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TOWNSITE HERITAGE PLANNING

Development Permit Area Engagement Summary (November 2018)



Table of Contents

- 1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY..... 2**
 - 1.1 Background 2
 - 1.2 Drop-In Event and Survey 2
 - 1.3 Summary Survey Results 2
 - 1.4 Next Steps 5

- 2 VALUES, HOPES & FEARS 6**
 - 2.1 Townsite values..... 6
 - 2.2 Hopes & Fears 6

- 3 POLICY OPTIONS 8**
 - 3.1 Policies for New Buildings..... 8
 - 3.2 Policies for Existing Buildings 9
 - 3.3 Heritage Conservation Area Only Policies 10
 - 3.4 Policy Implications..... 11

- 4 OTHER DISCUSSION..... 12**

- 5 WHO PARTICIPATED 13**
 - 5.1 By Neighbourhood 13
 - 5.2 By Length of Residency 13
 - 5.3 By Age 13

- 6 Appendices..... 14**



1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

City of Powell River is considering a new Development Permit Area in Townsite. The Development Permit Area would complement the existing “DPA 4: Townsite Centre Mixed Use Area” by providing heritage form and character guidelines for single and two-family homes. In a Development Permit Area, homeowners obtain a “Development Permit” before a Building Permit when making significant external changes to their home, like building an addition. This way, a Development Permit makes sure that new construction and renovations fit in with the existing neighbourhood character. To be clear, a Development Permit Area would not require someone who was not planning on making any renovations or additions to just change their home back to a heritage style.

1.1 Background

Although the City has undertaken some heritage planning tasks between 1991 and 2005, work remains to be done to protect heritage buildings and character in Townsite. So, staff are “taking the temperature” of residents to understand current perspectives on heritage planning in Townsite. The Townsite Historic District was recognized as a National Historic Site in 1995, but this prestigious recognition did not come with any protections for individual buildings or the neighbourhood as a whole. On June 5, 2018, staff presented a report to Council outlining the current level of protection for historic buildings in Townsite and recommendations for next steps to bring increased protections to the neighbourhood. Council gave first reading to draft Development Permit Area guidelines and directed staff to conduct public engagement.

1.2 Drop-In Event and Survey

On September 27, 2018, City of Powell River held a drop-in event at the Townsite Mall to share information and gather feedback on the Development Permit Area for Townsite. Approximately 50 people attended this event. The poster boards from the event are included in the appendix.

Staff also collected survey responses from September 13 through October 19, 2018. Staff received 102 survey responses. The survey is included in the appendix.

The event and the survey were promoted on the City’s website, through flyer delivery to addresses in Townsite, and by Facebook postings and emails sent by Townsite Heritage Society and Townsite Ratepayers Association to their membership lists.

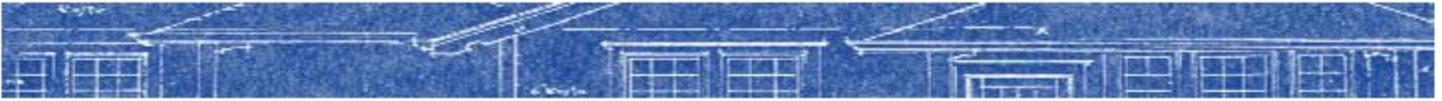
1.3 Summary Survey Results

This section summarises the survey results.

1.3.1 Survey Themes

First, Townsite is a much-loved part of Powell River, a friendly and beautiful place full of history, memories, stories, and strong neighbourly connections. The design of the heritage homes,

“I feel that Townsite homes should be protected, that there should be clear guidelines so that owners of the homes can't destroy the integrity of the craftsman homes. I also think new homes built in the Townsite should blend with the original neighborhoods.”



placed close together with front doors near sidewalks, helps to build this sense of community.

Next, we heard that people want to see a balance between rules and incentives. On one hand, as one person wrote, “If Townsite character is lost, even a little bit at a time, the historic value is lost.” On the other hand, as written by another respondent, “To encourage homeowners to restore heritage features, provide grants and subsidies, not punitive measures or excessively intrusive restrictions.” There was strong support for requiring that new buildings follow design guidelines to fit in with the established heritage character. For existing buildings, the responses were much more mixed. Some of the main “character defining elements” of heritage Townsite homes are the style and lines of the roof, the proportions and patterns of door and window placement, and the materials used to finish the exterior of buildings, such as the cladding and window frames. The majority of respondents did support the review of: cladding materials; designs for additions to the front or sides of homes; and designs for front door style or placement. But there was less support for the review of: roof line changes (e.g. adding a dormer); and window style and placement. City staff are interested in learning more about why people responded this way, and plan to gather more community input on this in early 2019.

