

May 2024



connect downtown

Visioning Phase - What We Heard

OWN







About

Connect Downtown is a planning project that will result in the creation of an Area Redevelopment Plan (ARP) for Canmore's Downtown to support the continued evolution and long-term vibrancy of the Town's core.

The project's full name, Connect Downtown: Planning a Vibrant Town Centre, reflects the intent of the plan: to reimagine how people can access, gather, and interact with a network of public spaces to support a thriving mixed-use area over the long term.

Connect Downtown publicly launched in October 2023 and is anticipated to be completed by Spring 2025. The first public-facing phase of work was the "Visioning" phase, which involved broad community engagement and research to understand what people value downtown and what opportunities there are for improvement. In total, more than 1,600 direct interactions with the community and stakeholders helped improve our understanding of what is working downtown today, what people want to see changed, and what is possible in the future.

The results from this phase of work supported the creation of a community vision for the future of downtown, which includes a vision statement, six core values, and ten big ideas. Together, these elements will be used to inform the development of draft policy in the "Options" phase of work that will happen next.

This report articulates this community vision (pages 4-7) along with a detailed summary of what we heard through engagement (pages 8-31).



**For more information, visit
mycanmore.ca/ConnectDowntown**



Vision

In the year 2050, downtown Canmore stands as a leading example of sustainable mountain living, defined by its ability to seamlessly connect people and nature.

It has a unique character—distinguished by a relationship to the natural landscape, an industrial past, and the diverse cultures that shape it.

Its residents move using safe and accessible connections, enjoying views of the mountains along the way. Visitors are welcomed and come downtown to experience a thriving mixed-use Town Centre in one of Canada's most beautiful settings.

In the year 2050, downtown is celebrated as Canmore's vibrant and resilient year-round community hub.

Core Values

To create a vision for the future of downtown, we need to understand what the community values for our Town Centre.

Values reflect our core principles, priorities, and beliefs—they define what we care about most and will guide the overall direction of the plan for Downtown. Six values have been identified based on community and stakeholder engagement, research and analysis, and with consideration for Council-approved bylaws, plans, and strategies.

01

Distinct

IN 2050...

Downtown embraces a unique character that reflects its geographic setting and status as Canmore's Town Centre.

02

Connected

IN 2050...

Downtown is easy to navigate and offers convenient connections to key destinations, amenities, and communities.

03

Vibrant

IN 2050...

Downtown is lively and active all day, every day, and every season.

04

Accessible

IN 2050...

Downtown works for people of all ages, incomes, backgrounds, and mobilities.

05

Inclusive

IN 2050...

Downtown fosters a sense of belonging and is welcoming to a diversity of residents, visitors, and businesses.

06

Resilient

IN 2050...

Downtown is adaptable, and its businesses, residents, and infrastructure can withstand climate impacts and other changes that emerge over time.

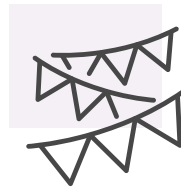
Big Ideas

The following ten big ideas represent transformative concepts that will guide the future evolution of downtown in support of the six core values. The final Area Redevelopment Plan will provide a land use concept, transportation network, and supporting policies that will guide the implementation of the big ideas.



Embrace nature and mountain views

Distribute and design buildings and public spaces in ways that embrace nature and mountain views as defining elements.



Make Main Street a Great Street

Redesign Main Street as a pedestrian-oriented, year-round public space for gathering and activity.



From the Creek to the Bow

Provide efficient connections and linkages that make the Bow River and Policeman's Creek part of downtown.



Make downtown year-round

Provide spaces and land uses that support street activation and welcome people day and night, rain or shine.



Repurpose underused spaces

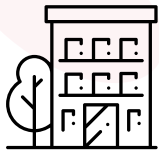
Develop underutilized or vacant land to address gaps and enhance vibrancy.



Create accessible and adaptable spaces

Design buildings and public spaces that welcome everyone and can adapt to a changing environment and community.

Big Ideas (continued)



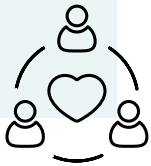
Housing for a more diverse population

Provide more housing opportunities in residential areas that can meet the needs of a diverse population.



A distinct character

Create a special and unique sense of place that distinguishes downtown from other areas and celebrates its connection to nature, the mountains, and its rich history.



Create a neighbourhood heart

Establish a pedestrian-focused corridor anchored by a central plaza and captivating spaces for the community.



A low-impact community

Design downtown in a way that fosters sustainable development and minimizes impacts on the environment.

IDENTIFYING THE BIG IDEAS

Ten draft big ideas were originally developed based on our research into challenges and opportunities downtown along with consideration for how the area could evolve in ways that align with the six core values as well as Council-approved bylaws, plans, and strategies.

The ten draft big ideas were, along with the core values, the primary focus of community and stakeholder engagement. All ten draft big ideas were broadly supported; however, changes were made in response to community and stakeholder feedback as summarized on page 17.

What We Heard

Introduction

The public has a strong role to play in shaping the direction of the final plan that will be presented to Council for consideration in early 2025. There will be four distinct touchpoints over the project lifespan where we will seek public input.

We kicked off public engagement for Connect Downtown with the Visioning phase of the project, which took place from November 2023 to March 2024. We had over 1,600 direct interactions with a diverse representation of individuals, community organizations, industry associations, and businesses—including 467 responses to our online survey, which informs much of the results featured in this report.

During public engagement, we heard how central our downtown is to our community, drawing over 80% of our community year-round on at least a weekly basis. We also saw a cohesive vision for its future emerge across the feedback we received.

This report provides a detailed breakdown of key results; however, at a high level, we heard that the public would like to see a future downtown that:

- Generally aligns with our draft core values and potential 'Big Ideas',
- Is a place of vibrancy year-round,
- Is walkable and people-focused,
- Has a strong sense of place and maintains its mountain-town character,
- Offers places to gather,
- Provides enhanced opportunities to connect with nature in trails and parks,
- Demonstrates leadership in sustainability,
- Offers a diversity of retail and services, and
- Moves people and vehicles efficiently.

The feedback we received during this phase of engagement shaped the Vision document that will guide potential policy options for downtown, which will be the focus of the next engagement phase ("Options") in Summer 2024.

