdale, Hidden Lakes, the Lakes
 - Downtown uses Riverdale trails and right-of-ways network; having an accessible crushed gravel Lower Riverdale Trail right around Riverdale would be great. Winter kicksledding should be a natural activity here.
 - In winter, road clearing windrows block trail access to the switchback at Dept of Ed. — entry is by climbing a 5-foot cliff!
 - Making a trail down off the Chadburn Lake Road where the trail crosses between the Dam Hill and Heartbreak Hill.
- ◆ **South past Yukon Energy**
 - A crushed gravel promenade along Schwatka Lake would be very popular for people with wheelchairs/walkers/strollers/tricycles, families, residents, tourists
 - misses connecting Hepburn Tramway, Yukon River Trail South to Miles Canyon, MacCrea, Pineridge, Wolf Creek, Spruce Hill. A big sidehill trail above MacRae Creek would get a Yukon River Trail to Wolf Creek and beyond.
- ◆ **Northwest**
 - across Alaska Highway doesn't show proposed underpass to Tank Farm area, above-the-airport neighbourhoods, CGC, Nordic Centre
- ◆ **Southwest**
 - Millennium Trail up to the South Access to highway intersection
 - across Alaska Highway misses that a trail to the Urban Expansion Area South and the above-the-airport neighbourhoods, Mount MacIntyre is a vital missing trail

PS. As part of a transparent process, it would be nice if we can read others' raw submissions as part of this trail process, and not just a summary. City also needs to allow citizens to network among themselves.



February 27, 2023

Whitehorse Centre Neighbourhood-level Trail Task Force

The 2017 NUCB study said: “Neighbourhood-level trail planning identifies highly valued and/or significant trails for formal City adoption. These trails are incorporated into the City’s Trails Maintenance Policy and maintained by the City and/or its partners.”

Northeastern Urban Containment Boundary Pre-Feasibility Study

The left map shows the areas covered by the first six Trail Task Forces (yellow arrows, names). Whitehorse Centre, the group of neighbourhoods in the middle, has not been addressed. The close-up right map shows these neighbourhoods as being either bordered by the escarpment, or are above on the edges.

Elementary School focused on sidewalks. Riverdale, one of the oldest neighbourhoods in the city, has no inner trail network.

What are the implications of not having a Trail Task Force?

Most Downtown trails are paved paths. Winter maintenance is becoming quite good. However, we don’t want to have a denser Downtown where people must drive to use natural recreational trails. Most of our natural trails are above on the bluffs on both sides of the river, especially the Hospital bluffs.

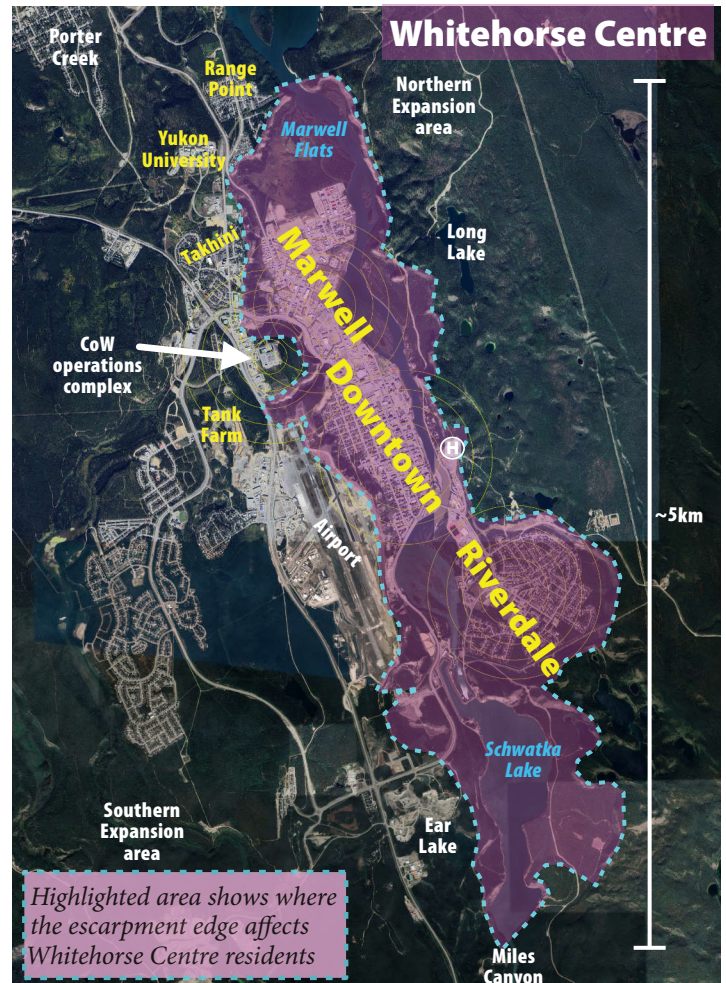
The closed airport perimeter trail, stuck between the airport fence and edge erosion, is waiting for paperwork to move the fence a few meters back from the edge as advised in the 1959 Escarpment Plan¹. Our old, well loved escarpment trail has been described as an unofficial trail — would need a special process to be called official, and thus able to be maintained.