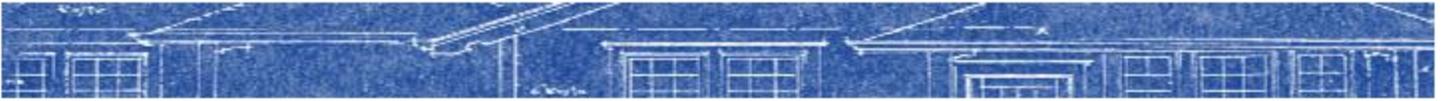
Finally, we heard some skepticism about the role of the City in heritage protections. One person wrote, “My experience with City Hall leaves me wanting to avoid any dealings with them.” So, a Heritage Commission – a well-supported policy option – could be a way for residents to experience more trust and comfort in how Townsite development applications are reviewed for heritage form and character.

1.3.2 Hopes and Fears

The survey asked people to pick their top five hopes and fears for heritage protections in Townsite. There were two questions. The first asked people who live in Townsite to think about what more heritage protections could mean for them and their home. The second question asked all respondents to think about Townsite in general. The following are the five top responses from both questions:

- I hope that heritage protections preserve a piece of history for future generations across Canada (69% of the 102 responses)
- I hope that heritage protections encourage people to take good care of their homes (65%)
- I hope that heritage protections help residents feel proud of our City and Townsite (63%)
- I hope that heritage protections will protect the historic feel of Townsite (48%)
- I hope that heritage protections will improve the appearance of homes (44%)

Most of the feedback focused on people’s hopes for heritage protection. But, survey respondents did provide some fears about heritage protections, too. Twenty-two percent responded that they feared that heritage protections would make additions and renovations more expensive. Seventeen percent said that City should understand the current condition of Townsite homes first, before making specific heritage protection requirements. Another 12% were concerned about the cost of maintenance. Other fears, including that new heritage policies would lower property values, deter new buyers, or not be flexible enough for different kinds of homes, were only selected by eight or fewer of the 102 respondents. About ten people thought that the City should not be involved in more regulations of single or two-family homes.



1.3.3 Specific Heritage Protection Policies

To understand what guidelines would be appropriate, the survey asked people to select their level of support for 18 different heritage protection policies. Some policies can be achieved through a Development Permit Area, but some would require a different tool – a Heritage Conservation Area.

The most popular policies were requirements for new single-family homes:

- Review the architectural style of new single-family homes (87% “yes” responses)
- Review the building height and siting of new single-family homes in Townsite (80% “yes”)
- Require cladding materials that fit in with Townsite for new single-family homes 79% “yes”)

These results are followed by support for establishing a Heritage Commission to assist City staff with reviewing proposed development (66% “yes”).

The next most popular tools can only be achieved with a Heritage Conservation Area (they are not possible through a Development Permit Area):

- Prevent demolitions of buildings built before 1950 (60% “yes” responses)
- Maintenance standards for Townsite homes (60% “yes”)
- Fine property owners for run-down buildings (54% “yes”)

The next set of policies reflect character-defining elements for existing heritage homes, and many people responded “maybe” to these policies:

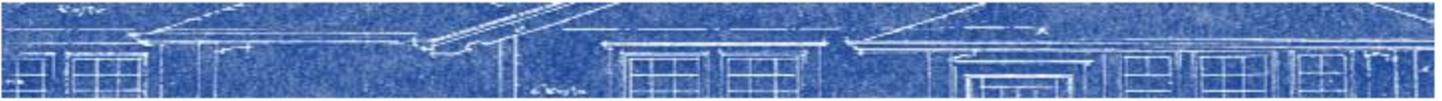
- Review cladding materials (e.g. stucco or vinyl siding) for existing Townsite homes (50% “yes” and 27% “maybe”)
- Review front addition designs for an existing Townsite home (e.g. enclosing a porch) (46% “yes” and 32% “maybe”)
- Review side addition designs for an existing Townsite home (43% “yes” and 37% “maybe”)
- Review front door style or placement designs for existing Townsite homes (41% “yes” and 36% “maybe”)
- Review window style or placement designs for Townsite homes (41% “yes” and 30% “maybe”)

There was some ambivalence about the following policies, which affect the character of existing heritage homes:

- Review dormer addition or roof line changes to Townsite homes (39% “yes” and 31% “no”)
- Review the change in height of a home (e.g. raising it to add a full-height basement) (31% “yes” and 26% “no”)

Finally, the most unpopular proposed policies were:

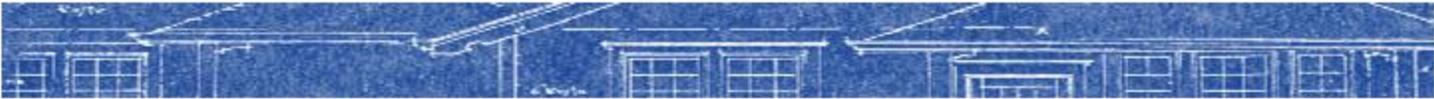
- Require landscaping plans for new single-family homes in Townsite (37% “no” responses)
- Review roofing materials for existing Townsite homes (35% “no”)
- Review rear addition designs for existing Townsite homes (36% “no”)
- Review building paint colours for existing Townsite homes (32% “no”)



1.4 Next Steps

As the results note, some of the most popular policies can only be achieved through a Heritage Conservation Area. A Heritage Conservation Area is a super-charged Development Permit Area, intended specifically for heritage protections. With a Heritage Conservation Area, the City can prevent demolitions of older buildings, require that maintenance standards be met, and/or fine property owners for run-down buildings. Because a Heritage Conservation Area can take a year or two to prepare and requires extensive research on the current condition of heritage buildings, the City wants to be sure that it is appropriate for Townsite before proceeding.

Based on feedback received, staff will update the draft Development Permit Area guidelines and plan for another drop-in event in early 2019 to gather specific feedback on them.



2 VALUES, HOPES & FEARS

The first three survey questions asked participants to share their thoughts on what makes Townsite special, what their hopes are for heritage protections, and what their fears are about heritage protections.

“Townsite feels like a living window into history.”

2.1 Townsite values

The survey asked, “What makes Townsite special to you?” Participants could write in their own answer. We received 94 responses to this question. The top responses were:

- **History:** Heritage, historic buildings, old buildings, and Arts and Crafts character, sense of history (66%)
- **People:** Community/neighbourhood feeling, fond memories, friendly people, and community events and resources (47%)
- **Beauty:** Ocean views, great location, walkable neighbourhood layout, and closeness to parks (33%)
- **Connection to industry:** Relationship to the mill, example of a single-industry town (6%)
- **Other:** Other comments or comments not directly related to values (4%)



Figure 1: A word cloud showing popular responses

2.2 Hopes & Fears

The survey asked people about hopes and fears two ways:

- If you live in Townsite, what are your hopes and fears about heritage protections as they relate to your home?
- What are your hopes and fears about heritage protection in Townsite overall?

We received 102 responses to both questions. The following are the five top responses from both questions:

- I hope that heritage protections preserve a piece of history for future generations across Canada (69% of the 102 responses)
- I hope that heritage protections encourage people to take good care of their homes (65%)
- I hope that heritage protections help residents feel proud of our City and Townsite (63%)
- I hope that heritage protections will protect the historic feel of Townsite (48%)
- I hope that heritage protections will improve the appearance of homes (44%)

The following charts summarize all feedback received from the 102 responses:



Figure 2: Hopes and fears about heritage protection for your own home

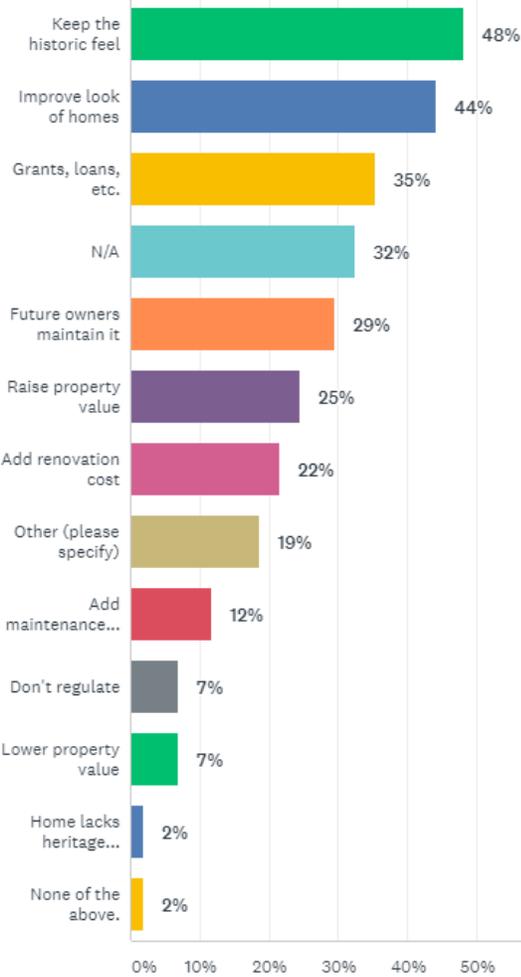
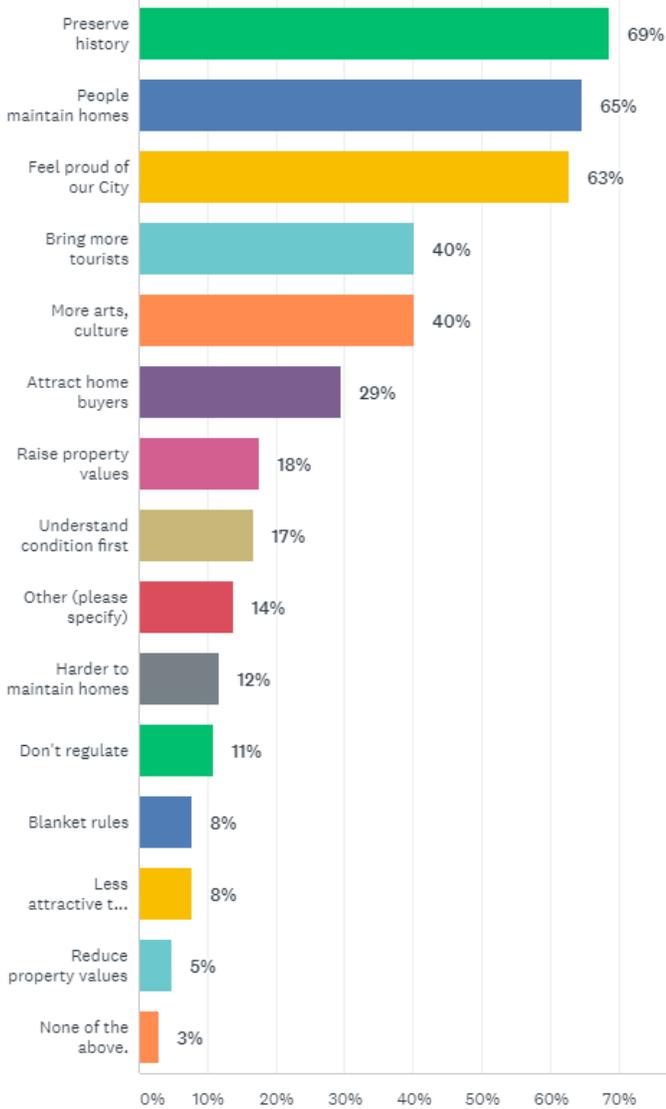


Figure 3: Hopes and fears about heritage protection in Townsite overall:



Most of the feedback focused on people’s hopes for heritage protection. Some fears about heritage protections were mentioned, too. Twenty-two percent responded that they feared that heritage protections would make additions and renovations more expensive. Seventeen percent said that City should understand the current condition of Townsite homes first, before making specific requirements. Another 12% were concerned about the cost of maintenance. Other fears were only selected by eight or fewer of the 102 respondents, including that new heritage policies would lower property values, deter new buyers, or not be flexible enough for different kinds of homes. About ten people thought that the City should not be involved in more regulations of single or two-family homes.

Some of the “other” feedback received included:

- “So much work went into getting this designation, let's keep it!”
- “I fear that heritage protection will needlessly prevent the city from adding new housing stock.”
- “Great ideas but please just do it. Make it with teeth.”



There were also two comments about traffic calming and adding boulevard trees in Townsite, plus another three comments about the old Golf Course lands and proposed wastewater treatment facility, which are not part of this Development Permit Area project.

The results were very similar for respondents who currently or previously lived in Townsite, compared to all respondents.

3 POLICY OPTIONS

To understand what guidelines would be appropriate, the survey asked people to select their level of support for 18 different heritage protection policies. Some policies can be achieved through a Development Permit Area, but some would require a different tool – a Heritage Conservation Area. Respondents also submitted 72 comments about the policy options.

3.1 Policies for New Buildings

This section asked participants to select which form and character elements the City should review before a new building is constructed in Townsite. Between 89 and 91 responses were received for each of the following policy areas. The Figure 4 charts reflect all feedback. The results were virtually identical for respondents who currently or previously lived in Townsite.

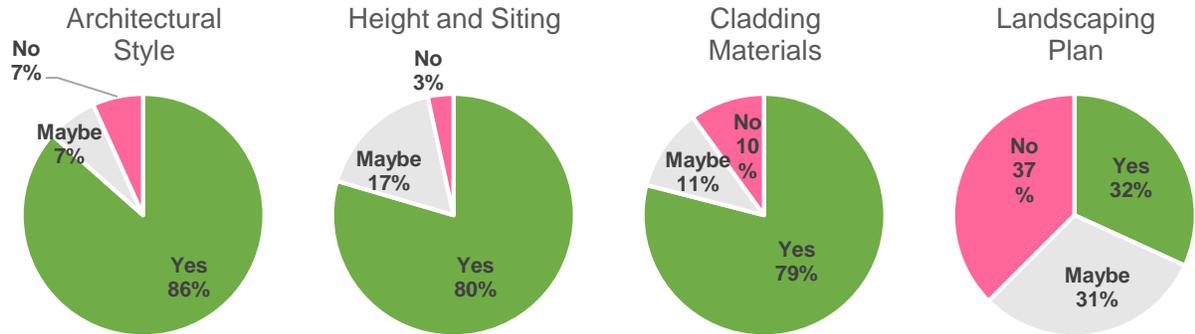
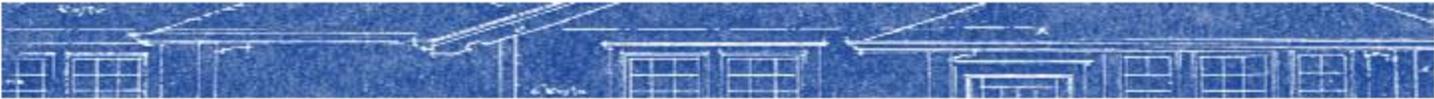