Engagement Approach

From November 2023 to March 2024, we invited the public and stakeholders to share their current experiences downtown and their priorities for the future. We also welcomed input on and ideas for draft core values for a future downtown and potential 'Big Ideas' that could transform the area.

Since the ARP will guide change downtown to the year 2050, its implementation will impact the next generation of our community. As a result, we set out to do engagement differently by bringing different voices into the decision-making process. We crafted innovative engagement tactics to reach a broader audience while also providing more traditional methods for the public to share their perspectives.

OVERVIEW OF KEY TACTICS

DATE	ACTIVITY
Nov 9 to Dec 15, 2023	Classroom asset mapping exercise targeted at Canmore middle school students (216 submissions)
Feb 1 to Mar 1, 2024	Online engagement (476 submissions)
Feb 7, 2024	Pop-up engagement with Canmore Young Adult Network (CYAN) (100 participants)
Feb 9, 2024	The Warm Up concert series and open house (2,137 participants including 600 visitors to the open house)
Feb 10, 2024	The Cool Down event and open house (200 visitors to the open house)
Feb 21, 2024	Virtual Public Workshop (15 participants)
Feb 27, 2024	Virtual Stakeholder Workshop (22 participants)

How We Listened

Online Engagement Tools

We provided a series of digital tools (i.e., a survey, ideas board, Q & A, and digital asset map) for the public to provide input on our MyCanmore site. The most prominent tool was a survey containing 15 multiple choice questions and 12 open-ended comment boxes. We had 467 respondents to the survey. None of the questions were mandatory to answer, resulting in differing submission totals for each question.

The online survey was divided into two main sections: *Your Experience Downtown Today* and *Your Vision for a Future Downtown*. We wanted to understand what people currently value about downtown and what they want to see in the downtown of 2050. In answering these questions, we asked respondents to consider their overall experience (i.e., at all times of day and year).

We also received 8 submissions on a virtual 'asset map' of downtown where users could drop pins on specific features downtown and 11 ideas added to our 'big ideas' board.

The open-ended responses are summarized within the report and the asset map pins were added to a summarized digital map included on pages 28-29. As an incentive to encourage participation, we offered a draw prize of a \$100 gift card to anyone who completed the survey and provided an email.

Flagship Events and Open Houses

For our flagship engagement event, we teamed up with the Canmore Folk Music Festival to host a micro-music festival called The Warm Up. The event featured pop-up concerts at downtown businesses and an open house with live music at the Canmore Civic Centre. The open house included interactive information boards, an asset map of downtown where the public could add pins to identify specific features, and an opportunity to provide feedback on the draft core values and big ideas. There was also an artist sketching attendee's own big ideas for how downtown could be transformed.

We also hosted an open house at the family-friendly Cool Down event and attended a Canmore Young Adult Network (CYAN) evening with the information boards.

The open-ended responses we received at these events were grouped thematically, and the asset map pins were added to a summarized digital map included on pages 28-29. As an incentive to encourage participation, we offered a draw prize of a \$100 gift card to anyone who visited the open houses.

Classroom Activity

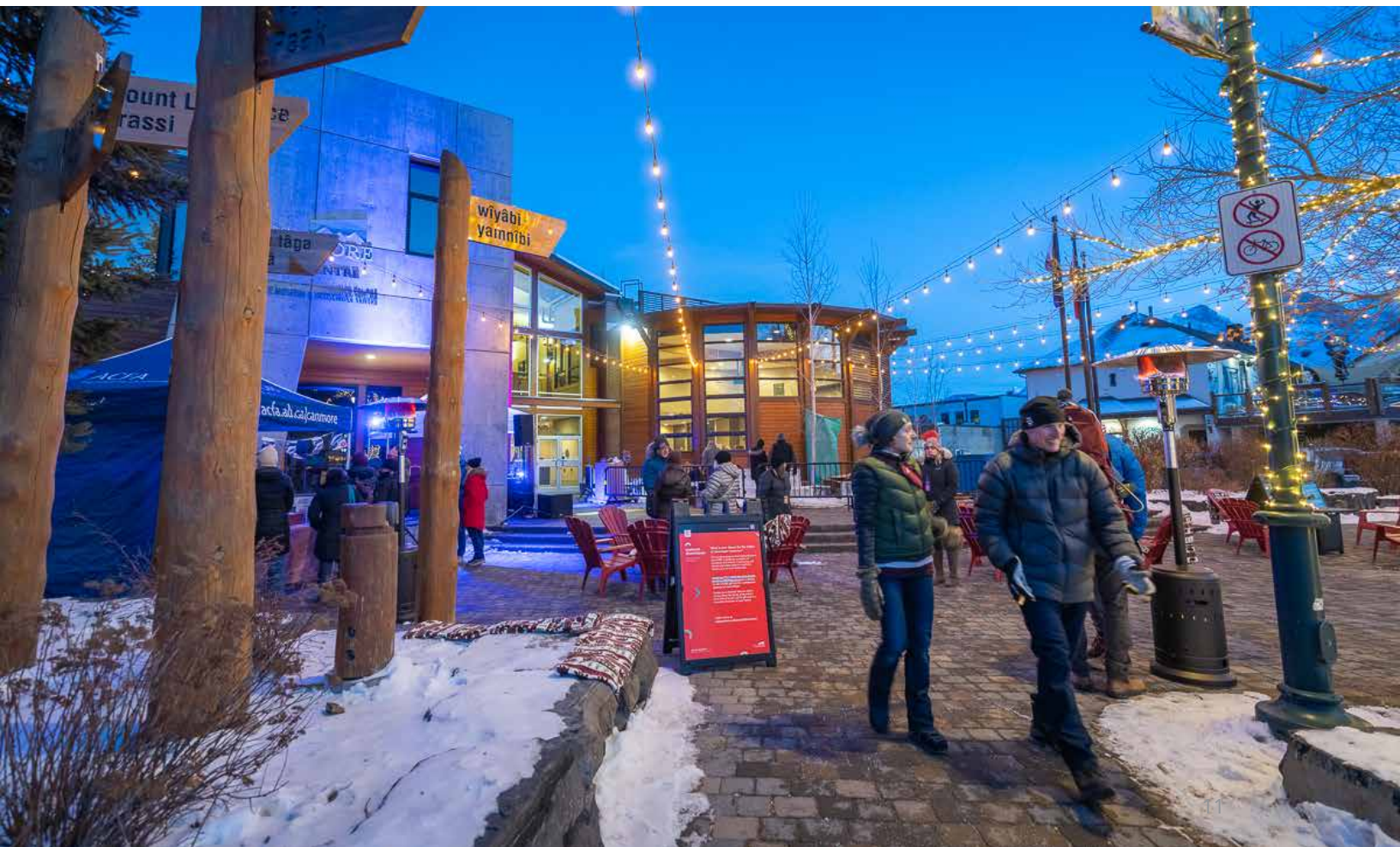
We partnered with Canmore middle schools to engage students in grades 7 to 9. We provided classrooms with a self-guided asset mapping activity to understand what youth value downtown and what they would like to see in the future. We asked them to fill in two different maps: the first prompted them to draw downtown from memory, while the second asked them to imagine a future downtown paired with a worksheet containing supporting prompts.

