FORT MCMURRAY

Report of The Waterfront Steering Committee

FORT MCMURRAY
At the confluence of the Athabasca and Clearwater rivers

FORT MCMURRAY
The Jewel in the Heart of
Fort McMurray

An Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

The Waterfront Steering Committee

On September 12, 2014, the following citizens formed the Waterfront Steering Committee as mandated by Council

Ian Dirom *Chair*
Cathy Dreier *Vice-Chair*
Bryan Lutes *Commercial and Residential Development*
Peter Fortna *Aboriginal Peoples*
Carmen Ramstead *Cultural, Heritage and Historic Interests*
Ron Fetzko *Recreational Use of the Clearwater River & Snye*
Paul Hunt *Recreational Use of the Clearwater River & Snye*
Todd Hillier *Cultural, Heritage and Historic Interests*
Debbie Hahn *Aboriginal Peoples*
Cliff Maron *Commercial and Residential Development*
Gene Ouellette *Citizen at Large*

32 Committee meetings were held with approximately 600 meeting man hours dedicated to this project, and many more studying, preparing and contemplating what would be in the best interests of the community as we understood it.

Public Engagement

As the Waterfront area attracts a high level of public attention and political interest, there needs to be an appreciation of the community's views and the diversity of stakeholders' agendas

Social Media 167

Stakeholders Group 22

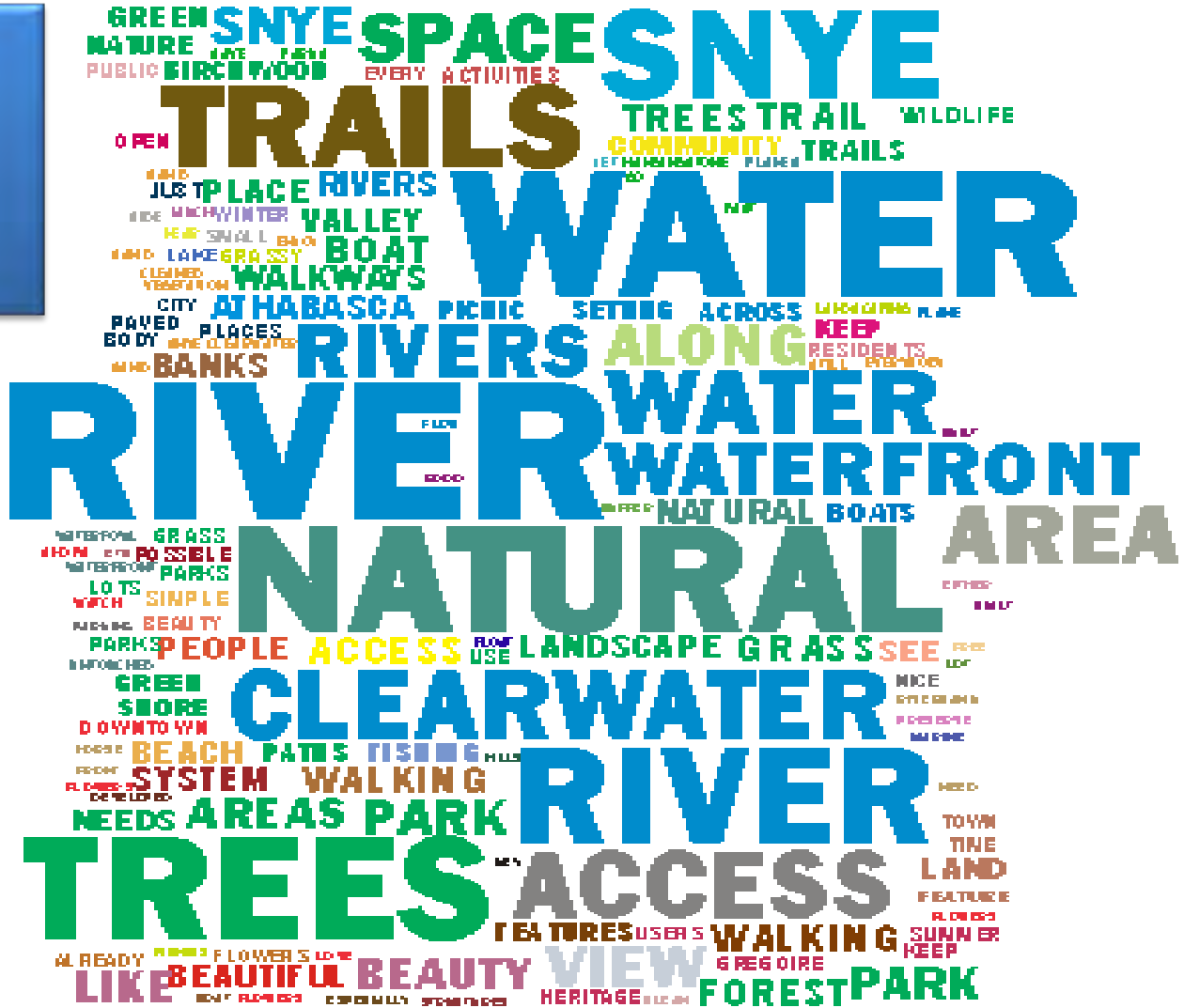
Public Meetings and Survey 267

Public Engagement

- *Results indicate that there is keen community interest in the development of the waterfront lands for park and related complementary uses.*
- *The majority of findings reflect a similar vision of parkland, trails, related retail and recreation related business opportunities, float planes, water accessibility for the user groups, and a cultural center.*
- *A main concern is the water quality of the Snye channel and safe access from there to the Clearwater River (a designated heritage river).*
- *The impact of flood abatement and loop road related issues are a focus.*
- *The number of topics and issues is extensive, ranging from concern over detailed design of boat launches, parking lots and off highway vehicle needs, to the introduction of local interpretive elements along trails, and the merits of building a seniors facility in the vicinity.*
- *It is also acknowledged that there is a place for urban development, but most desirably set back as an edge to the park.*

1. What are the key cultural features of the waterfront area in your opinion?

2. What are the key natural features of the waterfront area in your opinion?



3. Describe your vision of the waterfront

Review of the CURRENT SITUATION – a planning appraisal

- *A comprehensive review of the current situation in the Study Area was undertaken, identifying and understanding key considerations that should be taken into account when developing plans for the Waterfront. It identifies those elements that can be beneficially retained and protected and those opportunities and potentials that can be exploited.*
