

# What We Heard So Far: Round #1 Engagement Summary

# Engagement by the Numbers

## Notifications, Information and Invitations



**Project Website**  
1707 views



**Mail Out**  
5000 project cards mailed



**Farmer's Market Pop Up – June 18, 2025**  
20 interactions



**StoryMap**  
187 visits

## Community-Wide Engagement



**Community Drop-In Session – May 22, 2025**  
65 participants



**Community Workshop – May 22, 2025**  
70 participants



**Round #1 Online Survey**  
16 respondents

## Focused Engagement



**Preston BIA Meeting – May 21, 2025**  
7 participants



**Preston High School Grade 9 Workshops – May 29, 2025**  
3 classes



**Indigenous Engagement**  
Ongoing



**Community Focus Group – June 11, 2025**  
17 participants

# Community-Wide Engagement

Community Drop-In Session, Community Workshop, and Round #1 Online Survey

# Community Drop-In Session and Workshop – May 22<sup>nd</sup> 2025



## Community Drop-In Session – May 22, 2025

65 participants



## Community Workshop – May 22, 2025

70 participants

- A total of 135 community members participated.
- The Consulting team delivered a brief presentation which included an overview of the project process, insights into the policies influencing the project, and information about the next steps. A recording of the presentation was added to the project website.
- Visioning: Attendees shared their thoughts on what Preston might look like in 2051.
- Mapping Exercise: Participants placed pins on a map in response to the following themes:
  - Improvements to transportation connections
  - Opportunities for parks and public spaces
  - Suitable locations for higher density
  - Suitable locations for different types of gentle density
- Key Outcomes
  - Numerous issues and opportunities for supporting growth in Preston were identified.
  - While many community members are open to change, there are concerns about how these changes might impact existing traffic and parking issues.



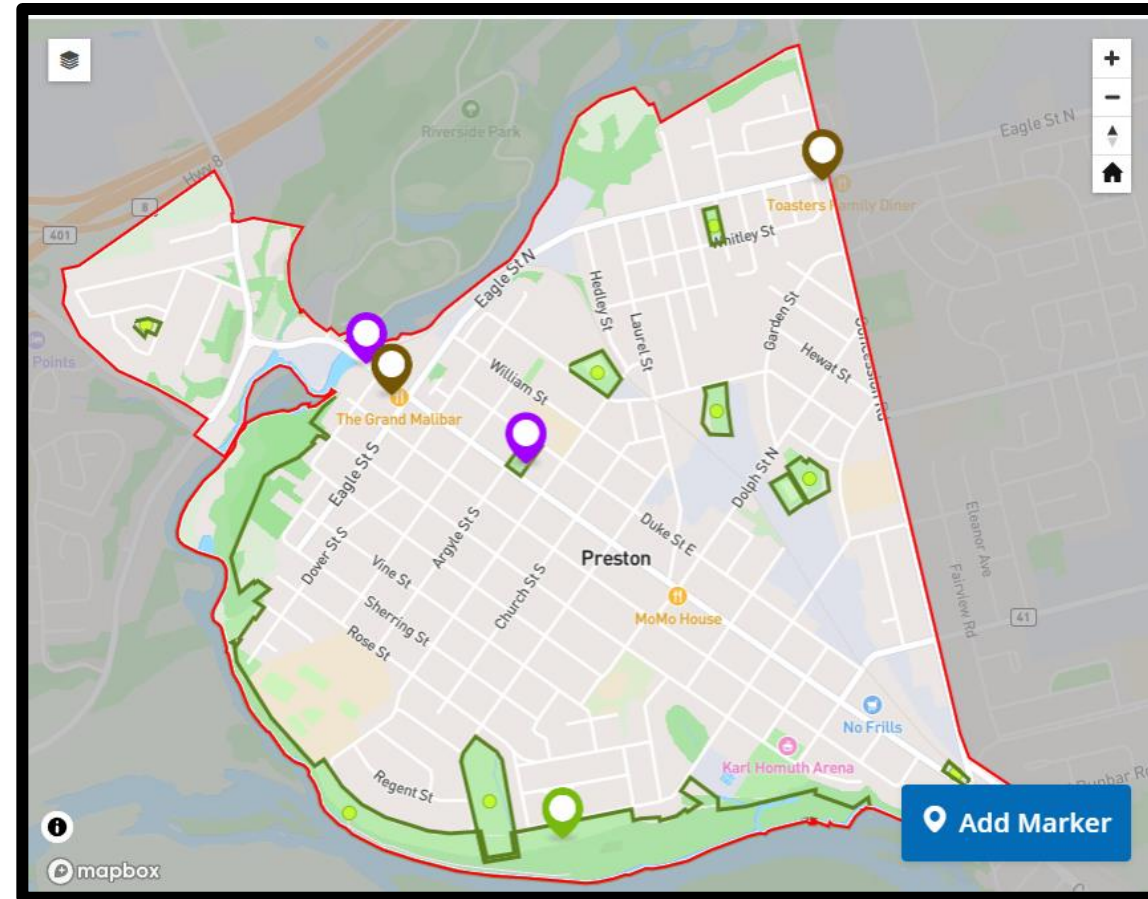
# Round #1 Online Survey & Interactive Map