The open-ended responses and key features of the youth asset maps were grouped thematically, and select pins added to a summarized digital map included on pages 28-29.

Virtual Workshops

We held two virtual workshops. One open to the public, and the other focused on key stakeholders. This long-form feedback received from the public and organizations was summarized into predominant themes and woven into the Key Themes section of this report (pages 13-16).

Figure 1: Photos of The Warm Up event



Who We Heard From

Community

We had robust turnout during engagement and heard from a diverse cross-section of the community for our online engagement tools, the vast majority (91.5%) which were Canmore residents. We saw a diverse mix of participants across demographics—with a nearly even distribution of ~20% per age bracket, including respondents ages 45 and under making up 42% of responses. Business owners were well represented as well, making up 21.5% of survey respondents including 28 downtown businesses.

Youth

At the outset of engagement, we identified youth perspectives as a key audience for engagement; however, we expected to see low participation on the online survey by people 25 and under. Additional targeted tactics included engagement to address participation shortfalls included a pop-up with information boards at a Canmore Young Adult Network event where the average demographic are Canmore residents ages 18-35. We also received 216 submissions from middle school students ages 12-15 as part of an in-classroom activity.

Stakeholders

We held a virtual workshop session that included 22 stakeholders representing 14 community organizations representing a diverse range of sectors, including the environment, affordability, social services, tourism, building and development, and arts and culture. Representation included Downtown Canmore Business Improvement Association, Bow Valley Builders & Developers Association (BOWDA), Rocky Mountain Adaptive, Canmore Community Childcare, Tourism Canmore Kananaskis, Canmore Museum, Banff Canmore Foundation, Community Cruisers, Bow Valley Immigration Partnership, Canmore Young Adult Network (CYAN), artsPlace (Canadian Mountain Arts Foundation), Bow Valley Climate Action, Homelessness Society of the Bow Valley (HSBV), and Bow Valley Food Alliance.

Indigenous Communities

We also formally invited the Stoney Nakoda Nations and the Metis Nation District 4 to participate in a parallel process through a government-to-government invitation.



What We Heard: Key Themes

The results of the engagement analysis are intended to illustrate broad trends, preferences, and themes to inform the future phases of this project. We determined the key themes by identifying the key phrases and sentiments shared most often. The data from the survey form the bulk of the results featured in this report; however, information from the other inputs informed the overall engagement themes.

YEAR-ROUND VIBRANCY

“Vibrant” was the word respondents most frequently identified to define their ideal future downtown.

- Respondents often indicated a need to make downtown more lively, active, and vibrant during all times of day and all seasons of the year—not just in the summer.
- Ideas included the pedestrianization of Main Street, weather and wind protection on commercial streets and public spaces, community facilities like ice rinks and splash pads, washroom facilities, expansion of arts and cultural facilities (e.g., artsPlace), improved winter maintenance, heated/covered patios, higher-density mixed-use developments to support a larger year-round population base, small-scale visitor accommodation on the commercial streets, and a greater focus on events and programming throughout the year.

A PLACE FOR PEOPLE

Respondents stated they valued downtown as a walkable place where people lived. They commented on its compact form and central location—and would like to see those traits enhanced even further moving forward.

- A significant majority (87%) believe the seasonal closure of Main Street has had a positive impact on downtown; similarly, 87% support a vision for Main Street that provides more space for people and permanent public spaces. Respondents most frequently identified a permanent pedestrianization of Main Street as the one change they would like to see.
- Many respondents expressed a desire for enhanced cycling and trail infrastructure. Many respondents also agreed with reduced emphasis on vehicles and improved wayfinding and connectivity.
- Respondents frequently expressed a need to increase universal accessibility of downtown spaces, such as through wider sidewalks.

GATHERING SPACES

Respondents resoundingly expressed a desire for additional free public spaces such as green spaces, plazas, and patios to gather with additional seating, outdoor and indoor dining areas, and facilities like washrooms. Some respondents also suggested the creation of a multi-purpose community centre or a conference centre for events.

ACCESS TO NATURE & ENHANCED RECREATION

Respondents treasure current access to our natural environment provided by the trail network and green spaces, especially existing parks such as Riverside and Centennial.

- Respondents also wanted to see our natural environment reflected in materials, like stone and wood, and more native vegetation.
- Respondents were interested in increasing the user experience of parks and green spaces to make them more vibrant, inclusive, and accessible year-round. Recommendations included adding sports courts, splash pads, exploring the possibility of an indoor facility, and adding additional features to existing parks such as outdoor cooking facilities, covered/heated patios to extend the usability of outdoor areas throughout the year, and additional lighting for evening use and safety.

PLACEMAKING & MOUNTAIN-TOWN CHARACTER

Respondents expressed that they appreciate Canmore's small-town atmosphere while recommending the need to beautify downtown by investing significantly in the public realm to enhance the current look and feel of the area.

- Respondents felt that downtown serves as the heart of the community and would like to see Main Street continue to play a central focus as a "spine of downtown" but with an expanded focus on 7th and 10th. Suggestions to further improve Canmore's downtown identity included creating a sense of arrival with prominent signage (e.g., like the Banff sign).
- Suggestions included the creation of a distinct and unified aesthetic throughout downtown that reflects its "mountain town" character, improvements to public spaces such as the creation of a major central plaza, gathering elements (such as seating, public fire pits, and lighting), and greater integration of high-quality public art that reflects culture and heritage.
- The newly redesigned Bear Street in Banff was commonly cited as a positive example.
- Respondents felt strongly that built form should preserve mountain views to allow the area's natural beauty to anchor design. This could include consideration of height restrictions on Main Street and additional outdoor amenities like patios and trails.