- *This understanding is particularly important for such a sensitive and prominent location - Fort McMurray's waterfront.*
- *The fundamental acknowledgement regarding the Snye/Clearwater River waterfront and the greater landform of the confluence of the Athabasca and Clearwater River is that it is the jewel in the crown of the community, both physically and historically.*
- *As an area of outstanding natural beauty with unique and distinctive character, it is precious to the community, and in our interest to safeguard it.*

Key Issues

1. Water Quality of the Snye

- Weed Harvesting
- Water Flow
- Fish Habitat
- Improve Water Quality

Key Issues

2. The Scale and Type of Urban Development

- Storage for recreational equipment - Rowing Club, Canoe Club, Float Planes etc.
- Mooring areas for boats and planes
- Parking for overnight and day users
- Commercial Development (e.g. cafes, boardwalk, farmers market, mini golf, rental of canoe, skates, rafts etc.)
- The Appropriate Scale of Development
- Design and Development of Snye Point
- Economics of affordable development

Key Issues

3. Use of Space and Public Programming

- Tourism opportunities (boat tours, fishing tours, water taxi, adventure tours, hunting, float plane rides)
- Preservation and Improvement of the Designated Areas of Parkland
- The Design and Development of Snye Point
- The Recognition of Historic Aspects of the Snye and Clearwater
- Cultural and historical uses: preserve and enhance – Cultural
- Public art and interpretive displays

Key Issues

4. Safety

- Accessibility to the Waterfront
- Security for Float Planes
- Resolution of Conflicting Uses and Activities in the active Snye Area
- Minimizing water use conflict – no wake zones, noise bylaws, speed in winter
- Safe access to still water and river system 12 months of the year
- Emergency Response - access to water and lay down area for command post set-up - may include but not limited to: pipeline emergency, Search and Rescue and other emergency response teams

Key Issues

5. Flood Mitigation

- The Design and Impact of the Flood Mitigation Program
- The Design and Impact of the Loop Road

The Snye

The Snye is a body of water approximately 4,400 feet (1,200 meters) in length and 400 feet (122 meters) in width. The calmness of the water and the relative straightness of the shoreline provide for a safe harbour and natural place to land floatplanes and launch boats and other watercraft. The location is unique to the area and is not duplicated anywhere on either the Athabasca or Clearwater Rivers. The lands along the shoreline of the Snye are owned and controlled by the Municipality.

McDonald Drive, built in 1960's, reduced the flow of water through the Snye. The culverts installed at the time of road construction have become choked with silt and vegetation essentially closing off all water flow.

The Snye

The Snye /Clearwater/ Athabaasca

The Snye

The Snye has become prone to siltation. In recent years the Municipality has regularly dredged portions of the waterway to maintain the depth for floatplane and boat traffic.