Figure 4: New Building Policy Chart Results

Looking at these results plus the written comments indicates that there is strong support for form and character guidelines for new construction in Townsite, except for the requirements of a landscaping plan. Even respondents who did not support many policies for existing homes did support policies for new home construction. Example comments include:

- “The Arts & Crafts style is beautiful for houses and my hope is that new houses will be built using the Arts & Crafts style. Keep the "garden city" as original and authentic as possible.”
- “I think all new construction should meet certain standards and have a specific heritage look and feel. I think it is going to be very hard to do this with the existing houses because so many of them have been so altered over the years.”
- “New homes should fit in with the neighbourhood but can do so without being exact replicas of the historical homes.”



3.2 Policies for Existing Buildings

This section asked participants to select their level of support for various form and character policies for existing buildings. To be clear, the question relates to what the City should review before the homeowner applies for a building permit. Between 86 and 92 responses were received for each of the following policy areas. The Figure 5 charts reflect all feedback. The results were not significantly different for respondents who currently or previously lived in Townsite.

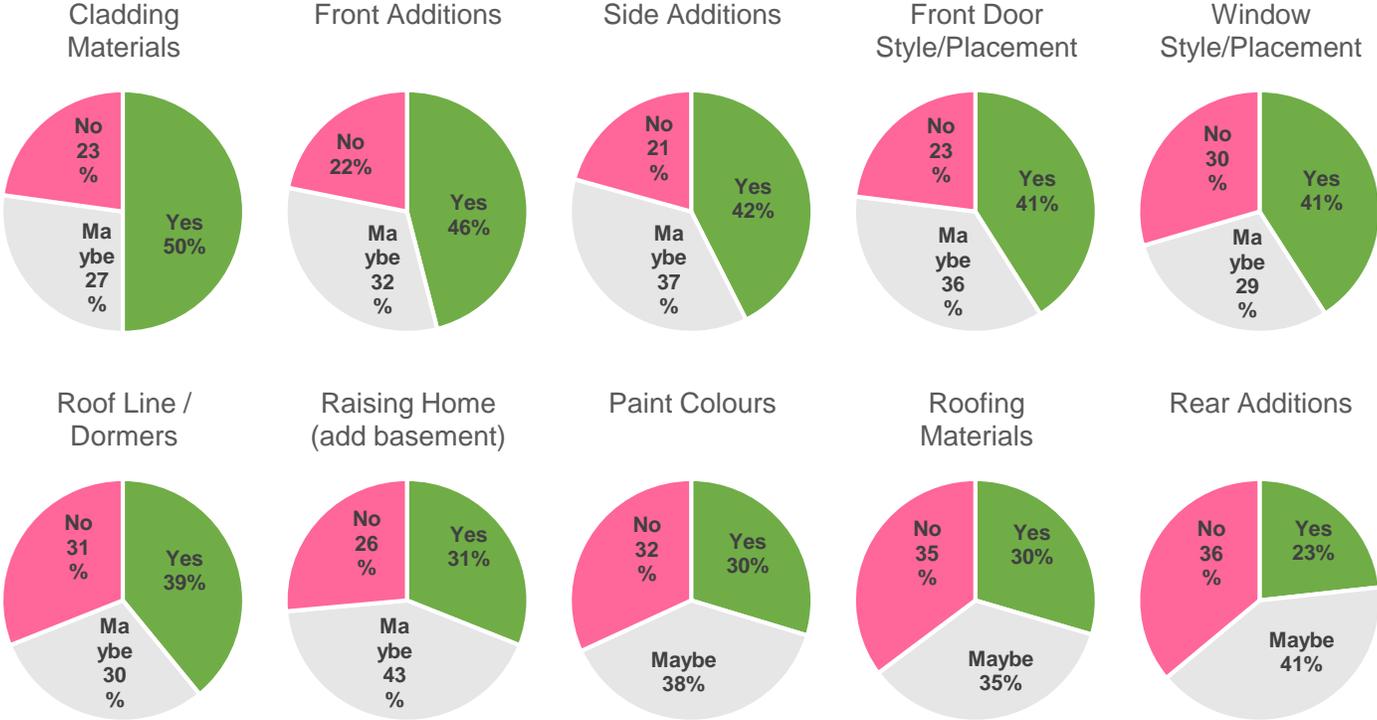


Figure 5: Existing Building Policies Chart Results

We also received many comments about policy ideas for existing buildings. Some comments covered more than one topic:

- **Flexible policy:** About 38 comments supported being flexible and using common sense to approach heritage policies for existing homes. Example comments included:
 - “Want basics but not too nitpicky.”
 - “I want to preserve the character and feel of the arts and crafts home in Townsite. But also be aware that times change, needs change, and we as a society cannot be stuck in the past. I don’t want to be fined because I have vinyl siding and I’ll replace it when I can afford to. But when I can afford to I’d like to replace it with something that will fit in.”
- **As authentic as possible:** About 33 comments supported having heritage policies for existing homes to preserve the historic character as much as possible. Example comments included:
 - “Townsite is an integral part of the character of Powell River. Preserving it should not be a question, only the manner in which it is carried out. Maintaining standards to preserve this national treasure will benefit both Powell River and also Canada far into the future if done mindfully.”



- “If Townsite character is lost, even a little bit at a time, the historic value is lost.”
- **Provide incentives:** About 16 comments specifically mentioned the need for incentives to help homeowners maintain or restore their homes. Example comments included:
 - “I guess the City should review most of these things, but if it disapproves of certain things, like vinyl siding, a grant should be available to offset the extra expense.”
 - “I believe much of the focus should be on protecting what currently exists from being destroyed and ensuring new builds fit the character of the neighbourhood. This would take the pressure off existing homeowners who may struggle with excessive restrictions. To encourage homeowners to restore heritage features, provide grants and subsidies, not punitive measures or excessively intrusive restrictions.”
- **Avoid more bureaucracy:** About five comments focused on a desire to minimise regulation. There were some questions about whether all existing buildings would need to be brought up to a new standard, or whether existing renovations could stand. The Development Permit Area would be triggered when someone applies for a Building Permit. So, it would affect new renovations. For example, “My home doesn’t have any real features left but I’m worried I will be penalized for this. I don’t want new homes built that look modern, guidelines to follow would be great as I’m interested in redoing my home at my budgets pace.” Or, “I fear that heritage protection may force some homeowners to renovate to standards they may not be able to afford.”

3.3 Heritage Conservation Area Only Policies

This section asked participants to select their level of support for various form and character policies that are only possible with a Heritage Conservation Area. Between 88 to 89 responses were received for each of the following policy areas. The Figure 6 charts reflect all feedback. The results were not significantly different for respondents who currently or previously lived in Townsite, though there is slightly less support for maintenance standards and preventing demolitions.

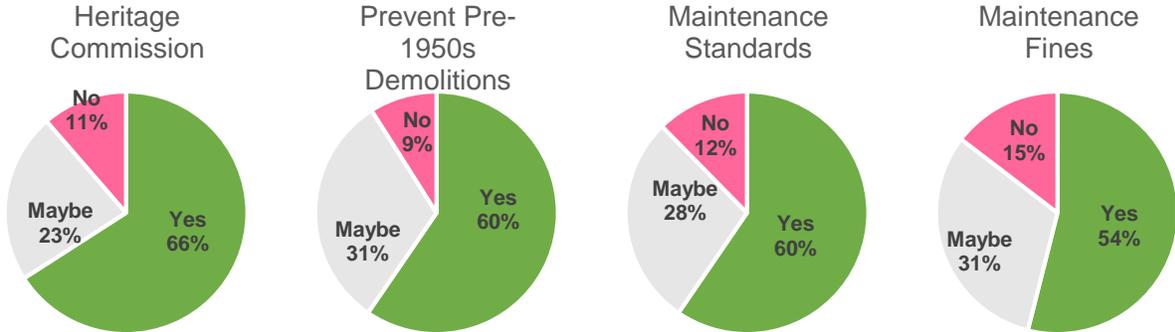
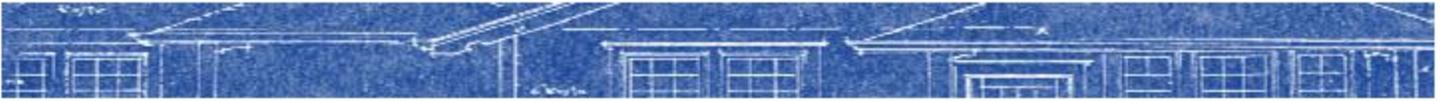


Figure 6: Heritage Conservation Area Policies Chart Results

We received about 26 comments about a Heritage Commission and maintenance standards/fines:

- **Heritage commission:**
 - “Include in the Heritage Commission mandate to assist homeowners with information for performing restoration work.”
 - “I am deeply worried that rules and regulations may be controlled by people that don’t live in Townsite and therefore are not as connected as those that live there. Also, I do not trust or believe that controls and regs put in place by the City will be managed fairly.”