LEADERSHIP IN SUSTAINABILITY

Respondents were concerned about the impacts of changing climate, flooding, wildfires, extreme heat, and air pollution on Canmore's resilience and sustainability. As downtown evolves, respondents generally agreed that they would like to see the Town practice leadership in sustainability.

- Specific suggestions included additional cycling infrastructure, aquifer access for heating and cooling, net-zero buildings, applying density bonusing, and encouraging garden spaces and greenhouses on top of buildings.

RETAIL DIVERSITY

Respondents identified the unique mix of locally owned businesses downtown as a significant strength and part of its unique and authentic character.

- Downtown retail is the number one draw for people to visit downtown, including for essential services; however, some concerns were expressed about the lack of retail diversity that was perceived as being solely targeted at visitors.

PARKING MANAGEMENT & VEHICLE MOVEMENT

Parking and vehicle management was frequently mentioned as a key component of increasing the future experience of downtown.

- Many respondents noted concerns about congestion and how vehicular access and circulation should also be improved, citing the creation of intercept parking, a parkade, increased cycling infrastructure, and better trail connections to neighbourhoods outside of downtown.

SUPPORT FOR BIG IDEAS

We shared a list of potential 'Big Ideas', bold ideas to shape the direction of the ARP.

- Respondents indicated strong levels of support all ten of the draft big ideas, with support ranging from 54% (creation of gateways) to 89% (embrace nature and views of the mountains).
- Big ideas suggested by respondents fell under the themes of creating a place for people and year-round community, meeting local needs, providing easy access, connecting to nature, and fostering a distinct character.

SUPPORT FOR VALUES

We shared a list of potential core values (Inclusive, Accessible, Connected, Active, Resilient, Distinct) to guide the spirit of the ARP. Respondents indicated strong levels of support for all six of the draft core values with support levels ranging from 64% to 85% for each value.

- Some respondents expressed an interest in seeing values that incorporate beauty and aesthetics (23 responses), a locals-first approach (23 responses), and community (16 responses) among other suggestions.

How Public Input Will Be Used

Vision

The vision statement for downtown in the year 2050 (page 3) was crafted based on what we heard through the Visioning phase of engagement. It incorporates key themes of feedback that an Area Redevelopment Plan for downtown may address through improvements to the public realm and development on private property—such as how we can make a downtown that is more vibrant, sustainable, and people-focused.

The six core values received broad support through engagement; however, the value “Active” was changed to “Vibrant” to improve clarity around what it entails and to better align with community feedback.

Similar to the core values, the ten draft big ideas received broad support but several changes were made to improve their alignment with community feedback. Changes included alternate wording to better encapsulate nuance and interpretations of the intention behind each idea, and the following three pivots:

- Replacing “Establish a pedestrian-oriented corridor on 9 Street with captivating spaces for the community” with “Create a neighbourhood heart”,
- Replacing “Foster a lively commercial and entertainment district that works for residents and visitors” with “Make downtown year-round”, and
- Replacing “Create gateways that signal arrival and provide a sense of welcoming downtown” with “A low-impact community”.

Policy

The feedback collected through this phase of engagement will be used to inform draft policy options for downtown, including a proposed land use concept, transportation network, and key development policy. Engagement on draft policy options is anticipated for Summer, 2024.

Conclusions

During engagement for this phase of the project, we heard resounding cohesion across all engaged groups for potential elements that the ARP could address for a future vision of downtown. There was a strong level of consistency and remarkable support for the draft core values and potential Big Ideas, although changes were made to further improve alignment with community perspectives.

The data confirm that we are heading in the right direction and provides us with a strong shared understanding of what the community would like to see in potential policy options.

APPENDIX 1

Detailed Engagement Results

Summary of Youth Feedback

Youth Asset Mapping Activity

We provided middle school classrooms with a self-guided asset mapping activity to understand what is valuable to youth in the current downtown, and what they would like to see in the future. We asked them to fill in two different maps, one where they were prompted to draw downtown from memory and another where they were asked to imagine a future downtown.

Instructions

Activity #1: Mapping Your Downtown Experience

Step 1: Watch the Video

- Start by watching the short video featuring the Town of Carmore's planning team that will help you understand your role in planning for how people can better connect with downtown. Pay attention to how your input will contribute to the plan.

Step 2: Draw the Current Downtown from Your Memory

- Pull out map 1, "my downtown today", and think about how you currently experience downtown Carmore.
- Using only your memory, draw the missing parts of downtown in the empty space on the map so that someone could use it to get around. You can include whatever you think is important—such as streets, parks, shops, or other places you visit. It's okay if you're not an artist—this is about sharing how you experience downtown!

Step 3: Identify Your Special Places

- Once you've completed your drawing from memory, take a moment to think about some of the places you like downtown. Add them to your drawing if you haven't already.
- Add labels or descriptions to these special places so that someone else can know what they are!

Step 4: Share Your Vision

Tell us about your top three favourite things that you labeled on your map and what makes them special to you:

Favourite Thing/Place #1 Park by head river is important to me because it's relaxing and beautiful but we need playgrounds lights on the trees to make it feel like a nice place to visit

Favourite Thing/Place #2 Mountain Views is important to me because it feels like its not real

Favourite Thing/Place #3 Spring creek is important to me because it's at the cool docks and the nice board walk

Please More Christmas lights!

Activity #2: Dreaming of a Re-imagined Downtown

For this activity, you can let your imagination run wild and think about what downtown would look like in the future if you were in charge of designing it.

Step 1: Imagine a Map of a Future Downtown

- Pull out map 2, "my future downtown". Using your imagination, fill in the blank space on the map to create your very own downtown. Think about the places or things that would make it a perfect downtown to you. This could include anything and is your opportunity to dream big.
- As you map out what downtown could like, make sure you think about some of the things that a community needs to thrive like trails to walk on and places to live, play, shop, or eat.

Step 2: Add Labels

- Add labels or descriptions to some of the places you drew that you are excited about or feel like the community really needs.