The Snye

Mother Natures's Plan

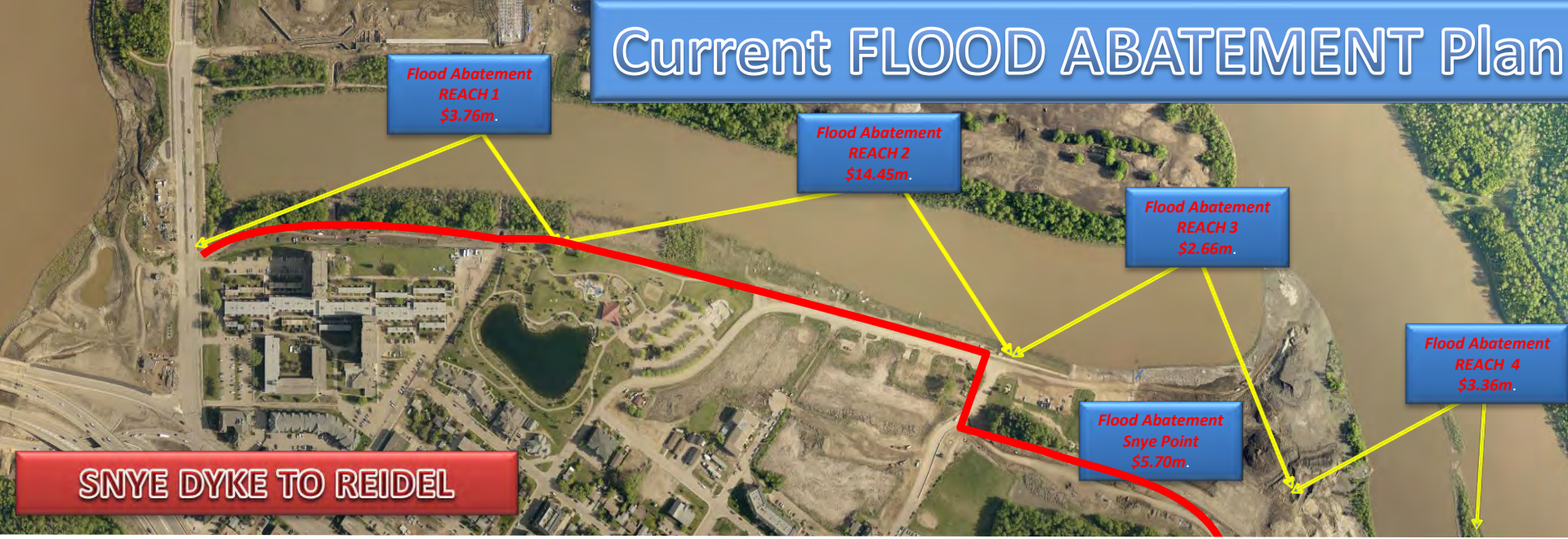
Annual Dredging

Continued Siltation

Habitat Renewal

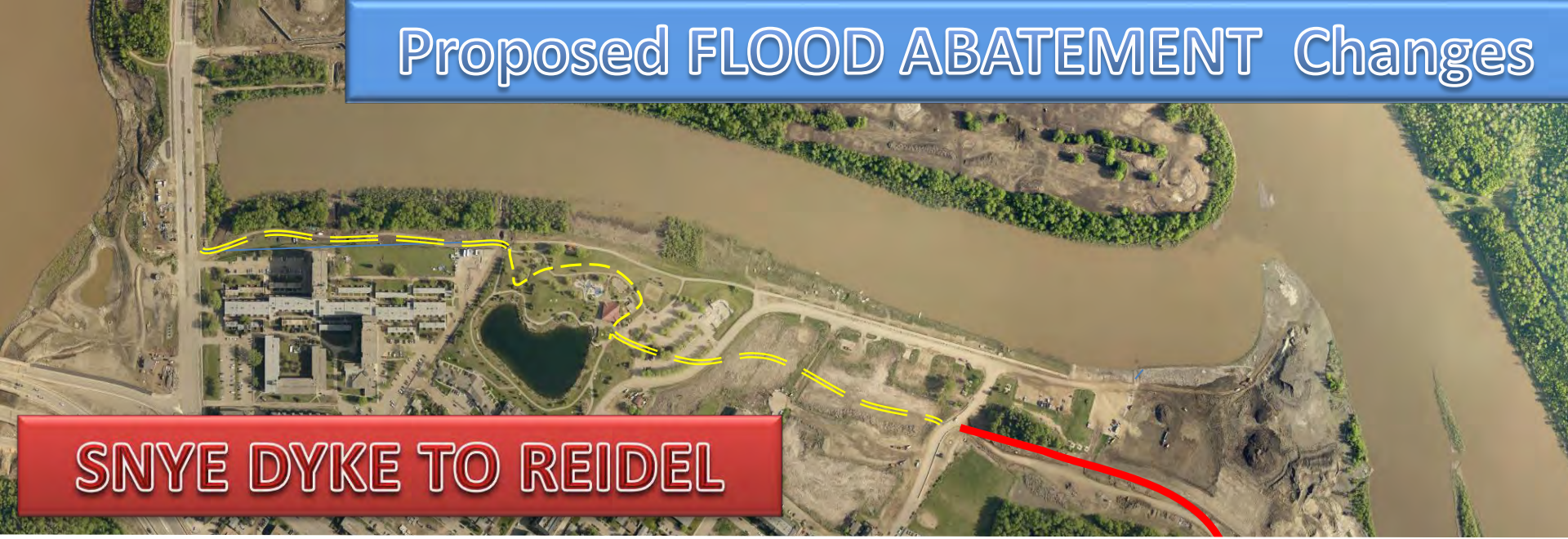
Muskeg

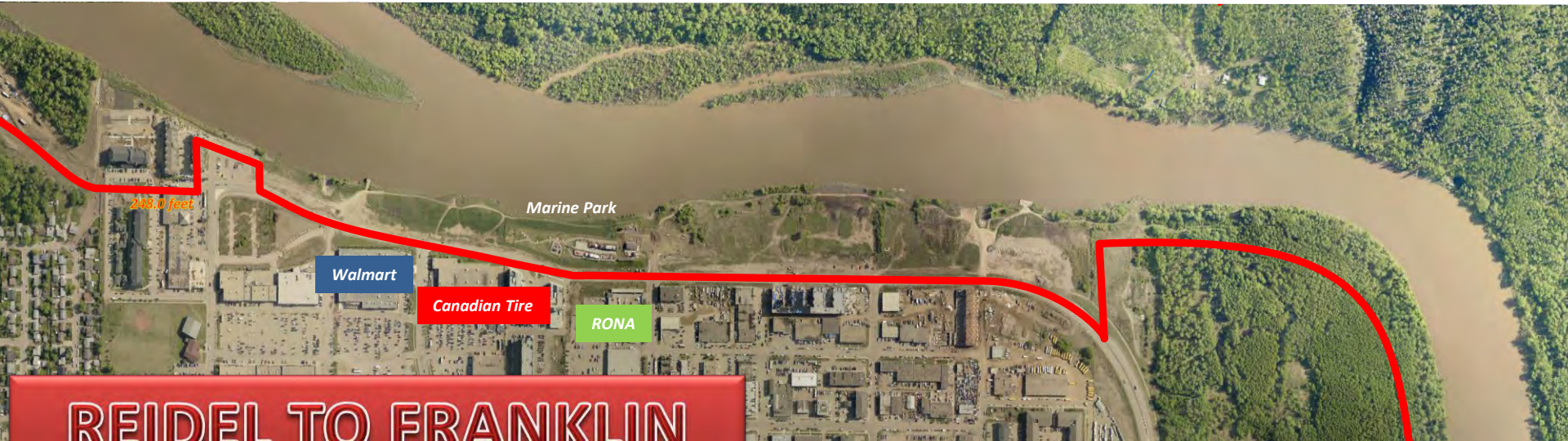
Current FLOOD ABATEMENT Plan



Reach 4/5 – Elevated Snye Point/Prairie Loop Boulevard/Floodwalls/Flood gates

Proposed FLOOD ABATEMENT Changes





LOOP ROAD MAINTAIN CLEARWATER SECTION ELEVATION AT 248.5M.

LOOP ROAD SUGGESTED REALIGNMENT

PROPOSED LAND USE – PARK CONSERVED

SNYE DYKE TO REIDEL

MAINTAIN EXISTING LAND USE

REIDEL TO FRANKLIN

Priority Recommendations

1. Recognition that this area of Fort McMurray is one of outstanding natural beauty and should be conserved accordingly.

2. Rezone the majority of the area to Parkland and allow for active and passive, complementary recreational uses.

3. Continue to improve the water quality of the Snye.

Priorities

4. Complete a continuous trail along the waterfront connecting the major neighborhoods to the north and south.

5. Create and refine the design of an extended Snye Park and its waterfront, and introduce Conservation and Management Plans.

6. Refine the Loop Road and Flood Mitigation plans, and realize potential economies, and a less intrusive massing.

Priorities

1. Recognition that this area of Fort McMurray is one of outstanding natural beauty and should be conserved accordingly.

Priorities

2. Rezone the majority of the area to Parkland and allow for active and passive, complementary recreational uses.

The majority of respondents were clear that:

- *high rise residential development, on the edge of the Snye negatively impacts the public realm and should be rezoned to Parkland.*
- *that such development is incompatible with their vision.*
- *however, they did embrace the idea of limited commercial development (such as pubs, restaurants, boutiques, and other related initiatives in the area.*

2. Rezone the majority of the area to Parkland and allow for active and passive, complementary recreational uses.

Priorities

Priorities

3. Continue to improve the water quality of the Snye.

- Commence operation of the west end water intake, monitor and review for performance evaluation.
- Formalize and improve the dredging program.
- Review the merits of the outlet structure proposed by Golder.

Priorities

4. Complete a continuous trail along the waterfront connecting the major neighborhoods to the north and south.

Continuous walkway connecting Waterfront to Thickwood/Timberlea and Waterways/Beaconhill

Priorities

5. Create and refine the design of an extended Snye Park and its waterfront, and introduce Conservation and Management Plans.