**The intent of the online engagement was to provide an opportunity for those who could not attend the in-person sessions to participate at their convenience.**

- Participants completed an online survey and dropped pins on an interactive map to share what they love, what could be changed, and ideas to support growth and meet community needs.
- Total of 16 survey respondents and 5 map responses

## *Survey and map feedback summary:*

- Respondents varied in opinion on how they felt about the vision statement. While some individuals felt the vision strongly related to Preston, others strongly disagreed.
- Respondents felt the overall vision could be adjusted to be more plain language.
- Concerns were raised regarding infrastructure management and ensuring capacity to house the incoming growth.
- Concerns were also identified in regards to the ION and the potential congestion it may cause due to higher rise development in the area.



# Focused Engagement

Preston BIA, Preston High School Grade 9 Workshops and Community Focus Group #1

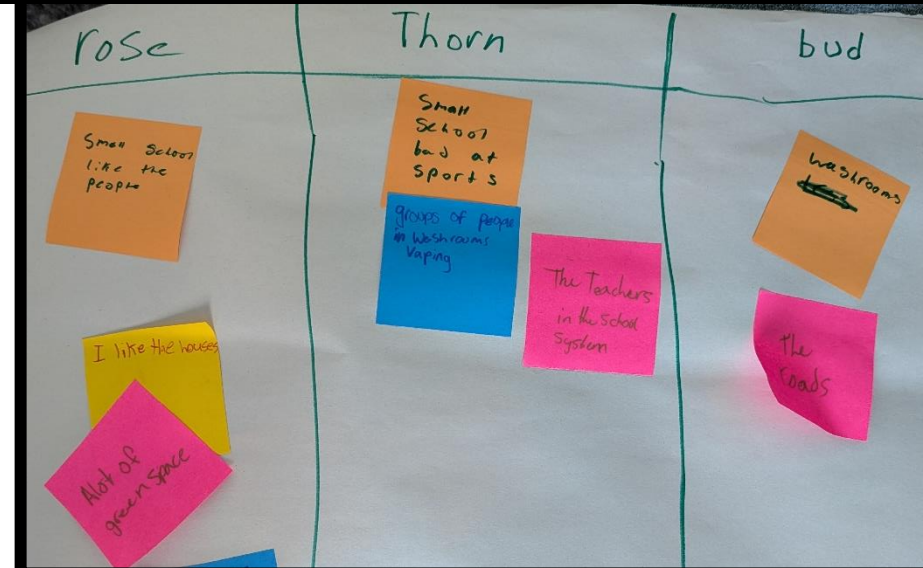
# BIA Meeting – May 21, 2025

- 7 participants from the BIA Board of Directors
- City staff delivered a brief presentation which included an overview of the project process, insights into the policies influencing the project, and information about the next steps.
- The intent of the meeting was to share information on the project and invite feedback on issues and opportunities.
- Discussion included a summary of what the engagement process would look like.
- Key Outcomes
  - Keep the BIA informed on the project status and updates.