Step 3: Share Your Vision

Tell us about your top three favourite things that you labeled on your map and what makes them important to a future downtown:

Favourite Thing/Place #1 Dedicated Christmas Street is important in a future downtown because it will show people and make it beautiful with the mountains

Favourite Thing/Place #2 Movie theater / arcade is important in a future downtown because to give more entertainment

Favourite Thing/Place #3 Parks like head river and civic center with lights on trees is important in a future downtown because it will make people feel happy and it will look so beautiful

Step 4: Reflect on Your Choices

Take a moment to reflect on your choices. How do you think your suggestions could help make downtown a place for everyone?

Step 5: Completing the Exercise

Once you've finished, review your maps and answers in both Activity 1 and 2. Do they capture your experience of downtown and vision for the future? Is there anything you would you change?

Figure 2: Example youth worksheet

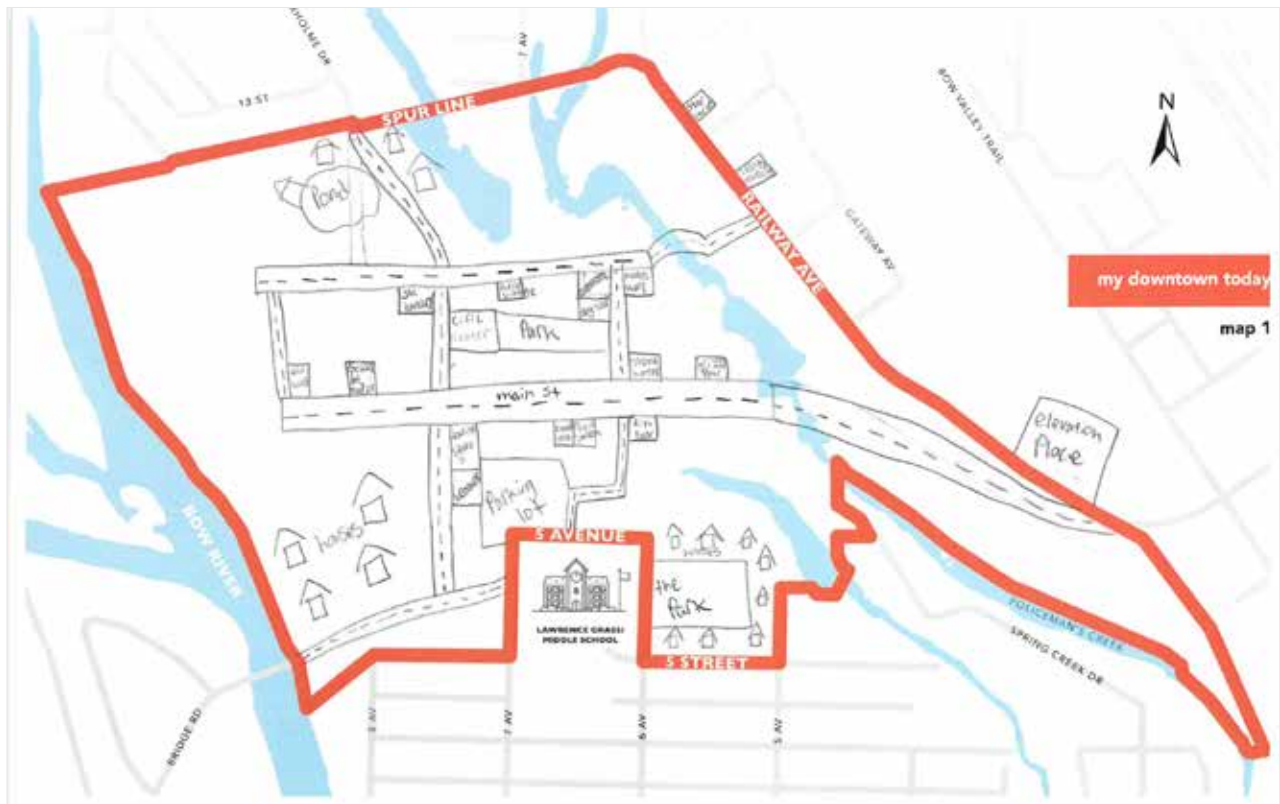


Figure 3: Example current downtown map



Figure 4: Example future downtown map

In open-ended responses, several key themes emerged:

Retail and Services (290 mentions)

Access to retail downtown featured prominently in the youth responses. They reported visiting a diversity of lower-cost establishments on a regular basis. Some youth shared nostalgic memories of visiting certain businesses with family. Many youth expressed frustration at a lack of retail options for kids and youth.

Access to Nature and Recreation (184 mentions)

Downtown's nature and recreational areas, particularly parks like Riverside Park and Centennial Park, hold special significance for Canmore's youth. One youth expressed, "I love the mountain views. It doesn't feel real". Many youth proposed enhancements to existing parks, such as additional seating, string lighting, and facilities like splash parks, to make them more appealing. They also referred to outdoor recreation areas outside of downtown as places where they stay active. They pointed to the Benchlands Bike Skills park, the skate/scooter park, and ice rinks, and would like to see similar recreation amenities downtown.

Gathering Spaces (89 mentions)

Youth identified that they value existing indoor public spaces as safe places to socialize and stay warm/cool. For example, the Civic Centre was singled out as the most frequently identified place of importance for youth downtown by serving as a multifunctional space. While youth value existing indoor public spaces like the Civic Centre, Elevation Place, and the library as safe socializing spots, they expressed a desire for more youth-friendly areas.

Arts, Culture, and Heritage (44 mentions)

Downtown landmarks like the Engine Bridge, the Pond hold nostalgic significance for Canmore's youth. They value these landmarks and other cultural spaces like the Museum and Barracks as part of Canmore's heritage, contributing to the town's identity and sense of community.

Walkable and People-focused Downtown (34 mentions)

Youth rely on transportation options like the Roam bus and trails for mobility within downtown. They emphasized the importance of expanded bus services and improved trail networks for better accessibility. Additionally, several youth expressed support for pedestrian-friendly initiatives like a car-free Main Street and separated bike lanes to enhance safety, such as one student who shared, "Main Street closed to cars makes it more inviting."

Summary of Public Feedback

The following analysis follows a question-by-question assessment of input received in the public survey. This summary also includes select open-ended question results. Where relevant, we included synthesized comments from parallel inputs (i.e., open houses).