Tank Farm planning options currently in process don’t offer a highway underpass for connections between Downtown, Above-the-Airport neighbourhoods and the CGC; a 20+year vision has this connection for walking, biking, kicksledding.

Why include Riverdale? The 2017 NUCB study also said “... trail planning on the east side of the Yukon River [is] complete”. It assumed the 2013 Yukon River East Trail Task Force dealt with neighbourhood needs for trails on the east side of the river.

In reality, the 2013 Yukon River East Trail Task Force mandate was “to determine which trails, areas, and/or access points on the east side of the Yukon River should be designated motorized multi-use.” The focus wasn’t on neighbourhood trail use/needs. For instance, the Downtown Residents Association was not on the 2013 Task Force, yet many/most of Downtown’s closest natural recreational trails are on the east side behind the hospital.

And still today, virtually all of Riverdale’s escarpment access routes have issues. A recent study on kids going to Selkirk



¹ <https://emrlibrary.gov.yk.ca/nrc/whitehorse-escarpment-1959.pdf> walking: whitehorsewalks.com
plants: www.yukonviews.com/yukon/flowers

People want a recreational trail along the river — throughout the world, riverside trails are very popular. Marwell, Takhini, Yukon University, Range Point, Whistle Bend will all use this. Marwell's recreational trail focus is tough, although trails in the Marwell wetlands see a fair amount of winter use. Building a Yukon River Trail, a walking, biking destination, would help celebrate this ancient First Nation route between the lakes.

Overview of Downtown recreation trails (without driving first)

Whitehorse Centre's natural surface trails are dictated by the ice-age landscape: specifically the escarpment and the Yukon River.

WEST SIDE OF RIVER

- **Downtown:** paved, non-connected perimeter trail; forested escarpment with small trails, a switchback and stairs going up
- **Above:** (access via Black St. stairs, various trails up Puckett's Gulch; rough Airport Toe Trail in south) Still closed airport perimeter trail going south, so no access to trails off the Airport Perimeter Trail north is paved path to highway, traffic lights; small bit of forest above Baxter's Gulch; some forest behind new city complex with an escarpment edge trail that could become a crushed gravel accessible loop trail (also needs a trail down powerline to Two-mile Hill path and an access near the new Dairy Queen.)
- **North:** trail along the river and entering Marwell, fenced off until N of 60° rehabilitated; no natural trail along Marwell Creek, lower escarpment, or going up to Copper Trail along top

- of Takhini escarpment; must walk beside Mountainview Drive (planned to become a 4-lane road) or beside 2-Mile Hill
- **South:** Yukon River Trail going out along Schwatka, past Ear Lake to Miles Canyon. **West,** there's no plan yet for crossing the new highway intersection and accessing Maclean Lake or Paddy's Pond/Ice Lake parks, nor the southern city expansion.