# Youth Planning Workshop – May 29<sup>th</sup> 2025

## Led by Urban Minds and Dillon Consulting

- Three Grade 9 classes at Preston High School participated
- Students participated in a warm-up activity called **Roses, Thorns and Buds** where they were asked to identify:
  - Roses - "I like...": What do you like about Preston as a community?
  - Thorns - "I don't like...": What do you not like about Preston?
  - Buds - "I think...": What can be improved in Preston?
- The Workshop facilitator introduced the topic of planning for more housing of different types and a range of affordability levels.
  - The students were divided into small groups to work on two exercises:
    - Where more housing of different types could go
    - Where other land uses could go, including commercial, industrial, institutional, and parks/open spaces
  - A set of coloured chips were provided for students to place on the board to show where the different types of development and land uses could go



# Youth Engagement - Common Themes

## Zoning and Land Use:

- Place taller buildings and housing near the downtown core, to make use of transit and access to shops and services.
- Place larger industry near the railroad.

## Infrastructure and Amenities:

- Provide more libraries, schools, recreation centers, and parks.
- Maintain parks and add spaces and activities for youth.
- Connect transit hubs to high density residential areas.
- Widen and connect sidewalks, make it safer for people walking to get around.
- Make intersections easier to navigate and safer for pedestrians, particularly on King Street.
- Provide WiFi connectivity throughout the area.

## Community and Lifestyle:

- Place family homes near schools and green spaces, with amenities like parks and trails for community use.
- Provide more affordable cafes, restaurants, and food options near schools and spaces where youth gather like parks.

## Environmental Considerations:

- Place industrial buildings away from schools and rivers to minimize pollution impacts, with attention to wind direction to prevent pollution from coming into where people live and play.



# Youth Engagement - Common Themes (Cont.)

## Affordability and Housing:

- Provide more affordable housing options for all different types of housing.
- Make sure affordable housing is connected to where there is transit access and services.
- Consider how adding more housing will affect the cost of housing.

## Community Concerns and Perspectives:

- Plan for ways for new residents to get around without a car and manage traffic.
- Consider how new development will add noise and disruption to the lives of existing residents.
- Consider ways to make it safer for young people, women, etc. to feel safer walking alone in Preston.

## Growth and Expansion:

- Expand King Street to make space for cyclists and more people walking.
- Extend the high school to support a bigger student population.
- Consider ways to spread population growth throughout Preston, not only in the downtown area.

## Social Services and Support:

- Provide more rehabilitation and addiction treatment centers in the downtown area.
- Provide more daycares and libraries close to residential areas.



# Youth Engagement - Roses, Thorns and Buds

## Biggest pain-points (Thorns):

- Safety & social issues - drugs/vaping, homelessness, feeling unsafe, reckless driving.
- Infrastructure basics - poor Internet / cell-tower coverage, sidewalk and lighting complaints.
- Mobility bottlenecks - limited bus routes to PHS, crowded pick-up zone, confusing King St. traffic lights.

## Moderate friction / mixed sentiment:

- Green space - youth love river/trails but lament small or poorly maintained parks.
- Education / youth space - need for better teen-centred spaces.
- Opportunity for better mobility - cheaper transit, more bus stops, bike lanes.

## High-interest improvement areas (Buds):

- Third-spaces & recreation - "more activities," "better mall," "places to hang without buying food."
- Affordable housing - requests for "more new houses that are affordable," mixed-income towers near transit.
- Greening - calls for pocket parks and new greenspace in future high-density zones.

## Clear strengths (Roses):

- Community "vibe" - friendly, walkable, "small-town feel".
- Commercial/food presence - proximity to Tim's, Taco Bell, downtown strip praised but teens want more variety.
- School pride - youth like sports & teachers despite resource gaps.