SECTION 1: YOUR EXPERIENCE DOWNTOWN TODAY

On average, how often do you visit downtown in each season (rarely/never, annually, monthly, weekly, or daily)?

Most respondents visit downtown on a regular basis with a consistent frequency of visitation regardless of the season; on average, 83.7% of respondents visit downtown at least weekly on a year-round basis.

How do you primarily get to and from downtown?

Respondents were provided four options: walk, cycle, public transportation, and vehicle and were asked to tell us how often they used each one on average to access downtown. Walking was the most common mode of transportation with 64% walking downtown at least weekly, followed by vehicle and cycle at 60% and 47% at least weekly, respectively. By comparison, only 12% reported using public transportation at least weekly.

What draws you downtown?

We asked respondents to identify up to three top reasons that draw them downtown. We received a total of 1297 votes divided between 15 options. We heard that respondents are drawn to the town centre for retail and recreation. The top three ranking reasons by far were restaurants/bars (20%), shopping (20%), and recreation such as trails and parks (16%).

How often do you use or visit the following public spaces (rarely/never, annually, monthly, weekly, or daily)?

We provided respondents with a list of 10 downtown public spaces and asked them to indicate how often they visited each place. Respondents told us that they visited many downtown spaces on a regular basis, with an average of 54.5% of people indicating that they visited downtown places at least weekly. Main Street (78% at least weekly), pathways (75% at least weekly), and the 10th Street commercial area (54% at least weekly) were the top three ranking spaces. Respondents were least likely to visit Eklof Park (5% at least weekly).

What is one word to describe the current downtown?

In an open-ended response, busy/crowded (87 mentions), vibrant/dynamic/lively (29 responses), and quaint/unique/interesting (19 responses) the top three words that respondents used to describe the current downtown.

What is one thing you value about the current downtown?

In an open-ended response, respondents indicated overwhelmingly that they valued the current downtown's compact, central, and walkable layout (160 responses), a mix of local businesses and services (148 responses), the small-town character (48 mentions), and sense of community (25 responses). The mountain views (23 responses) were also frequently mentioned. Downtown landmarks such as the Engine Bridge, the Big Head, and the Pond hold special significance, especially for youth for their nostalgic value.

What is one thing you would change about the current downtown?

In an open-ended response, adopting a more people-focused, car-free Main Street was overwhelmingly the most frequently mentioned change that respondents wanted to see with 111 mentions. Better vehicle circulation (53 responses), additional parking/intercept parking (54 responses), and placemaking and public realm enhancements (50 responses) were the next frequently mentioned desired changes.

Starting in 2020, we closed a section of Main Street to vehicles to provide space for people to safely move and gather. This people-focused approach to Main Street has continued each summer and we would like to hear your experience with it (didn't like it, somewhat disliked it, neutral, someone like it, like it.)

We asked respondents to share their perspective on a series of seven features of the seasonal car-free Main Street, that included atmosphere, accessibility, more space to walk and cycle, more public open space, etc. Across the board, respondents indicated they liked the benefits that a seasonal closure provides (ranging from 73% to 88%), with more open space (e.g., to sit, gather), more space to walk or cycle, and no vehicles (e.g., reduced air or noise pollution) as the top rated features.

To what extent do you agree with the following statement: The pedestrianization of Main Street has been an overall positive change to downtown (strongly disagree, somewhat disagree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat agree, or strongly agree)?

We directly asked respondents if they felt that the car-free Main Street had made an overall positive change to downtown. Respondents expressed significant support (87% positive) consistent with the previous question. Respondents who were supportive of the current Main Street closure referred to Bear Street in Banff as an example and indicated that they would like to see enhanced public spaces to make it feel more permanent and welcoming. Maintaining or increasing the closure length was also frequently mentioned.

One respondent shared that, "Last fall I went downtown with my five-year-old daughter, and she said that she was sad downtown was closed. I was surprised since 8th street had just been reopened to traffic. She followed-up by saying she misses riding her bike down main street..." while another exclaimed, "It was the best thing Downtown Canmore ever did."

Some respondents, especially those who were not supportive of the closure, noted concerns about congestion and how vehicular access and circulation should be improved, citing the creation of a

parkade and improved signalization as possible ideas. Other concerns included sentiments such as “I love the concept, but it looks “cheap”. Another noted, “Although it’s great for Main St, it discourages people from venturing off Main St to any other attractions and businesses. The event barricades and lack of signage make this even harder.”

SECTION 2: YOUR VISION FOR A FUTURE DOWNTOWN

To create a future vision for downtown, we need to understand what our values are. Values reflect our core principles, priorities, and beliefs—they define what we care about most and will guide the overall direction of the plan for downtown. We prepared some draft values, and asked for respondents to weigh in. These values were developed based on Council-approved bylaws, plans, and strategies, and reflect some of the opportunities we have identified for downtown.

We asked how closely the following six values align with what is important to you for the future of downtown (strongly disagree, somewhat disagree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat agree, or strongly agree)?

Respondents indicated strong levels of support for all six of the draft core values (Inclusive, Accessible, Connected, Active, Resilient, Distinct), with support levels ranging from 64% to 85% for each value. Some respondents expressed an interest in the values incorporating beauty and aesthetics (23 responses), locals-first (23 responses), and community (16 responses) among other suggestions. Active and Resilient were the two values with softer support. Since feedback in other question areas affirm support for ‘Vibrancy’ and ‘Sustainability’ – parallel values to Active and Resilient, there may be an indication that these values could be reworded or reframed.

