

Phase 1 Information Sessions
Canmore Nordic Centre
May 8, 2024



Proposed Canmore Health and Wellness Resort

May 8, 2024 Information Sessions

What We Heard Report

Project Background

The vision and purpose of the project is to develop an inclusive, destination health and wellness resort in Canmore offering dedicated spa retreat programs. The emphasis is on overall wellness with a comprehensive range of wellness features including hot and cold pools, saunas, steam baths, waterfalls, relaxation areas, fireside lounges, meditation spaces, therapeutic treatments, Indigenous healing practices, a healthy cafe, onsite accommodation, educational programs, and a medical sanctuary. The intent would also be to offer an immersive nature-based experience within the surrounding forest and landscape.

The subject property was acquired under the provisions of the Province of Alberta *Public Lands Act* as a Tourism and Commercial Recreation lease. It consists of an undeveloped, but previously disturbed parcel of land located within the Town of Canmore Urban Growth Boundary directly adjacent to and east of Spray Lakes Road (Highway 742), Rundview Drive to the south, and the Rundview Estates residential area to the east. Canmore Nordic Centre Provincial Park is located to the north and west of the site.

The Alberta government recognizes that commercial and recreation projects on public lands contribute to job growth and economic diversification. Since 2011, the Province has offered various parcels of public land for lease in Canmore under the Public Lands Administration Regulation (PLAR), governed by Alberta Environment and Parks (AEP). Approved uses of public lands have historically included recreational use, commercial use, and industrial use.

In 2019, the Government of Alberta notified municipalities about amendments to the PLAR that created a new type of disposition that allowed for Tourism and Commercial Recreation activity to occur on public land.

The project team, led by Frank Kernick and Serge Ouimette, applied to lease land from the Province under this new disposition, and in 2023, were notified that they were successful in securing a 60-year lease agreement with AEP. To proceed with development, the project team will first need to apply for an amendment to both the Town of Canmore Municipal Development Plan (MDP) and the Land Use Bylaw (LUB) to create a new Direct Control District (DC) that would allow for the development of a health and wellness resort + boutique hotel.

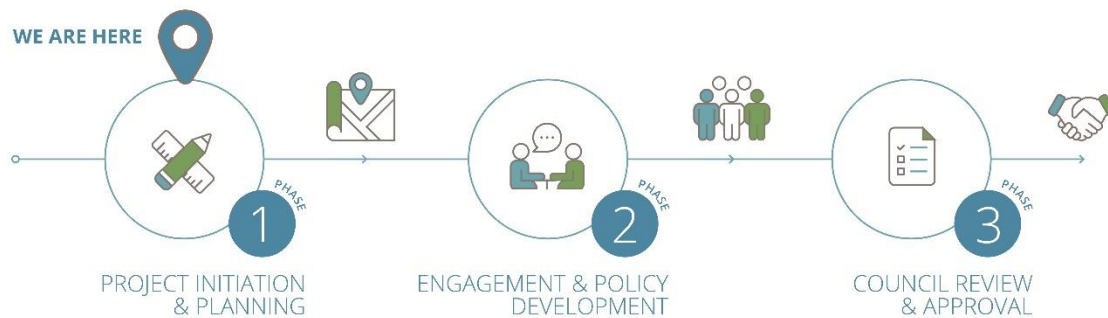
This project will follow a three-phase process for applying for an amendment to the MDP and LUB:

Phase 1 – Undertake technical studies, mapping and models

Phase 2 - Engage with the community and stakeholders in developing policy

Phase 3 – Draft policy amendments for Council’s review and approval

We are currently in Phase 1.



Phase 1 of the project began in January 2024 and is expected to take eight to ten months. The activities in Phase 1 include introducing the project to the community, conducting research, and starting the required technical studies, mapping, and modeling.

Engagement Overview

The project team is committed to an open and transparent process that is informed by the preparation of extensive technical studies and site analyses, as well as by community input and feedback.

A Pre-Application meeting was held with the Town of Canmore Planning and Development Department to confirm the nature, type, and scope of the technical studies. The project team will be engaging the community and impacted stakeholders early and often throughout the research and planning of the development.

Two Information Sessions were held on May 8, 2024, to introduce the proposed development and better understand the community’s perspectives on both the opportunities and challenges it presents. 160+ people attended the Information Sessions, which included [information boards](#), a short presentation by the team, and an open forum Q & A session. A summary of the questions and responses from the May 8, 2024, engagement sessions is available [here](#).