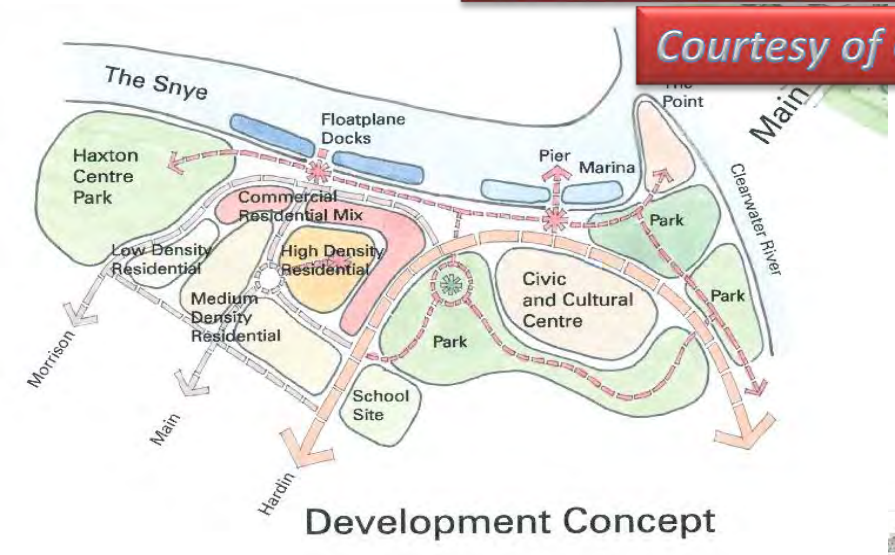
Refine traffic circulation through the Park and Snye Point - providing a more pedestrian friendly scale and a softer interface with park extensions

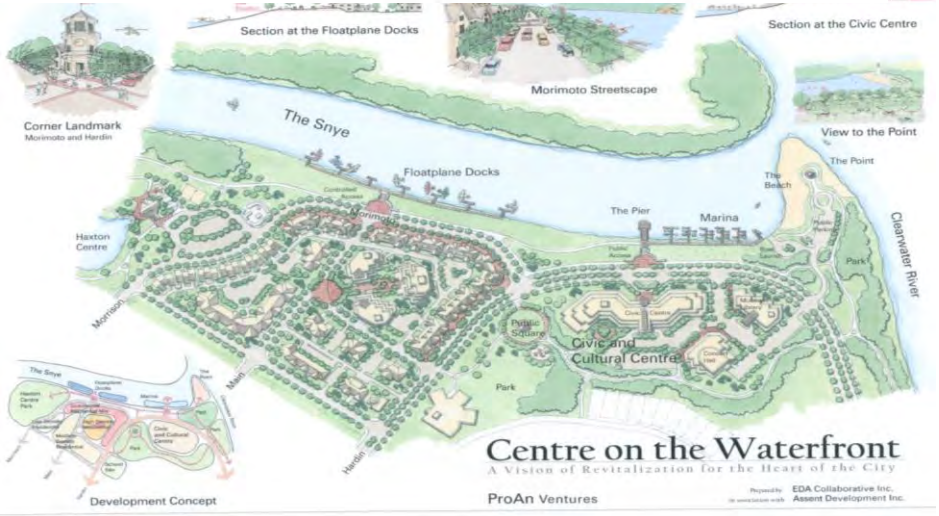
Priorities

6. Refine the Loop Road and Flood Mitigation plans, and realize potential economies, and a less intrusive massing.

ALTERNATIVE CONCEPTS AND IDEAS

Courtesy of Carmelo Daprocida





ALTERNATIVE CONCEPT

Courtesy of Carmelo Daprocida

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ALTERNATIVE CONCEPT

Courtesy of Carmelo Daprocida

FLOAT PLANE BASE

FLOAT PLANE BASE

The developmental theme of the Snye area can provide a focus on the importance of the Water Aerodrome in Canadian aviation history

FLOAT PLANE BASE

The Snye SAFE HARBOUR

TOURISM OPPORTUNITY

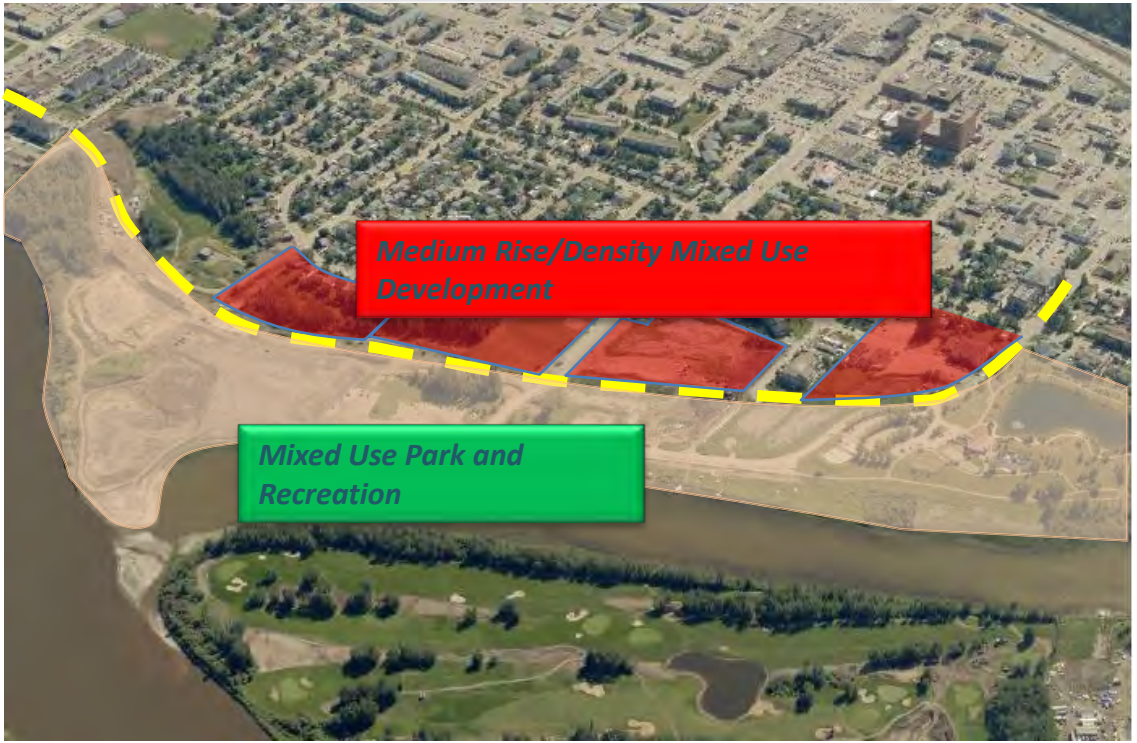
A tourism inventory and opportunity study should be completed to help promote and guide the development of tourism opportunities on the waterfront and within the Municipality.

