

Smith Creek Area Structure Plan Phase 3: Policy Development Report

Background

The Town of Canmore and Three Sisters Mountain Village (TSMV) continue to work together to create a development plan for the Smith Creek lands in TSMV, more commonly known as Sites 7, 8 & 9. The collaborative process involves addressing opportunities and challenges from a variety of perspectives by providing multiple occasions for the community to participate in the process. **Phase 1** was completed in July of 2015, **Phase 2** was completed in December of 2015 and **Phase 3** was completed June of 2016, although there is not a clear distinct ending or beginning that can be identified between **Phases 3** and **4**.

This report deals specifically with the public engagement undertaken in **Phase 3** of the process.

Summary of Phase 3 Activities

Phase 3 focused on refining the draft Concept Plan for the Smith Creek ASP that was developed in Phase 2 of the process. Members of the Community Advisory Group (CAG) continued to meet in Phase 3 of the process and provide input and feedback as the Concept Plan was being refined and the policy document was developed. Four CAG meetings and one sub-group meeting were held during **Phase 3** of the process.

The Project Team began to refine the Concept Plan. This included a technical review of steep creeks, grading, transportation, and the mix of land uses in relation to needs of both the Town and the developer. The review also included a layering of recreation opportunities within the Smith Creek area. Discussions on the topic of wildlife focused on more holistic mitigation strategies and included recent learnings and new research. These mitigation strategies include edge treatments, such as fencing, attractant management and increased education and enforcement. It should be noted that some of these strategies are outside the scope of the ASP but the discussions were useful to inform other Town and provincial strategies. A draft Environmental Study was also completed and is now under review. . Notes from the CAG meetings and the sub-group meeting can be found on the website: www.smithcreekcanmore.ca.

As a result of the conversations in **Phase 2**, specifically focused on how Smith Creek ASP supported the vision for Canmore and how the area encompassed in the ASP connected with the surrounding developments, for example, the Resort Centre, TSMV made the decision to also apply for an amendment to the Resort Centre ASP and submit that amendment at the same time as the Smith Creek ASP. This will provide Council and members of the public with a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness of the two areas of Canmore. Although the Resort Centre ASP amendment application is separate from the collaborative process, information and ideas from the Smith Creek discussions are informing TSMV as the proposed amendments to the

Resort Centre ASP are prepared. A small group from the Smith Creek CAG are meeting to inform and advise the Resort Centre planning.

Next Steps

Phase 4 of the process has already started and the draft Concept Plan and ASP document will be further refined through a number of small focused community with targeted groups. Broader information sessions are planned for the fall. Information will be made available to the community on both the Smith Creek Planning website and PlaceSpeak.

Summary Phase 3 Engagement

Summary of the Community Advisory Group Meeting: January 7, 2016

The CAG meeting of January 7, 2016 focused on reviewing and providing feedback on the vision for the Smith Creek ASP. The vision document was drafted from a variety of reports and notes specifically, *Mining the Future*, Canmore Tourism and Business reports and studies, input from the open house and workshops from October, CAG discussions, particularly the September workshop and discussions held with the CAG sub groups in November and December. The process to develop the vision was an iterative one with an initial draft crafted by the facilitator and a second draft updated based on a discussion with the Town and QPD.

The focus of the Vision was on three main areas: social diversity, economic viability and environmental soundness. The first part of the vision addressed an overall vision for Canmore. The intention was to ensure that the vision conveyed what was heard during the process to date. The second part of the vision addressed how Smith Creek will meet these future aspirations using four main pillars. Ultimately, the vision document will provide the basis for the ASP policy and the policy statements that will guide the implementation of the Smith Creek goals. .

The following feedback was provided by members of the CAG.