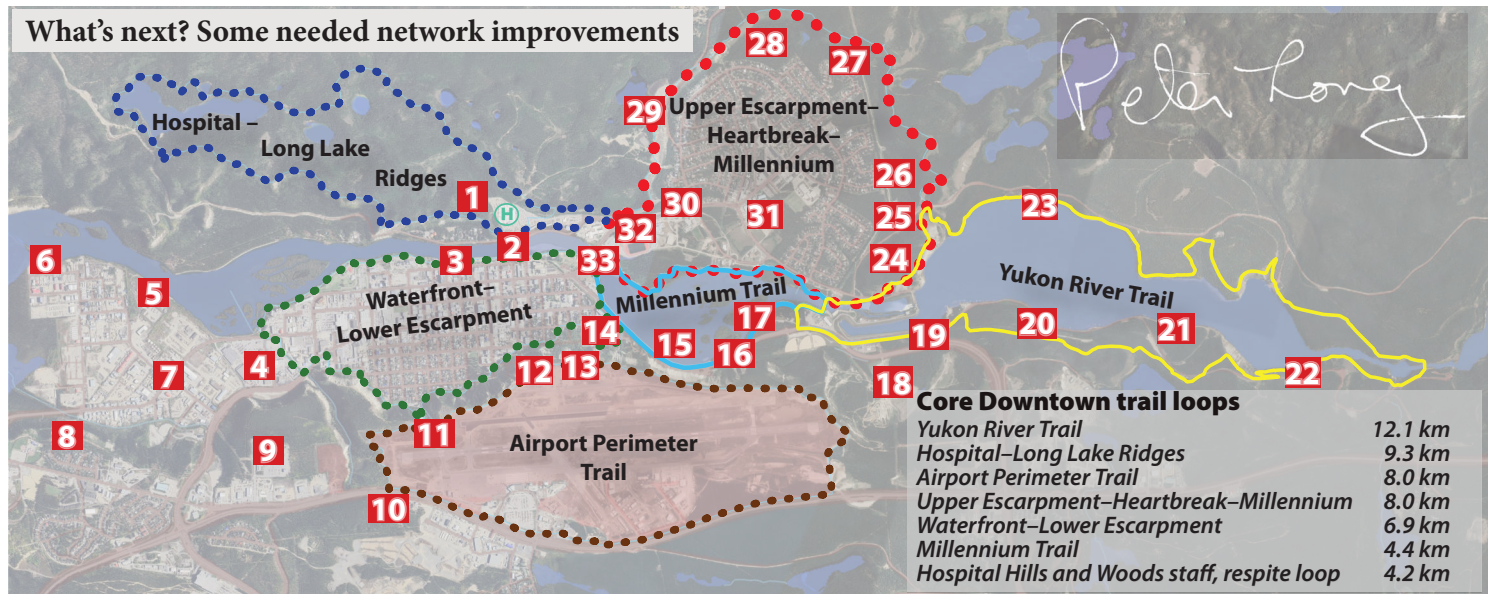
EAST SIDE OF THE RIVER

- **Going south:** (Access: Robert Campbell, Millennium, Robert E. Lowe bridges) Riverdale has paved Millennium Trail, Upper and Lower Escarpment trails; lower flats, interior trails as a kicksledding paradise? Yukon River Loop Trail, trails to Hidden, Chadden, Chadburn lakes. No trail yet to Marsh Lake!
- **Going east:** network of Magnussen, Grey Mountain trails
- **Going north:** Hospital, Long Lake trails; projected city expansion around Long Lake, Croucher Creek calls for a plan.

NETWORK IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

How does the overview pan out on the ground? Look at this list of suggested network improvements. Some have very little cost. Recognize that community improvements benefit tourists as well as locals, and provide visitors with reasons to stay longer and spend more, and recreate with an authentic experience.

A comprehensive Trail Plan is needed to give Whitehorse Centre residents a voice how this network of trails will play in their recreation and active transportation needs over the next decades. The list is long, but the alternative is more roads, more sprawl.



1. Create scenic Hospital Woods and Hills loop — focus on staff, respite
2. Build an iconic pedestrian bridge from VRC to Hospital
3. Explore Rails2Trails to make a better Downtown commuting bike route
4. Connect Waterfront Trail to Lower Escarpment Trail via Spook Creek
5. Join Downtown to Marwell on riverside trail as North of 60° site cleaned
6. Build Yukon River Trail to Range Point and Whistle Bend
7. Build a diagonal walkway across Marwell
8. Connect Takhini down bluffs to Marwell wetlands, along the river
9. Connect City complex to Waterfront, Airport trail; make accessible
10. Build a highway underpass, a critical piece of non-vehicle infrastructure
11. Fix old road going up Puckett's Gulch so it's better at top in winter
12. Build a landslide-proof descent from escarpment to Hanson/Hawkins
13. Move airport perimeter fence above Drury St and other trouble spots
14. Connect Lower Escarpment Trail to Waterfront and Millennium trails
15. Fix drainage so spring lakes don't form on Millennium Trail
16. Fix icing so trail open in winter; we want to walk on Bert Law Park
17. Make an accessible, crushed gravel trail around Bert Law Island Park
18. Build Airport Toe Trail down, through woods, cross to Millennium Tr.
19. Build Yukon River Trail thru woods by Yukon Energy; bypass road
20. Make a crushed gravel First Nation - Hepburn Tramway promenade
21. Brush section of Hepburn Tramway in woods by end of Schwatka Lake
22. Brush trail along the Hepburn Tramway above Miles Canyon
23. Replace rough party parking, campfires with accessible promenade
24. Make Dam Hill trail better at YE end + descent to Chadburn Lake Rd
25. Build a switchback trail from the viewpoint down to trails below
26. Make the route up Heartbreak Hill from road nicer, less slippery
27. The 3 trails descending from Peewee Hill/powerline hill have issues
28. Connector trails to Lower Escarpment trail are inadequate
29. Create a better method than walking on edge of Grey Mountain Road
30. Build a better trail up at Lewes/Alsek for start of Long Lake Ridge Trail
31. Connect Peewee Hill to Robert Campbell Bridge through inner trails
32. Fix Downtown's major trail access: intersection: Lewes, Hospital roads
33. Create an underpath on south end of bridge like one on north end