A hard copy feedback form was distributed at the Information Sessions and an online survey was available from May 8 - 31 for community members to provide their input at a time most convenient for them.

In total, 50 surveys were completed and submitted, including surveys that were later emailed into the project team.

What we asked

As the Information Sessions were held prior to any preliminary site plan concepts being formed, the project team sought to understand, at a high level, what residents thought about the idea of a health and wellness resort.

Specifically, participants were asked what elements of the project they were excited about, what elements concern them, if there were any opportunities that hadn't been identified by the project team, and what participants would like the team to consider when thinking about what the resort might look like and how it would be situated on the site.

What we heard

Most concerns expressed by respondents were about impacts to wildlife and the adjacent community of Rundlevue. It was noted by some participants that the area is often inhabited by elk and deer and that it is uncertain where wildlife will go as Canmore continues to develop. Residents of Rundlevue are also worried about impacts such as increased traffic, noise and light pollution.

Both residents of Rundlevue and other participants expressed concerns about further disturbance of the undermined lands, noting they are worried it's unsafe and that if it fails, Canmore residents would be left with the cost of clean-up.

A few opportunities were identified by respondents. These included keeping a forest buffer between the development and the adjacent community, ensuring the buildings have modest aesthetics, including an auditorium for community event space, and keeping all parking underground.

When asked what the team should consider as they start planning the development, respondents asked the project team to consider human-wildlife coexistence strategies in their plans and consider mitigating impacts to the community, such as ensuring there is no access to the resort from Rundlevue Drive.

Many survey respondents indicated their preference is to keep the site as is or suggested finding another location for the resort within the town.

Detailed Summary

What elements of this project are you excited about?

While many respondents noted they weren't excited about the project, a number of benefits were shared.

These included the opportunity for Canmore to have a world-class destination health and wellness resort, along with the economic benefits it brings. Eco-sensitive development, local jobs and staff housing were also listed as benefits. One participant shared the wellness market is misunderstood, and they are excited about the opportunity to define and share it.

A couple of respondents felt it was too early to comment, given no plans were available, and another appreciated the opportunity to learn about the impacts of what is being proposed.

What elements of this project concern you?

A number of concerns were shared by participants. Some do not see the need for another spa in Canmore and that it would only attract a wealthy clientele, while others expressed concerns about the impacts the development will have on wildlife and the community of Rundlevue.

Participants from Rundlevue noted they are concerned about an increase in traffic, light pollution and noise.

Some respondents voiced concerns about the undermining, with a few noting they are worried the community will be left with the long-term liability and cost of cleaning up the site if something happens.

A couple of respondents were concerned about the scale of the development, especially noting the number of potential buildings that will be constructed on the site and the various impacts the different uses will have.

Walking trails, forest fire risk and low water pressure were also noted as concerns.

A few respondents expressed disappointment about the Province's decision to lease the land and requested more transparency around the process. One respondent indicated that they felt it was a done deal, and a few others commented there is no benefit to the community.

Are there other opportunities for this site that we haven't identified?

Alternate opportunities for the site were suggested, including affordable housing and leaving the site as is.

Suggestions to improve the proposal included adding an auditorium for community events, maintaining a wildlife corridor through the site, providing a park space and a lookout for viewing wildlife, and including new trails/pathways through the site. One respondent suggested the site could be a green energy hub for the community.

Some respondents suggested improvements in the project's planning process, such as a desire for better communications around the need for the resort and mitigating against geohazards.

What would you like the team to consider as we start thinking about what this resort might look like and how it will be situated on the site?

Survey respondents noted the project team should consider impacts to wildlife, the community, and use of water considering current drought conditions and climate change.

Some respondents suggested the team consider modest aesthetics such as low building heights, limiting the scale and scope of the development, and refrain from using fencing on the property.

While some participants suggested another location for the resort be used, others suggested that the team consider how the resort could be used by locals, noting the cost of services may be too expensive for some.

Some participants suggested consultation with neighbouring First Nations communities will be important and wanted to better understand the extent of consultation that has been undertaken to date.

Additional feedback opportunity at the event

Participants at the in-person sessions also had an opportunity to share their thoughts on the above questions using Post-it Notes.

In addition to some of the ideas and concerns mentioned above, participants shared **concerns** about release of toxins, flammable gas and heavy metals during construction. Reservoir stability and potential sinkholes were also noted as concerns regarding undermining, with one person inquiring how the project team would insure the site.