- “I believe the city could/should require homes to be kept in good repair. And that they should require suitable form and character. However, I think a Heritage Commission would be more appropriate to handle specific details of changes / additions to homes and other buildings.”
- “There are good commissions that exist and there are bad ones. Some rules and guidelines can be very overbearing on a property owner. Also a commission needs to be seen as one that works with the property owners and not against them.”
- **Demolition protections:**
 - “I feel that some renovations are a reflection of the times in which they were done and in some ways reflect a different aspect of history. That being said, I do not want to see homes bought and then torn down to make way for some modern monstrosity.”
 - “I hope it will protect existing houses and prevent scenarios like Vancouver and Victoria where character houses are demolished and neighbourhood character is destroyed.”
- **Maintenance standards and fines:**
 - “There are too many terrible, defacing examples of renovations in Townsite. There are also too many homes that have been allowed to become rundown and unsightly.”
 - “Maintenance - yes in case of landlords and no in case of elderly or poor owners who need help. Sometimes people can't afford the repairs. So fines could be a problem. Grants, loans would help.”

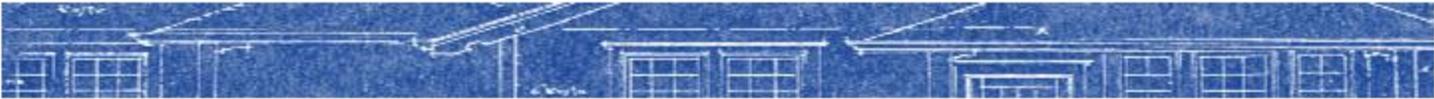
3.4 Policy Implications

The results indicate that there is very strong support for developing form and character guidelines for new buildings in Townsite, so that any new construction fits in with the established character of the neighbourhood. There are some differing perspectives on how “authentic” or “sympathetic” design guidelines should be for new construction, so this can be confirmed in a future public engagement opportunity in early 2019. For new construction, the results suggest proceeding with the Development Permit Area guidelines, removing the landscaping plan requirement, and adding more detail about architectural style requirements.

For existing buildings, we received strong feedback in support for many policies, particularly for reviewing cladding materials, front additions, side additions, front door style/placement, window style/placement, and roof lines. It is worth noting that a large proportion of survey respondents marked “maybe”, indicating that people likely want more information or more details before making up their mind. The results suggest that there are some different perspectives about whether proposed policies for existing buildings go “too far” or “not far enough” in protecting heritage character, and many of those perspectives are tied to potential incentives or funding opportunities.

Finally, some of the most popular policies can only be achieved through a Heritage Conservation Area. A Heritage Conservation Area is a super-charged Development Permit Area, intended specifically for heritage protections. With a Heritage Conservation Area, the City can prevent demolitions of older buildings, require that maintenance standards be met, and/or fine property owners for run-down buildings. Because a Heritage Conservation Area can take a year or two to prepare and requires extensive research on the current condition of heritage buildings, these survey results were an important step in understanding the potential level of support for a Heritage Conservation Area before investing more resources in developing them.

Based on feedback received, staff will update the draft Development Permit Area guidelines and plan for another drop-in event in early 2019 to gather specific feedback on them.



4 OTHER DISCUSSION

The survey asked participants to share anything else that the City should know about heritage protections in Townsite. We received 18 other comments, which are not in the scope for this project. The other ideas included:

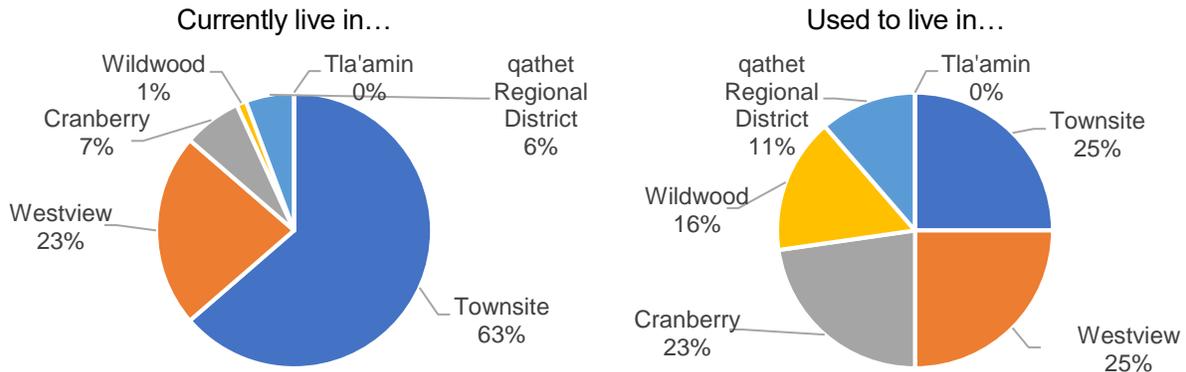
Topic	Description	How it will be addressed
Relationship to the Mill, old golf course lands, and the wastewater treatment facility	About eight comments included concerns that the City's decision to locate a wastewater treatment facility in Townsite shows a lack of value for the National Historic District. There is also curiosity about the future of the old golf course lands and how the City will plan ahead to preserve mill history.	The wastewater treatment facility project is being led by the Engineering Department. The location has already been decided, and staff are currently pursuing funding options.
Streetscapes, parks and greenspace	About five comments were suggestions for improvement about street design, street trees, and connections to the waterfront in Townsite.	The Planning Department is exploring opportunities to look at streetscape design in Townsite in 2019.
Accommodating change and growth	Three comments included ideas about how the population in Townsite will change over time. For example, the need to add to the side or rear of a home to add more space.	Comment noted.
Sustainable living	Two comments mentioned that Townsite is a walkable, complete neighbourhood and a good example of sustainable design.	Comment noted.
The Development Permit Area tool	A respondent wrote, "A DP would not cover doors, windows, and siding, which studies have shown to have the most impact on the character of a heritage home. A DP is a double negative in my view. No incentives provided (financial) and you have to pay more for the permit and a longer process for approval. I believe there needs to be more positive incentives."	Comment noted. Staff are aware that a Development Permit is an imperfect tool. Part of this process is understanding the appetite for any development controls, followed by the level of interest in features that a Heritage Conservation Area could make possible.
The BC Building Code	One person wrote, "I believe that a strict adherence to BC Building Code can be detrimental to these homes and there needs to be provision for some departure from BC Building Code."	Please note that the City's role is to administer the BC Building Code, and there are few possible exceptions for heritage buildings.
Cooperation with Tla'amin First Nation	One comment mentioned working with Tla'amin on the old hospital lands site.	Please note that the land has been transferred to Tla'amin as part of the treaty settlement when the Nation became self-governing in 2016 and to recognize the location one of the Tla'amin historic village sites.



5 WHO PARTICIPATED

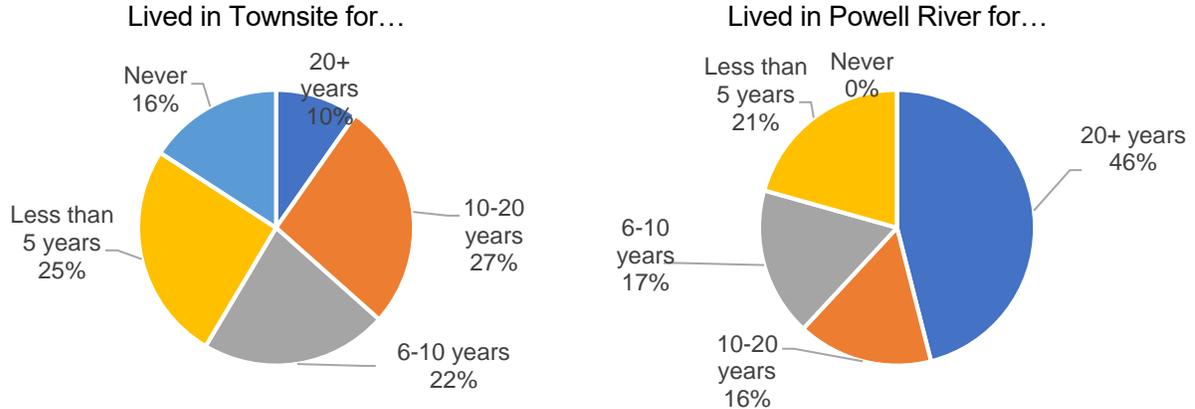
5.1 By Neighbourhood

Out of the 102 responses, eighty-eight people provided an answer about where they live.



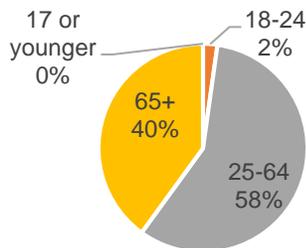
5.2 By Length of Residency

Out of the 102 responses, 90 people provided an answer about how long they have lived in Townsite or Powell River.



5.3 By Age

Out of the 102 responses, 90 people provided an answer about their age.





6 Appendices

The following are attached as appendices to this report:

- October 27, 2018 event poster boards
- Survey