Local hospital trail network

Goal #2: Promote outdoor recreation for human health and wellness

“Upgrade and develop facilities, trails, and associated infrastructure where needed to accommodate neighborhood locations, and changing demographics and preferences while maintaining ecological integrity.”

Chadburn Lake Management Plan

The management plan focussed in part on developing recreation areas like Long and Chadburn lakes, Grey Mountain.

What’s needed now is neighbourhood use of park trails and amenities, without driving. Map circles show that, as a raven flies, Downtown is closer to the Hospital than most of Riverdale.

Walkability and a Trail Task Force

Trail walkers want: views, walk from home, easier route trails in places, ways to get out of the sometimes very bitter winter winds, variety, long and short options, all-season, well signed.

Most logical: build destination trails from the Hospital, build a pedestrian bridge from VRC to Hospital, attend to some of the network improvements mapped on the previous page.

But walking Downtown is not only about trails and paved paths, it’s also business needs, tourism, neighbourhood vitality. Think about:

- Sidewalks: maintain existing, fix tripping hazards; build new where missing, like Downtown north
- Signs: missing, confusing, hazardous such as at head height
- Snow clearing: alley/lane letdowns, empty lots, boarded-up buildings, green spaces; slippery intersections
- Intersections: respect for signals, need to press buttons, missing crosswalks, vehicles running red lights, ignoring crosswalks

How does a Trail Task Force deal with various plans such as the Trail Plan, Trail Maintenance Plan, Bike Network Plan, Transportation Master plan, Active Transportation? Whitehorse Centre is complex and our neighbourhood realities, looking at Downtown and Riverdale, don’t quite fit their rules. How to deal with fragmentation of responsibility for our walkability? We do want to encourage more people to live downtown.

MOBILITY EQUITY

Many use trails — walking, biking, kicksledding, snowshoeing — because we love being healthy, being outdoors in nature.

However, some — for instance seniors, disabled, un- or under-employed, low wage workers — need activities that are low/no cost, that they can get to from their homes, with no membership fees, no day passes, no equipment, no schedules, no line-ups, ... Vehicles, even some of today’s bikes, can stress budgets.

Downtown south has an increasing amount of social housing, people who are often watching expenses. It’s close to businesses who need lots of service workers. There’s families with kids.

Think about encouraging people to change transportation habits, or to engage in inexpensive family activities. Make it fun, have a trails passport. A friend talked about living Downtown as kids



and their mother walking them out to Miles Canyon on the route of the abandoned 1898 Hepburn Tramway.

Natural surface trail recreation calls for mobility equity. We have big budgets for items like roads, highways, bridges, studies, plans, parking, active transportation. Recreation budgets fund or help fund CGC, programming, arenas, ski chalets, ski hills, broomball court, golf courses, skateboard park, pool, sports, parks, baseball diamonds, playgrounds, landscaping, but relatively little on trails.

TRAIL STEWARDSHIP

Generally there’s no group that looks after general trail needs. (KSA and CMBC work on trails as their organizations prioritize.) How do unorganized public trail users get trail needs addressed?

Walking is such a diverse activity, mostly with no easy concept of being an organization, especially one that could reasonably look after city trails with a trail stewardship vision. It really seems to be a government responsibility. Is there a person/department in the City/YG with this on their plate, with a budget? What is the City budget (operations, capital, personnel costs) for trails compared to other recreation types and transportation methods?

There’s potential for a key trail stewardship role by First Nations.

There should be a program that trains trail workers, leaders and designers, so trail users can reasonably expect progress on these network needs. A good trail is a lovely thing to use. We need innovative solutions: for example, woven strips, like ones on airport fence and on Yukon Energy’s fence near the bridge, block the wind, help block snow drifts. Trails need to be sustainably built to balance the needs of users with ground conditions. Good cross-slope trails make a huge difference on hills. Let’s build some accessible, nature trails: Bert Law Park, or at the Hospital.