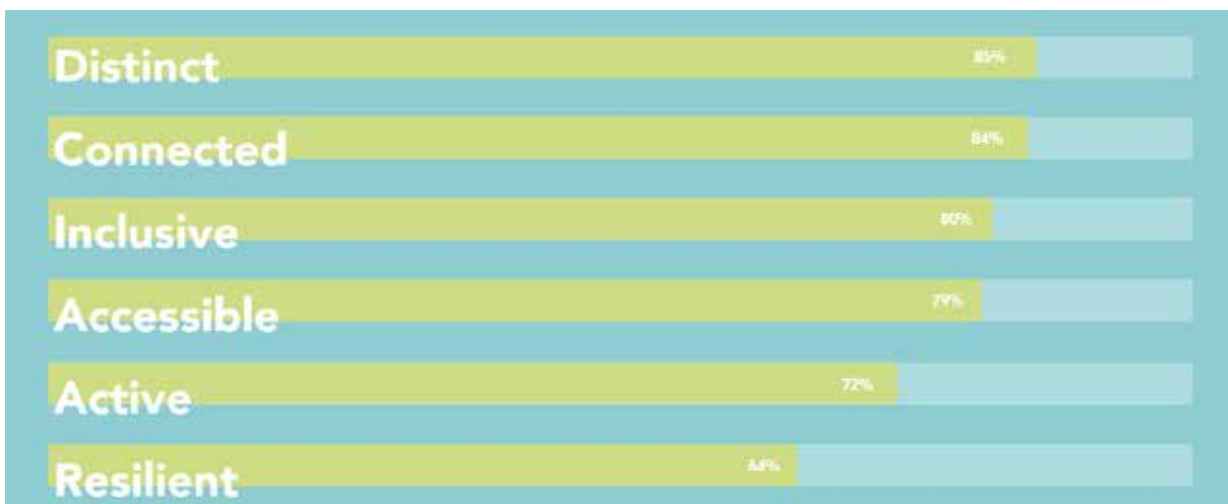


Figure 5: Levels of support for draft core values

What is one word to describe your ideal future downtown?

In an open-ended response, vibrant emerged as a clear front-runner with 45 mentions, followed by walkable (24 responses), and accessible (15 responses).

What is one thing we could do to improve our parks and greenspaces downtown?

In an open-ended response, several key themes emerged:

Enhanced Amenities and Facilities (33 responses)

Comments included: improve the year-round useability with features like ice surfaces, splashpads, and washrooms; increasing seating, picnic tables, and opportunities for commercial food and beverage like food trucks; create new parks or repurposing existing parks; provide more interactive elements for youth and children.

Beautification and Greenery (28 responses)

Comments included: integrate more native trees and plants; incorporate natural elements such as stone; maintain green spaces year-round; provide better wayfinding.

Accessibility and Connectivity (23 responses)

Comments included: improve connectivity between green spaces; ensure accessibility for people with varying mobilities; connect parks with active modes of transportation.

Community Engagement and Events (15 responses)

Comments included: additional infrastructure to host more events, festivals, and gatherings.

What is one thing we could do to improve our parks and greenspaces downtown?

In an open-ended response, several key themes emerged:

Improved Wayfinding and Signage (51 references)

Comments included: Install clearer directional signs at trail intersections and provide maps and distance markers along the trails.

Trail Maintenance and Winter Management (36 references)

Comments included: regularly clear snow and ice from the trails.

Paving and Accessibility (47 references)

Comments included: pave currently unpaved walkways to make them accessible to everyone. Use permeable paving to balance accessibility with environmental concerns while maintaining some natural gravel trails for a more natural feel.

Connectivity and Expansion (30 references)

Comments included: create better connections between existing trails to form a more cohesive network and extend trails to connect with popular destinations within and outside downtown.

Bike Lanes and Separation from Pedestrians (25 references)

Comments included: implement designated bike lanes to separate cyclists from pedestrians design measures to ensure pedestrian safety from faster-moving trail users (e.g., e-bikes)

Public Amenities (23 references)

Comments included: install more benches along the trails for resting and enjoying the scenery; increase the number of trash bins and dog waste stations to maintain cleanliness.

Environmental Concerns (16 references)

Comments included: avoid over-paving to preserve the natural feel of the trails; use low-impact lighting solutions to reduce light pollution and minimize disturbance to wildlife.

Cultural and Educational Signage (14 references)

Comments included: install signs providing information about local flora, fauna, and the surrounding geography and incorporate historical or cultural facts about the area along the trails.

What is one thing we could do to improve downtown's public realm (e.g., the streets, sidewalks, and public spaces) to better meet your needs?

In an open-ended response, several key themes emerged.

Transportation Infrastructure (27 references)

Many respondents highlighted the importance of enhancing transportation infrastructure for all modes to reduce conflict and make downtown feel more prominent and defined. Emphasis was placed on wider sidewalks, dedicated bike lanes, better signage for cyclists and pedestrians, and improved parking management with opinions mixed on what that looks like (e.g., removal of paid parking, creation of a parkade, or significant reduction in vehicle traffic and parking spaces).

Beautification (24 references)

Numerous respondents emphasized the importance of beautifying downtown--and Main Street in particular--with an emphasis on making it a place for people. This included either pedestrianizing the street or providing wider sidewalks, greenery, informal seating, better public art installations, and quality materials. Several respondents referenced Bear Street in Banff as an example.

Accessibility and Safety (17 references)

Respondents stressed the need for improved accessibility and safety measures, including pedestrian-only zones, better maintenance of sidewalks, snow and ice removal in winter, and ensuring universal accessibility throughout the study area. Suggestions also included enhancing lighting, installing more benches, creating safer pedestrian crossings, and providing additional accessible parking stalls.

Community Spaces and Amenities (11 references)

Several respondents highlighted the importance of creating vibrant community spaces and amenities downtown. Suggestions included adding more public seating areas, picnic spots, outdoor gathering spaces, and fire pits to create spaces for people to enjoy without having to shop. Additionally,

respondents mentioned the need for public washrooms, performance areas, and facilities for hosting events and activities that could help bring residents downtown and provide a sense of animation.

In the future, what would make you come downtown more often?

We asked respondents to rank a list of 10 potential options in order of preference (with 1 being the most important) that included features such as increased accessibility, pathway access, and increased public transit. We heard that people want more spaces to gather (average rank of 3.92), more retail diversity (average rank of 4.33), and better trail/pathway access (average rank of 4.37) as the three top options respectively. More patios for commercial areas ranked last with an average rank of 6.01, closely preceded by increased public transit.

In the future, what would be your preferred ways to travel to and within downtown if it was convenient and could meet your needs?

Respondents were provided five options: walk, cycle, public transportation, vehicle, and micro-mobility (scooters, skateboard), and were asked to rank their preference. Respondents clearly identified walking as their preferred mode of transportation with an average ranking of 1.84, followed closely by cycling with an average ranking of 2.19. Cycling replaced vehicles as the number two preferred transportation mode compared to a previous question when we asked how people currently move around downtown, indicating that increased cycling infrastructure could increase mode shift downtown.