## Equity & planning take-aways:

- Dense growth along King St is acceptable if paired with transit fixes, parks, and youth third-spaces.
- Safety investments (lighting, supervised hubs, social services) are needed to support downtown growth.
- Digital connectivity and basic infrastructure (sidewalk repair, Wi-Fi) are small-budget wins that would make a big difference in regard to Infrastructure and Services.
- Engagement must loop in teens on design of green space and retail to convert "nothing to do" buds into future roses.



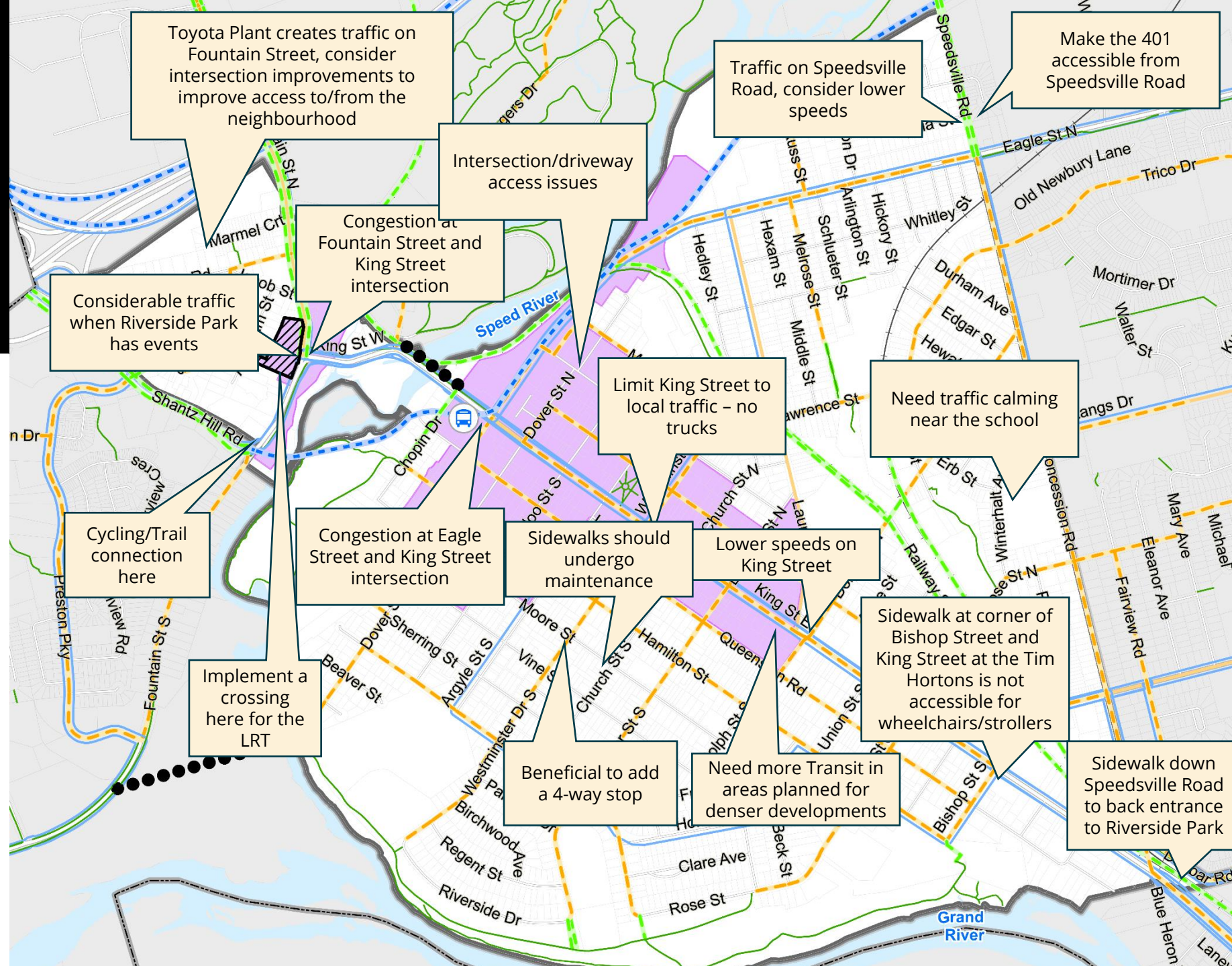


# Feedback Summary

Compilation of Feedback gathered from Round 1 Engagement Events

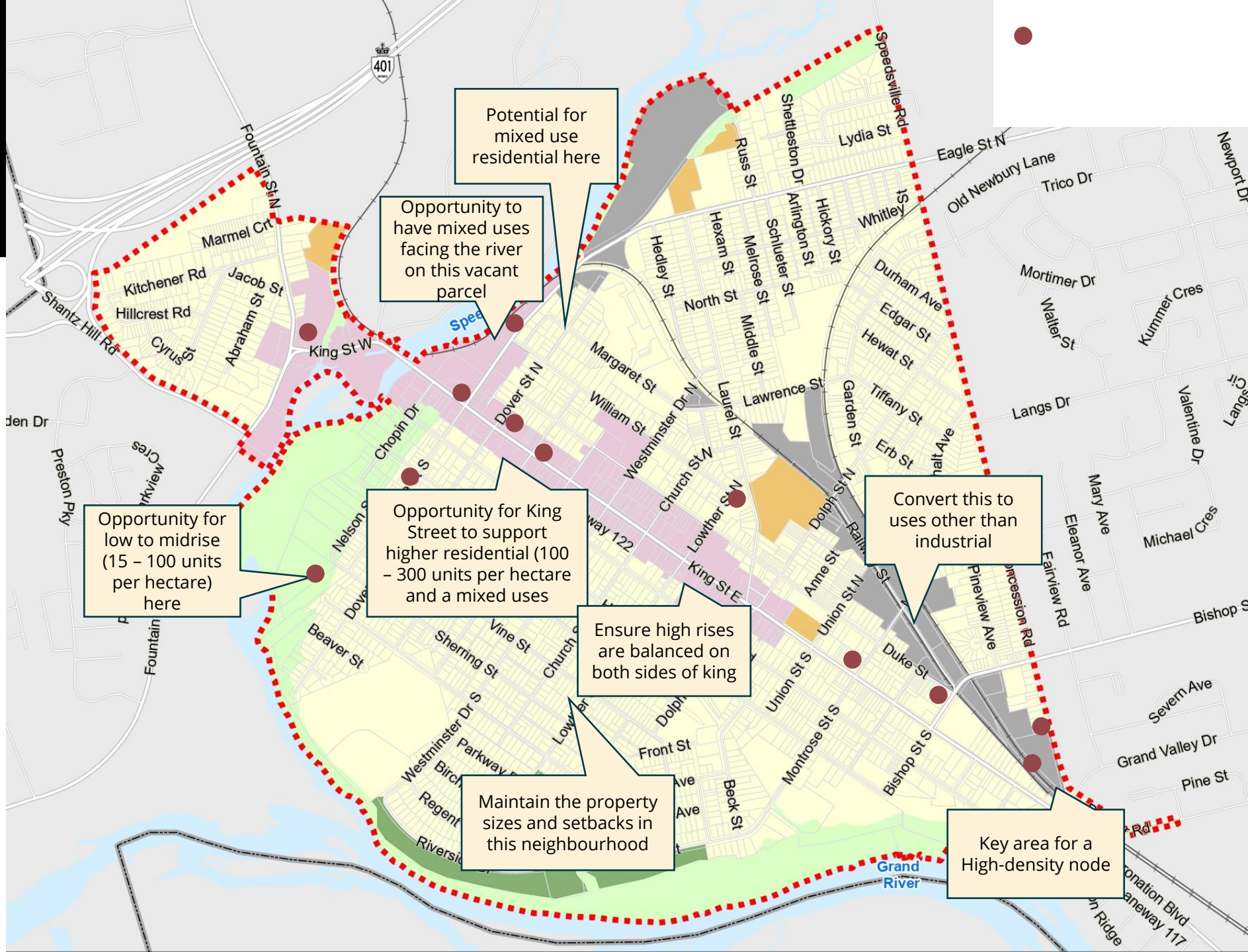
# Transportation

- There is both support for rapid transit in Preston and concerns about the impact of rapid transit on congestion, with some residents wanting a bus rapid transit option.
- There is a call for more pedestrian crossings to improve safety and accessibility.
- There is a desire to establish a dedicated bus route, bridge, or walking trail to connect Preston and Blair.
- Biking on King Street feels unsafe to some, presenting an opportunity to enhance safety by removing roadside parking to widen bike lanes.
- Introducing a parking garage could support existing downtown buildings and alleviate parking issues.
- Implementing one-way roads could provide alternative routes during rush hours, easing traffic flow.
- Expanding bike lanes on side streets, such as Queenston, could further promote safe cycling options.
- More parking for parks and trails
- Desire to have more affordable transit options