As noted above, many in the community have identified the area under review as key to the identity of the community and should be showcased as such, by developing tourist opportunities. The area is well situated as a staging area for a number of other activities including boat tours, fishing tours, and hunting. Furthermore the history of the area that includes the signing of Treaty 8, a long history of aviation and as a key transportation hub could be leveraged. Heritage Park has already established the Marine Park and this should be seen as a pillar in the development of a tourist strategy for the area. Additional hubs should be identified that are grounded in the areas history and that can act as an introduction to the region.

The Snye FISH AND WILDLIFE HABITAT

RECOMMENDED CONCEPT FOR THE SNYE

BASIC CONCEPT



1. *Mixed Use Park and Recreation by the Snye*
2. *Up to 10 Storey, Mixed Use Development behind Dyke*
3. *Flood Abatement by Ring Road and Dyke*
4. *Linear Park Connections elsewhere*

Recommendations

Recommendations

Water Quality of the Snye

- *The operation of the intake installed at the West end of the Snye should be commenced, monitored and reviewed for performance evaluation.*
- *The east end of the Snye is prone to silt buildup, the RMWB should formalize and improve its dredging program.*
- *The outlet structure proposed by the Golder report at the east end of the Snye, should be reviewed and considered for implementation in conjunction with 1 and 2.*
- *The weed harvesting and riparian edge cleanup planned by the Municipality should be implemented and be considered for inclusion as a long term program.*
- *RMWB to further pursue the full flush solutions recommended in the Golder Report.*

Scale and Type of Development

The Appropriate Scale of Development

- *The lands proposed for twenty five story high rise residential development, in close proximity to the Snye negatively impacts the public realm and should be rezoned to Parkland.*
- *The majority of respondents were clear that the scale of development, particularly where high rise was proposed along the Snye, would be incompatible with their vision. However, they did embrace the idea of limited commercial development (such as pubs, restaurants, boutiques, and other related initiatives.*
- *Lands on the water-side of the Loop Road/Flood Protection Berms should be rezoned for Parkland with the exception of two currently privately owned parcels zoned DC-R4 and PRA2 Prairie.*
- *Lands within the City Core side of Loop Road/Flood Protection Berms should be zoned for medium to high density and height, and an urban village concept considered. This would provide the foot traffic necessary to support commercial initiatives along the waterfront.*

Commercial Development (cafes, boardwalk, farmers market, mini golf, rental of canoe, skates, rafts etc.)

- *A plan and process for the development of small scale commercial units on the edge of the Morrison/Hardin berm area similar to the Haxton Centre, which is at 250m and integrated development within a village concept, where practical be developed.*
- *Examine the prospects of developing appropriate facilities for seniors, using Municipal owned lands as a financial and motivating trigger.*

The Design and Development of Snye Point

- *The circulation of traffic through the park be refined and west of Snye Point - properly integrated, providing a softer interface with park extensions and pedestrian friendly scale.*

Economics of Affordable Development

- *The encouragement of "Made in Fort McMurray" solutions.*
- *Allow flexibility in development concept rather than emphasizing a solely high density urban scale.*
- *Further engage the development industry and public in a transparent and open minded way, embracing ideas as opposed to selling preconceived notions.*

Mooring Areas for Boats and Planes

- *The original boat launch should be retained and upgraded.*
- *The Float Plane Base should remain and docking area assigned.*

Storage for Recreational Equipment - Rowing Club, Canoe Club, Float Planes etc.

