

"The citizens of Whitehorse will enjoy year-round access to ample green spaces, accessible trails, active living opportunities and cultural events that reflect our commitment to creating a liveable, safe, attractive, healthy and sustainable four-season community."

Vision Statement, 2007 Parks and Recreation Master Plan

"The proposed Trails & Greenways Committee provides an oversight mechanism to ensure balanced representation of user interests and a means to ensure that local interests do not overwhelm the larger City-wide interest."

2007 Trail Plan

"Whitehorse will be a well planned self sustaining community that maintains and conserves wilderness spaces for future generations."

Vision Statement, 2009 Official Community Plan

Re: Phase I of the update to our Official Community Plan.

Our city has had problems for years around the topic of "develop or protect." Plebiscites, lawyers used against residents who don't feel listened to about what's happening to greenspaces, neighbours pitted against neighbours, developers wanting more new land...

Yukoners love living in a land with spectacular scenery and accessible recreation. We have a sense of stewardship of the land. We want our city to have a very clear understanding and respect of our trails and green spaces. And we repeat this for each of the various city plans.

homepage.mac.com/yukonviews/special/hillcrest2009 is my view of the above-the-airport region. My presentation addresses what both the 2007 Parks and Recreation Master Plan and 2007 Trail Plan recommended: create a trails and greenspaces committee. This has not been done.

Had the city created this committee, this 2009 OCP planning process would have been working with an annotated city-wide greenspace/trail map. At the neighbourhood OCP meetings, people would have understood their areas and how they fit into the bigger city picture. Then neighbourhood comments would have been more useful to the OCP planning process.

As it is, looking at the Paddys Pond–Ice Lake drainage, Phase I produced 4 overlapping plans from neighbourhood OCP meetings. Hillcrest's version of the planning map doesn't even cover the area that residents

use on a regular basis. (The Arkell–Copper Ridge group worked on a map that almost completely covered our greenspace!) By limiting Hillcrest to a small map area, it concentrated people's feedback to small items, to the detriment of our bigger regional picture.

These maps didn't show trails, wetlands, powerlines, steep slopes, nor the new Hamilton Blvd. and its new trail culvert. There were no contour lines; colour coding was not explained. They were in effect, disorientating maps.

So now Hillcrest's summary map marks a huge swathe of regularly used greenspace and trails to be developable. No contrary opinion is shown. This is difficult to believe — the people I meet walking are passionate about our greenspace! The other overlapping maps say to develop on wetlands and the slope above Ice Lake, and with no regards to access to the Hamilton Blvd. extension.

Q: *How did Vancouver get its Stanley Park, or New York its Central Park? A: People said "Keep this as an inner-city park!"*

Here's my vision of Phase I: Outside of the First Nation lands, there would be no development in the area bounded by the new Hamilton Blvd. extension, Ice Lake Road, Alaska Highway, Hillcrest and Granger. It's the parkland for the thousands of people living in the above-the-airport region; it would be designated Park Reserve. Hillcrest people have long promoted this.

As well, our city would have a network of core trails. People would have free movement from one area of the city to another. There are many routinely used core trails; some, such as motorized vehicle trails, need discussion; some need bits of work to fit their purpose; some need to be created; most need promotion. These would be joined with other land requiring protection such as wildlife corridors, wetlands, steep slopes. Workshops would have professional facilitators.

A new trails and greenspaces committee, made up with citizen representatives, would do this work. The City would be custodian of mapping, which they would make available in Google Earth; people could use the mapping at home to improve their input at mapping workshops.

Then at workshops, also with professional facilitators, neighbourhoods would see exactly how they fit into the bigger city picture. They would discuss which trails would

join the core city trails. Which major neighborhood trails should be promoted? Which trails can sustain motorized vehicle use? Which trails are really "neighbourhood" trails and should only show up on local maps? Trail mapping would, in part, define each neighbourhood's greenspaces.

Some workshops would bring together neighbourhoods sharing green spaces such as McIntyre, Hillcrest, Granger, Copper Ridge, Lobird, Copper Ridge, Arkell, Ingram, and organizations such as the ski, skidoo and bird clubs.

With agreement on trails, special trails could be maintained, such as ski trails, trails crossing wetlands, trails to bypass fragile areas. There could be interpretative signage, boardwalks, special loop trails, even paved trails.

So this is an approach the City could use to get a consensus-based OCP. Call it community building...but it has to start with trails and greenspaces, not development.

The background presentation for this 2009 round of OCP updating says "quiet and small neighbourhood character...protect the greenspaces...a collaborative planning process...maintains and conserves wilderness spaces...designed in a manner to protect significant trail corridors...minimize the impact of natural areas...protect recreation trails for future generations." We in Hillcrest have been saying this for years.

There's also a 2007 Strategic Sustainability Plan that says "Create a green space plan to identify and protect core wildlife habitat, and human use green space by 2015." So there's a deadline of 2015 for a plan to protect green space, yet Phase I of the OCP gives 10 days for figuring out confusing mapping results, talking, meeting and giving comments so we can protect our greenspace in the OCP.

It's obvious that the OCP should say "No development in greenspaces until the 2015 Green Space Plan is adopted".

The background presentation goes on to talk about "Neighbourhood Strategic Plans that...may be adopted by Council." It further notes: "Although the OCP makes specific recommendations on the implementation of policies, it does not technically require these recommendations to be followed."

So, how do citizens get our views heard, and respected?

Peter Long, Hillcrest resident, March 5, 2009