- Overall, the vision document is great, vibrant and exciting. It is short and compelling.
- There is a real balance with everything that has been talked about to date and the document captures key points from a business and tourism perspective.
- The vision document certainly captures the comments from the sub group conversations. It is clear on affordability; a key component to the future sustainability of the Town.
- The document clarifies how Canmore can maintain the character of the downtown core while at the same time provide opportunities for those who live within Canmore to access other "necessities of life" without having to drive to Calgary.
- There was a discussion about the use of the word "solutions" in the context of the environment. What was the thinking behind the word solutions and is it not more about ethics than solutions. All agreed.
- There could be areas such as the environment that may be open to interpretation so this needs to be addressed throughout the policy document itself.
- Sometimes visions can be reduced to a tagline and one was proposed: *live - work - play - coexist*.

- The role of a “vision statement” is to be aspirational and it is important to remember what the role is (e.g., Suzuki’s goal was to crush Yamaha).
- The brevity of the vision is appreciated. This vision will capture the attention of the reader and will hopefully encourage them to read the remainder of the document.
- Review of the words “the best or the most remarkable” as these works can come across as being elitist.

Overall, the comments were very positive. A number of changes were made to the Vision document. It will be used within the draft ASP policy.

Summary of the Wildlife Sub Group Meeting: January 18, 2016

The wildlife sub group meeting of January 18, 2016 was focused on mitigation strategies for wildlife/human conflict. Before these mitigation strategies were discussed, the environmental representative of the CAG requested the Project Team to consider four requests with respect to the discussions regarding the wildlife corridor identification and designation.

The Project Biologist then presented a suite of proposed mitigations for the project, including “simple” and “complex” mitigations.

- Simple mitigations are those for which mitigation does not have significant side effects and to which stakeholders have no objections (e.g. timing of construction to avoid disturbance to nesting birds).
- Complex mitigations are those for which mitigation may cause other adverse effects or for which mitigation may be resisted by some stakeholders (e.g. sensory disturbance such as lights or noise, wildlife exclusion fencing).

The consultant’s analysis from the initial review of the project proposal was that the development has a greater potential to adversely affect wildlife populations through increased human wildlife conflict than through changes to wildlife movement.

The remainder of the meeting was questions and comments from the CAG members, including discussions on:

- Level of acceptable risk
- Attractant management
- Soft versus hard edges
- Education and enforcement
- Community acceptance of a fence
- Alternative design options for creating a “reverse gated community” within the corridor

Summary of the Community Advisory Group Meeting: March 10, 2016

The CAG meeting of March 10, 2016 began with a short presentation from the environmental representative and his notice of resignation from the CAG. The remainder of the CAG meeting provided a ‘snap shot’ of the technical conversations undertaken to this point and the progress and decisions that have been made with regards to:

- Transportation (Three Sisters Parkway alignment).
- Trails and Open Space strategies.
- Wildlife Corridor and associated mitigation strategies and how this feeds into the Environmental Study.
- Ongoing grading and land use discussions.

The final draft of the vision was reviewed and agreed upon by the members of the CAG. The vision has been the guiding principles for the project team discussions and the conversations to date have begun to test the concept plan developed against the vision. Policies will reflect the vision.

In addition to the vision, a number of important points were discussed around the wildlife corridors. It was indicated that four key points were essential to the plan if there was to be any support from the environmental community. These are outlined below.

1. Keeping existing Across Valley underpass and opening more area (than proposed) to the existing connection (decrease the proposed area of development around the existing underpass).
2. Achieve 450m – wide along valley corridor at Site 7 through the use of large development lots.
3. Decrease proposed development area up to 100m in the Wind Valley corridor at the area described at the “armpit” as the current alignment encroaches into the corridor up to 250m (over half of corridors 450m width).
4. Proposed an additional Across Valley corridor through the Smith Creek plan area.
5. Resort Centre ASP: No development above (south) of golf course cabin line.

While discussions at the CAG continued to focus on the wildlife corridor, the focus shifted to a broader discussion on how to balance these desires with those of the recreation community, the Town, the technical requirements of the land and the viability of the development. These conversations were instructive for the Project Team in furthering the technical discussions.