- *The prospect of providing a boathouse/ recreation storage structure adjacent to the Snye should be investigated as part of the overall plan.*

Parking for overnight and day users

- *There is a need for parking for overnight and daytime parking for regional river users.*

Use of Space and Public Programming

Tourism opportunities (boat tours, fishing tours, water taxi, adventure tours, hunting, float plane rides)

- *A tourism inventory and opportunity study should be completed to help promote and guide the development of tourism opportunities on the waterfront and within the Municipality.*
- *As noted above, many in the community have identified the area under review as key to the identity of the community and should be showcased as such, by developing tourist opportunities. The area is well situated as a staging area for a number of other activities including boat tours, fishing tours, and hunting. Furthermore the history of the area that includes the signing of Treaty 8, a long history of aviation and as a key transportation hub could be leveraged. Heritage Park has already established the Marine Park and this should be seen as a pillar in the development of a tourist strategy for the area. Additional hubs should be identified that are grounded in the areas history and that can act as an introduction to the region.*

- ***Preservation and Improvement of the Designated Areas of Parkland (that includes recognition of the historic aspects of the Snye and Clearwater)***
- *The several historic points and features along the Clearwater promenade should be preserved and emphasized in conjunction with the continuous trail.*
- *The larger proposed developments such as the Orchards, Community Gardens etc. are in question in terms of relevance, functionality and viability. Their capital and operating costs are not known and they should be put aside pending consideration of the priorities of current thinking.*
- *Many of the survey responses as well as interactions with the stakeholder group and some of the submissions made to the committee hope that the RMWB will endeavor to maintain that natural character while creating spaces where the "community can meet." Pathways should be cut and interpretive signage and areas of historical interest should be noted. The RMWB should engage with key local stakeholders, notably Aboriginal stakeholders and long term residents to identify those areas and develop an interpretation strategy that stays true to the whole history of the area. Such an interpretation strategy may include interpretive signage, panels noting historical interest, and where possible artifacts. Efforts should also be made to meaningfully engage with some of the newer ethnic communities in the region to ensure the developed spaces also meet the needs of the growing community which is becoming home to such diversity.*

The Design and Development of Snye Point

- *The design continue to be refined, and access, parking and additional circulation reflect the nature of its mixed use, and pedestrian needs.*

The Recognition of the Historic Aspects of the Snye and Clearwater

- *The development of interpretive signage, historical interest panels, and other relevant artifacts should integrated along the trails.*

Cultural and Historical Uses: Preserve and Enhance

- *The development of a cultural centre in the extended Snye Park area should be developed with focus on the First Nations, Metis and Pioneer influences on Fort McMurray's development and the impressive evolution of our local modern cosmopolitan and multicultural society.*
- *The site of the Marine Park be extended to the water's edge and opportunities for park expansion to the east and west be considered.*

Public Art and Interpretive Displays

- *The development of public art with historic and relevant local industrial artifacts etc. should integrated into the park.*

Cultural, Historical and Festival Areas

- *There is a need to define, integrate and develop our festival heritage into the park environment.*
- *Closely connected to the above is the need for the municipality to create space for key community organizations to grow and contribute to the community. A number of organizations have made specific submissions to the committee and we recommend that the RMWB engage in a meaningful dialogue with those organizations in order to find space to grow. The committee strongly supports the idea of developing a cultural hub in the extended Snye Park area with development of secondary hubs potentially extended to other areas such as the Horse Pasture. This hub should be developed in consultation with the key stakeholders including heritage, Aboriginal, artistic and multicultural organizations. It is the hope that such a designated area would build on Borealis Park,*
- *Marine Park and Heritage Park and would be connected through interpretive walking paths, public art displays, gathering areas, Amphitheatre(s) and other spaces for "small concerts, birthday parties or whatever group event may be required."*

Dog Park (off leash and water access) on Park Area Side of the Berm

- *An additional need identified by the community is the need for more areas not only for the community, but also for our "furry friends." As such the committee is supportive of identifying an area where pet owners can responsibly let their dogs off leash. In our assessment the ideal area would be to designate it on the park area side of the berm that is floodable. The development of the park should be done in close consultation with the FMSPCA and any other groups that have a vested interest in animal care in the region.*
- *A second off leash Dog Park should therefore be located on the west side of the lower townsite*

Safety

Accessibility to the Waterfront

- A continuous walkway along the extents of the Waterfront and providing connections to
- Thickwood/Timberlea and Waterways/Beaconhill trail systems be built as a priority.

Resolution of Conflicting Uses and Activities in the Active Snye Area

- The west end of the Snye be developed for more passive and non-motorized uses, and the
- east end for more active motorized use.

Safe Access to Still Water and the River System 12 Months of the Year

- Safe access in the Snye to the river system 12 months of the year.

Minimizing Water Use Conflict - No Wake Zones, Noise Bylaws, Speed Limits

- Provide boat etiquette signage
- Develop an Educational program

Emergency Response

- Access to water and lay down area for command post set up – may include but not limited
- to: pipeline emergency, Search and Rescue and other emergency response teams.