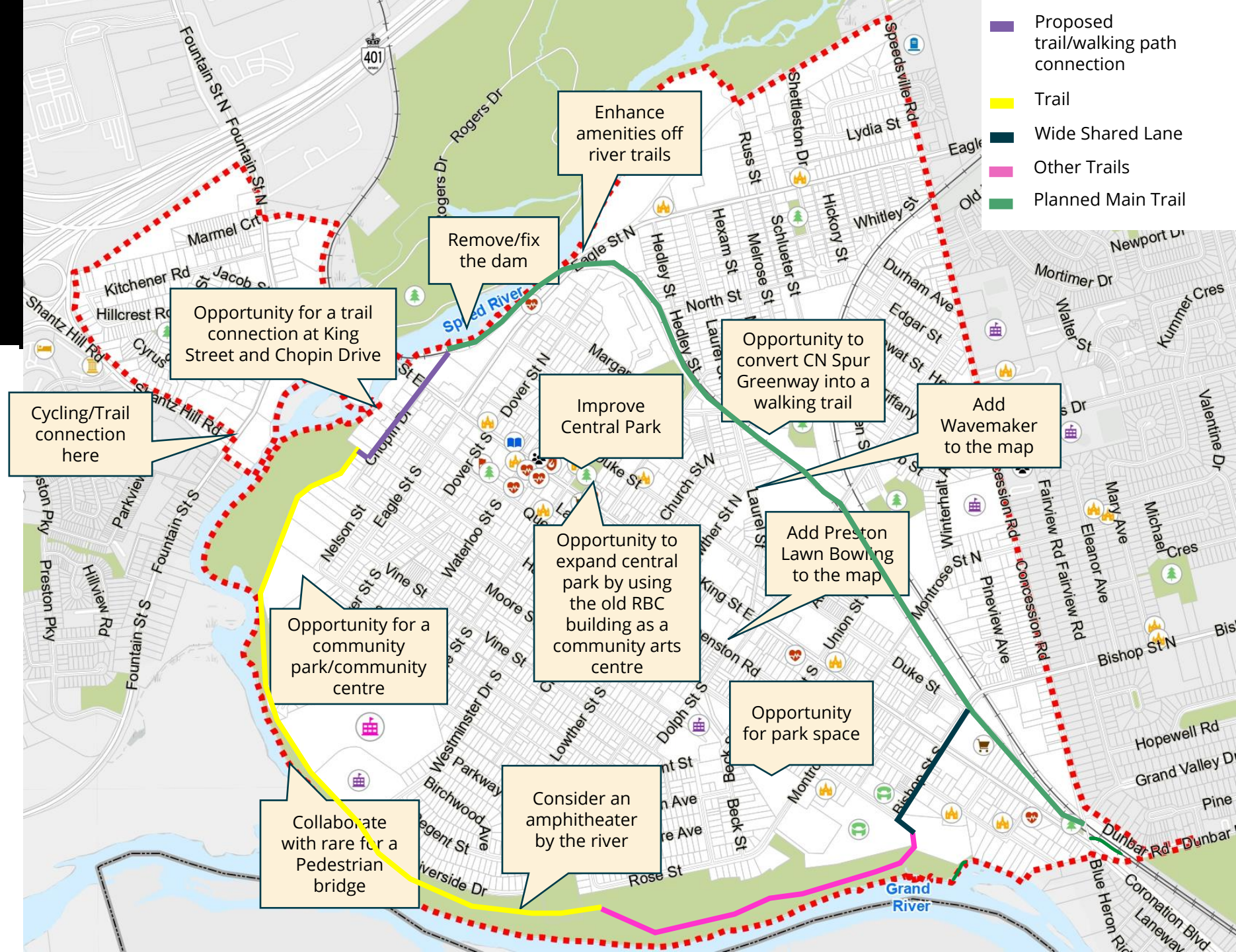
# Land Use & Built Form

- There is both support for growth/more housing options in Preston and also an opposition to growth.
- Opinions vary on where intensification should occur and how Preston should plan for future growth.
- Residents generally prefer low to mid-rise (1 to 4 storeys) developments over high-rise (6 - 12 storeys) buildings when considering intensification.
- There is a consensus that King Street should retain its current built form, and if intensification is necessary, it should not exceed mid-rise (300 units per hectare).
- New developments should seamlessly integrate with the existing architectural style and character of the area.
- Concerns have been raised about whether King Street has the necessary capacity to support additional growth recognizing existing congestion.
- Implementing a property maintenance by-law could help ensure the upkeep and appearance of properties.
- There is a pressing need for more affordable housing options in the area.
- Grocery stores are predominantly located in the south, highlighting a lack of such amenities in the north



# Parks & Public Realm

- Residents are keen on preserving, protecting, and developing green spaces within the community to enhance the natural environment.
- There is a desire for more year-round community amenities and gathering spaces, such as pools, parkettes and parks, to enrich local recreational options for all ages.
- Central Park is seen as an ideal venue for hosting more festivals and events, fostering community gatherings and vibrancy.
- Concerns have been raised about the impact of lighting on local wildlife, indicating a need for environmentally sensitive solutions.
- Introducing more restaurants and outdoor seating could play a significant role in revitalizing the downtown area.
- There is an opportunity to create a park along King Street, south of Bishop, to balance green space within the downtown core.
- Expanding public art and community art projects could enhance cultural expression and community identity.
- Developing wider, smoother multi-use trails would improve accessibility and encourage outdoor activities for all residents.



- Proposed trail/walking path connection
- Trail