The meeting concluded with the CAG discussing their role in the ASP process and what success looks like for each CAG member at the end of the collaborative process.

Summary of the Community Advisory Group Meeting: May 5, 2016

The CAG meeting on May 5, 2016 focused on a review of the development concept, testing it against the vision and principles. A few shifts of the development pods and the road that lies between the pods were discussed. The key points discussed at the meeting were affordable housing, fencing, and Phase 4 engagement opportunities.

The CAG discussed community expectations with regard to affordable housing specifically, the challenges and solutions with regards to the provision of affordable housing. A spectrum of affordability and how the affordability can be provided was discussed including market affordability, market choice (which is essentially affordability based on where you are in your life), employee housing, secondary suites and PAH lands. The policy developed for the ASP will need to reflect expectations as well as challenges and opportunities.

The CAG discussed fencing specifically, the pros and cons and the new learnings from Banff National Park and another area where it is being used, Jackson Hole. Key learnings were the focus of the discussion. It was clear that hard edges from partial fencing or buildings would only work for about 95% of the wildlife but it is 5% of wildlife that are the causing the problem. Consequently, experts at the meeting felt that a full wildlife exclusion fence, such as the style of fence used along the highway, would be the most effective mitigation option. As a result, the Smith Creek ASP proposal now includes a full fence enclosing the Plan Area, connected with the existing fencing around the Trans-Canada Highway.

The CAG also discussed Phase 4 engagement strategies including information sessions, small community conversations with targeted groups, broader public engagement strategies, including using PlaceSpeak more actively.

Summary of the Community Advisory Group Meeting: June 16, 2016

The June 16, 2016 CAG meeting began with a review and discussion of an Impact Matrix that had been previously distributed. The Impact Matrix identified policy areas where there are differing impacts on the community, the developer or the Town, and the discussions that occurred to get to the resulting policy direction. The matrix represents a summary of the discussions that have occurred over the last year between the CAG, the Project Team, the consultants and the Province. The Impact Matrix considers topics ranging from wildlife, human use, affordable housing, recreation, steep creek hazards and economic development and identifies where there have been differences in opinions throughout the process as well as the pros and cons of various ASP components. The matrix will be used to inform a communication strategy.

QPD provided an Illustrative Plan and an updated ASP concept map.

- The Illustrative Plan is an artist rendering of one option of what could be developed based on the ASP policy direction. The Illustrative Plan will not be contained in the ASP but is a tool that illustrates visually for the public what could be. It is based on the concept map but provides more detail than the concept map that will be used in the ASP document.
- Both the Illustrative Plan and the updated concept map for Smith Creek reflect the substantial technical work that has been ongoing in the background over the past few months between the Project Team and the consultants.
- The Project Team explained the next steps in developing the ASP and the focus on policy development flowing from this technical work in addition to the work completed on the guiding principles and vision of the ASP.
- There was some surprise at the scope of the Resort Centre on the Illustrative Plan.

The Project Team also provided an update on the commercial/industrial components of the Smith Creek ASP policy as well as affordable housing. The CAG discussed these topics, including suggestions for diversifying the economy and opportunities in Smith Creek, and the limitations to how supply affects housing costs.

QPD provided an update on the application to Alberta Environment and Parks for the wildlife corridor. The application will contain two options: a re-aligned Stewart Creek across valley corridor and a new underpass, or keeping the across valley corridor in its current location.

The CAG also discussed and reviewed the proposed public engagement plan, including upcoming small group community conversations. The intent was to include various stakeholder groups on focused conversations on specific issues such as wildlife and recreation. Other meetings will be broader in scope for other interested resident and interest groups. The intention of these community meetings is to inform and seek feedback on the mitigation strategies proposed within the ASP. CAG members were invited to participate in these small group conversations.

Notes of the Community Advisory Group meetings can be found on the smithcreekcanmore.ca website.