Flood Mitigation

The Design and Impact of the Flood Mitigation Program

- *Between Hardin Street and Morrison Street a berm (250.0m) provide flood abatement.*
- *The Loop Road remain at elevation 248.0 – 248.5m and a wall, berm or sheet piling provide additional protection to 250m on the south side of the alignment.*
- *The difference between a 1:40 and 1:100 year flood statistically is 2.5 events in a hundred years. Ice Jam floods are predictable in terms of specific timing and are very short term phenomenon. Temporary closure solutions together with engineered structures where necessary should be able to be developed economically at the key break areas.*
- *The possibility of relocating the Dyke to protect the DC-R4 should be negotiated with the land owners with a view to obtaining some additional community riverside lands.*

The Design and Impact of the Loop Road

- *The Loop Road be located from Franklin Avenue in the east, and end at Hardin Street.*
- *Between Hardin Street and Morrison Street a berm should provide flood abatement.*
- *Fraser Avenue between Hardin and Morrison provides the primary local road link.*

Further Recommendations

- *The evolution of this plan will require further developmental work in conjunction with the community and their various groups. It is important therefore that the public be continually involved, informed and their input respected given the known needs of the community and its stakeholders.*

VITAL NEXT STEPS

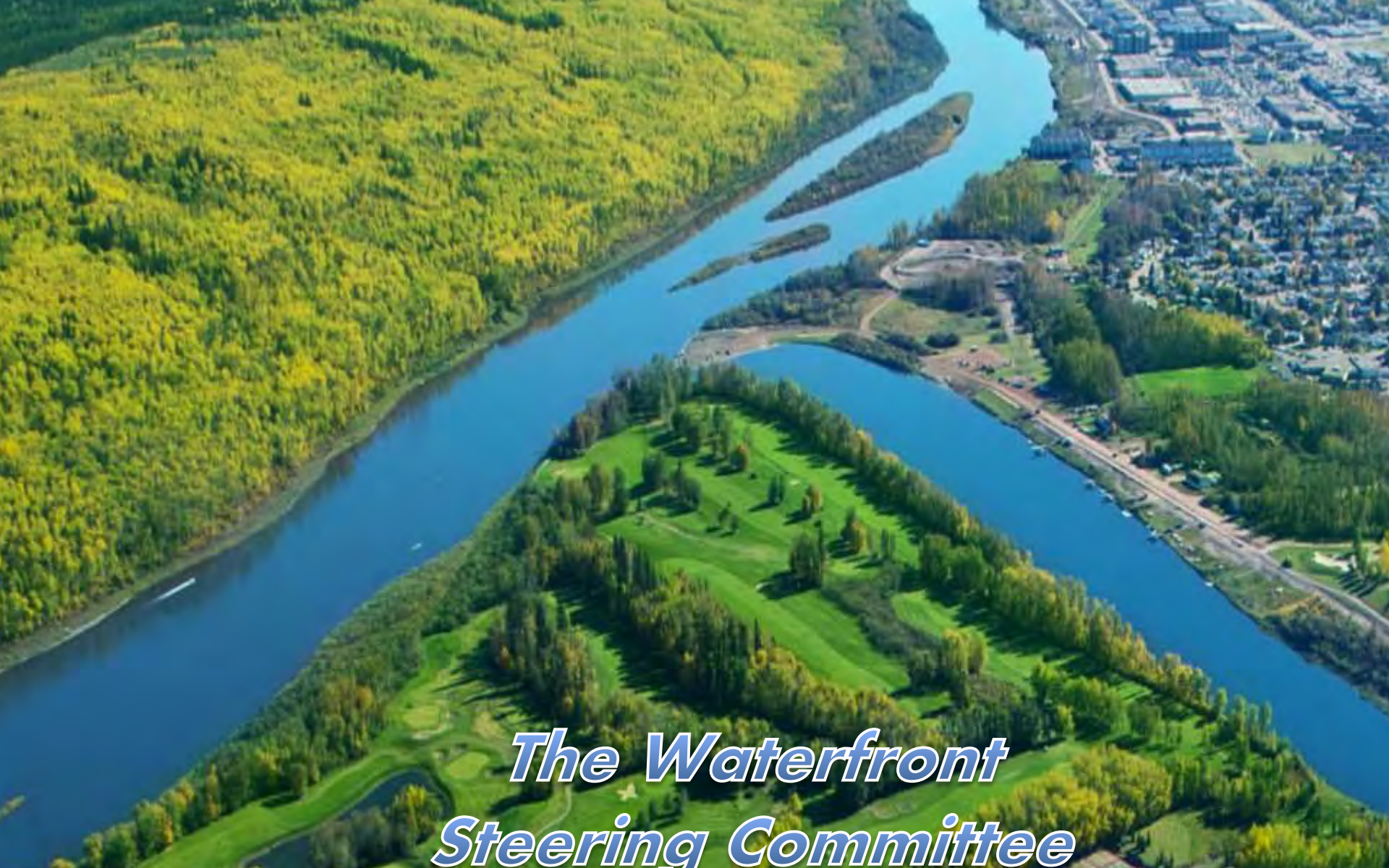
Undertake a working session with the Steering Committee, Administration and Council to fully review and understand the intentions and implications of these proposals.

Prepare a land use amendment to zone the area as Parkland.

Complete the basic trail connections as a foundation on which to quickly enable use and enjoyment of the waterfront experience.

Commit to Action and move forward on appropriate initial elements of the plan.

The Waterfront Steering Committee



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