- Wide Shared Lane
- Other Trails
- Planned Main Trail

Cycling/Trail connection here

Opportunity for a trail connection at King Street and Chopin Drive

Remove/fix the dam

Enhance amenities off river trails

Improve Central Park

Opportunity to convert CN Spur Greenway into a walking trail

Add Wavemaker to the map

Opportunity for a community park/community centre

Opportunity to expand central park by using the old RBC building as a community arts centre

Add Preston Lawn Bowling to the map

Opportunity for park space

Collaborate with rare for a Pedestrian bridge

Consider an amphitheater by the river

# A Vision for Preston

Community members were asked for the input on the vision for Preston through the in-person community events, online engagement, and through the Community Focus Group. The following shares the updated vision based on that feedback.

# A Vision for Preston

## Community

Preston Towne Centre is envisioned as a complete community with a vibrant core. As this area of Cambridge grows, it will provide a mix of uses and a full range of housing options, offering a variety of types and affordability levels to accommodate all life stages and support aging in place. The cultural and architectural heritage of Preston is celebrated and integrated as the community grows.

## Connectivity

King Street East serves as the main north-south corridor and commercial hub, linking Preston to the rest of Cambridge and the region. It supports a vibrant main street and provides a linkage to planned Stage 2 ION Rapid Transit, enhancing regional transit accessibility and connectivity.

## Nature

The Speed and Grand Rivers are the cornerstones of Preston's natural heritage, offering unique access to nature, showcasing the area's green spaces. Maintaining park access, urban forest, and recreational amenities while protecting environmental features will ensure the resilience of natural heritage and greenspaces.

## Employment

New employment uses will be encouraged to locate in Preston, to contribute to transit-supportive densities and create a community where people can live and work if they choose. Lands adjacent to the rail lines will transition to residential and other neighbourhood-serving uses over time.