When it comes to planning downtown for the next 25 years, it's helpful to think of some "big ideas" that could transform Downtown in alignment with the six values. We identified some possible big ideas and would like to understand how these resonate with you. To what extent do the following ideas align with your future vision for downtown?

Respondents also indicated strong levels of support all ten of the draft big ideas, with support ranging from 54% (creation of gateways) to 89% (embrace nature and views of the mountains).

What is YOUR big idea? Tell us about a bold idea you would like to see in your future Downtown that could advance our guiding values.

Big ideas that were suggested by respondents fell under the themes of create a place for people and year-round community, meet local needs, provide easy access, connect to nature, and foster a distinct character.

A Place for People

Ideas included: fully pedestrianize Main Street; limit car traffic in the Town Centre and promote alternative transportation options; create designated pedestrian zones that may extend beyond Main Street with enhanced design and aesthetics (e.g., cobblestones, plantings, public art, seating); enhance safety measures for pedestrians, including better crosswalks and traffic calming measures.

Meets Local Needs

Ideas included: restrict short-term rentals to increase availability of long-term housing; incentivize developers to prioritize more affordable housing; allow for higher density, mixed-use developments that cater to diverse residents and incomes; partner with non-profit organizations to develop affordable

housing projects; encourage locally owned businesses and explore tools to discourage chain establishments; upgrade key public amenities such as public washrooms, and provide new recreational facilities close to downtown.

Year-round Community

Ideas included: create a central plaza that can host festivals, markets, and other events year round; Establish an arts and culture district to draw residents downtown year round; design public spaces to be suitable for year-round use (e.g., covered patios and sidewalks, indoor amenities); explore creative, multi-purpose uses of public spaces (e.g., drink establishment in a greenspace, dog-friendly areas); create new, year-round public spaces (e.g., formalize the skating pond) with seating, fire pits, and other infrastructure; invite family and youth downtown through indoor family-friendly facilities; move beyond commercialism with free or low-cost opportunities to engage with downtown; balance housing needs with the potential for small-scale or boutique hotels to add vibrancy to the area.

Easy Access

Ideas included: build offsite parking facilities with efficient pedestrian connections or transit services to alleviate parking and vehicle congestion downtown; construct a multi-level parkade to accommodate parking demand while freeing up the surface lots for other uses; explore rail connections or transit hubs to reduce car traffic and congestion; improve bike lanes, pedestrian pathways, and infrastructure that make other modes easier and safer to use; invest in infrastructure that will improve the flow of vehicles for those that need to drive, such as improved intersections, signage, and signalization; ensure that infrastructure improvements are inclusive and accessible to all residents, including those with disabilities.

Connected to Nature

Ideas included: create green spaces and urban parks with native landscaping and sustainable design features; explore adaptable spaces that can be used for community-oriented uses and emergencies; promote eco-friendly initiatives such as waste reduction, recycling programs, and sustainable tourism practices; ensure new infrastructure and lighting minimize light pollution and support a “dark sky” approach to urban design.

Distinct Character

Ideas included: create height restrictions and design guidelines to preserve views and help maintain an authentic or mountain-town character; immerse downtown with its natural surroundings by introducing trees, plantings, green spaces, and active and accessible connections to the river and Riverside park; balance the needs of residents and visitors to preserve and showcase Canmore’s charm; embrace a clear, consistent style that connects the entire commercial area; promote local history and Indigenous culture through public art installations and engaging gathering spaces.

In the long term, how interested are you in a vision of Main Street that involves more space for people and permanent public spaces, such as expanded patios, landscaping, greenspaces, public plazas, and purpose-built areas for public events?

87% of respondents expressed support for a more permanent, people-focused Main Street with enhancements such as patios and public plazas.



What this map shows

This map highlights key themes of input that had a specific location component. It includes pieces of input collected through various engagement tools, including a virtual and physical asset map, public and stakeholder workshops, a youth mapping exercise, and an online survey. The map does not show feedback that was not linked to a general location or area.



Legend — Key Themes

Things People Love

- 1 Engine Bridge
- 2 Wildlife
- 3 Skating pond (seasonal)
- 4 Pathway (creek)
- 5 Pathway (Bow River)
- 6 artsPlace
- 7 Public restrooms
- 8 Friendship Park
- 9 Civic Centre
place for youth gathering
- 10 Rotary Friendship Park
seating areas
- 11 Main Street
seasonal pedestrianization,
walkable, local businesses,
views of mountains
- 12 Riverside Park
- 13 Pedestrian connection
- 14 Centennial Park
playground, stage
- 15 Boardwalk
- 16 Greenery
- 17 Pathway
natural character

Ideas for Change

- 1 Seating and other improvements
- 2 Reduced speed limit
- 3 Densify residential areas
- 4 Year-round park space
- 5 Improved residential-commercial interface
- 6 Better connect 10th and Main Streets
- 7 Expand recreation facilities
- 8 Expand artsPlace / create an arts & culture area
- 9 Develop parking lots with a higher and better use
- 10 Restroom improvements
- 11 Pathway improvements
(mixed perspectives on accessibility improvements like paving and lighting)
- 12 Wayfinding and access improvements
- 13 Transportation improvements
- 14 Main Street improvements
(e.g., fully pedestrianize, different mix of businesses, activation)
- 15 Pathway improvements
(e.g., wayfinding, winter maintenance)
- 16 Programming and amenities
(e.g., seating, firepits)
- 17 Reduce congestion
- 18 Dedicated cycling infrastructure
- 19 Wayfinding
(e.g., to river, downtown)
- 20 Repurpose the surface parking lot
- 21 Intersection improvements
(e.g., signage, signal timing)
- 22 Improved connectivity
(e.g., to the river)
- 23 Park improvements
(e.g., splash pad, paved track, dog park)
- 24 Connection to Spring Creek
- 25 Gateway features
(e.g., interactive art, lighting)
- 26 Accessibility improvements
(e.g., ramp)
- 27 Pedestrian safety improvements
- 28 Densify area
- 29 Consider other uses
(e.g., intercept parking)
- 30 Activate the space

Summary of Stakeholder Feedback

Stakeholder input from a cross-section of key community groups received during a virtual workshop (Feb. 27) and a follow up survey (3 responses) were consistent with the overall feedback we heard from the public. Feedback was reflected in the overall themes.

Figure 6: Section of artist's mural showcasing participants' big ideas at The Warm Up and The Cool Down events





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