

Public and Indigenous Engagement Summary

This document provides a high level summary of the input that was received through public and Indigenous engagement for Phases 3 and 4. For a more detailed overview of input, see Attachment 5: Phase 3 What We Heard Report and Attachment 6: Phase 4 What We Heard Report.

Public Engagement

Ribbon of Green

In Phases 3 and 4, participants were invited to review and share input on several components of the Ribbon of Green plan, including:

- **System-wide policy:** This section of the Ribbon of Green includes policies that will guide the planning, stewardship and activation of River Valley open spaces, and engagement with the public and partner organizations. Overall, there was broad support for the policy direction, with 70 per cent of Phase 4 survey respondents either strongly or somewhat agreeing with the proposed approach. Survey comments indicated strong support for ecological protection and concern about the impacts of development and human use, as well as a desire for continued or improved access and trail connectivity for people to enjoy the River Valley. Respondents also spoke to the importance of Indigenous reconciliation and reflecting Indigenous perspectives in River Valley planning.
- **Land Management Classifications:** Participants were invited to help finalize the Land Management Classification framework and maps. This included the addition of the two subclasses (Ecological Protection and Preservation: Trail-based Recreation) to the Preservation classification to acknowledge the demand for diverse uses on non-paved narrow trails, and the importance of identifying a network that meets this demand without compromising ecologically sensitive areas. There was strong support for the revised framework (74 per cent of Phase 4 survey respondents either strongly or somewhat agreed with the approach), with many feeling that it more accurately reflects the range of valued River Valley functions and uses. However, some participants remain concerned about the potential for further ecological impact if protection is not prioritized over recreational activities.
- **Program and Ecological Guidance:** Participants were invited to review and help refine the reach-level plans to protect and restore the River Valley and provide access for people to enjoy it. Overall, participants

supported the ecological and programming guidance proposed for each reach (73 per cent of Phase 4 survey respondents either strongly or somewhat agreed with the approach). Comments that helped to inform the final reach guidance included a desire for: ecological preservation and restoration efforts; additional recreational uses and infrastructure in some areas; a well-connected trail network; and accessible washrooms, commercial spaces (e.g. pop-up stores), and educational and cultural spaces.

River Valley Area Redevelopment Plan

In Phases 3 and 4, participants were invited to review and share input on the draft River Valley ARP, including the following key topics:

- **Public participation in development decisions:** Phase 3 survey respondents expressed the greatest interest in being able to provide feedback about projects that may result in high or moderate impacts to the River Valley (78 per cent and 60 per cent, respectively), or those resulting in benefits, such as ecological restoration (50 per cent). Survey respondents also expressed support (77 per cent) for being able to receive information or provide feedback on City projects in the River Valley at early, exploratory stages in the overall development lifecycle, and again when further details regarding design and potential impacts on the River Valley were available.
- **Proposed land use concept and map:** 73 per cent of Phase 4 survey respondents either strongly or somewhat agreed with the proposed land use concept, which identifies open space as the intended land use throughout the majority of the River Valley and Ravine System.
- **Policy intent to limit intensive development in the river valley:** 69 per cent of Phase 4 survey respondents either strongly or somewhat agreed with the proposed approach of discouraging intensive open space, utility, and transportation infrastructure in the River Valley.
- **Proposed decision-making process for future development proposals:** 66 per cent of Phase 4 survey respondents either strongly or somewhat agreed with the proposed approach of requiring City Council approval for development on public lands in the River Valley that would be considered intensive or carry a risk of permanent negative impacts.
- **Application of a mitigation hierarchy:** 74 per cent of Phase 4 survey respondents either strongly or somewhat agreed with the proposed approach of requiring application of the mitigation hierarchy, which prioritizes avoidance through project relocation or changing project

scope, but also allows for restoration and offsetting to mitigate for project impacts of proposed development in the River Valley should they advance.

- Some participants expressed a desire to see additional or more detailed definitions and additional information regarding anticipated reporting processes, decision-making processes, and decision-making criteria.

Administration continues to refine the draft plan, including definitions of terms that are key to inform decision making by Council on proposed River Valley developments, and will explore opportunities to incorporate additional interpretive detail in the plan as appropriate. Further supporting information and interpretive guidance is an important component of plan implementation, and will be addressed through technical guidelines and standards currently under development.

Indigenous Engagement

As part of Phase 3 engagement, the City met both in person and virtually with Indigenous Nations and Communities in October, November and December 2022. The focus of these conversations was on governance and decision-making in the River Valley, as well as draft planning guidance, including the Land Management Classifications. The following themes were identified based on the input gathered:

Governance And Decision-Making

- **Treaty Rights and Sovereignty:** Acknowledge the complex intersections of community connection to the River Valley and the importance of including broad perspectives from the diverse Indigenous Nations and Communities with connections to this place. Give space for the sacred practices of ceremony and protocol in processes. Respect Treaty rights and the sovereignty of Nations and Communities.
- **Advisory Boards and Committees:** While acknowledged as a challenge, decision-making processes that are started in ceremony and led by an advisory group had broad support.
- **Engagement Process for River Valley Development Proposals:** Ensure engagement begins early in the process, and that input is meaningfully considered in decisions. Ensure materials and information are accessible to all, including those without internet access and those not fluent in technology. Attend and connect with Indigenous Communities at existing gatherings.

Land Management Classifications

- **Indigenous Knowledge and Practices:** Prioritize Indigenous knowledge and practices in planning and decision-making. Provide opportunities for storytelling, medicine walks and harvesting of traditional foods.
- **River Valley Protection:** Natural/undeveloped parts of the River Valley present opportunities in which Indigenous Nations and Communities see specific access to their culture through opportunities for ceremony and medicine.
- **Places for Ceremony and Gathering:** Create and protect places for ceremony and cultural activities, and for Indigenous Nations and Communities to reconnect with RV lands. Connect youth to the River Valley to support conservation efforts and provide access to culture camps for urban members.

Other Input and Feedback

- **Housing and Homelessness:** Acknowledge the River Valley as a shelter or home for people experiencing houselessness. Consider how planning efforts and programs might support them, including stewardship and outreach programs with cultural components.
- **Economic Reconciliation:** Find opportunities for formal collaboration with Indigenous Nations and Communities to develop programming, and create employed roles as a form of economic reconciliation.
- **Naming:** Indigenous naming was a priority for some, including replacing existing names, and increased use of signage to share Indigenous knowledge or names.

In Phase 4, the project team will reconnect with Indigenous Nations and Communities to share back what has been heard throughout the project. This will include how that input has been reflected in the plans, or will be advanced through implementation. The RVPM project advances important conversations about shared governance, co-management and co-stewardship with Indigenous Nations and Communities in the context of River Valley planning and management. Ribbon of Green planning and policy guidance reflects that input at a strategic level, but there is more work ahead, and ongoing engagement with Nations and Communities, to define a path forward together.