Specific concerns regarding impacts to the community of Rundlevue included declining property values and traffic concerns, with an accompanying suggestion to keep access in and out of the community for residents only.

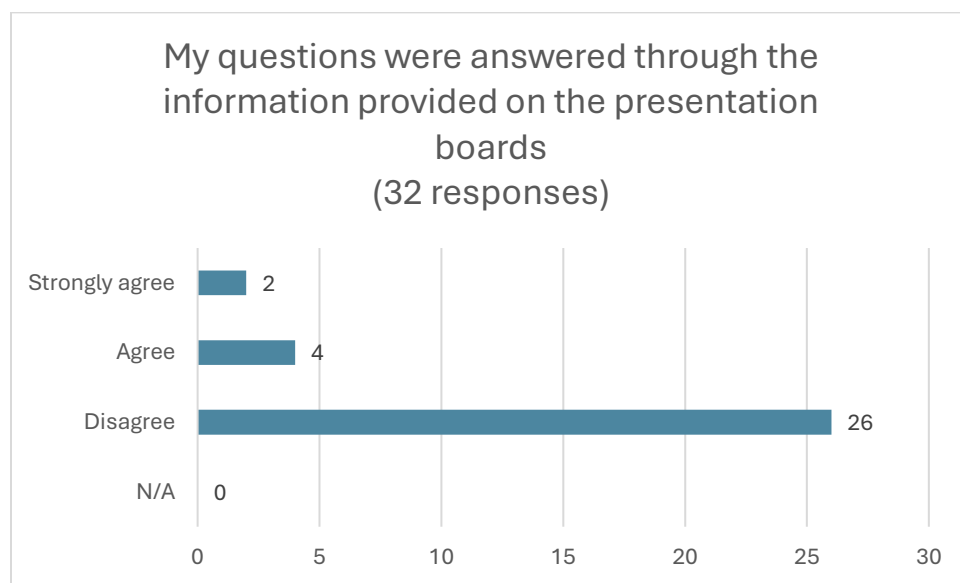
Additional **considerations** noted on the Post-it Notes included a request for the team to preserve the natural environment and minimize disruption to wildlife and community.

The project team was asked to consider designing a less obtrusive resort, a third-party environmental assessment, building the development below the cliff line/away from the cliff, ensuring there is no entrance off Rundlevue Drive, and keeping all parking underground.

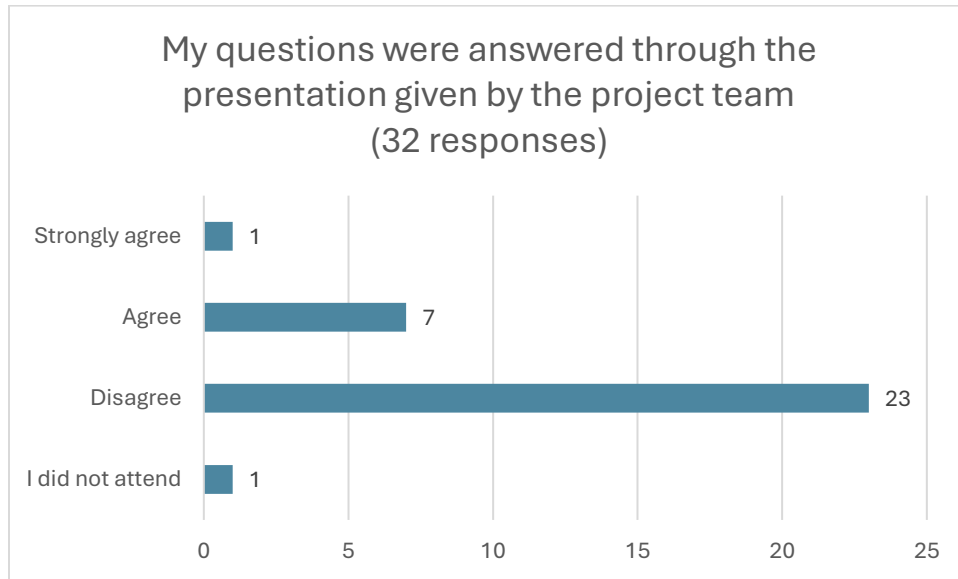
Event Evaluation

Participants at the Information Sessions were asked to provide feedback on the event to help improve future engagement activities. The consolidated responses are below.

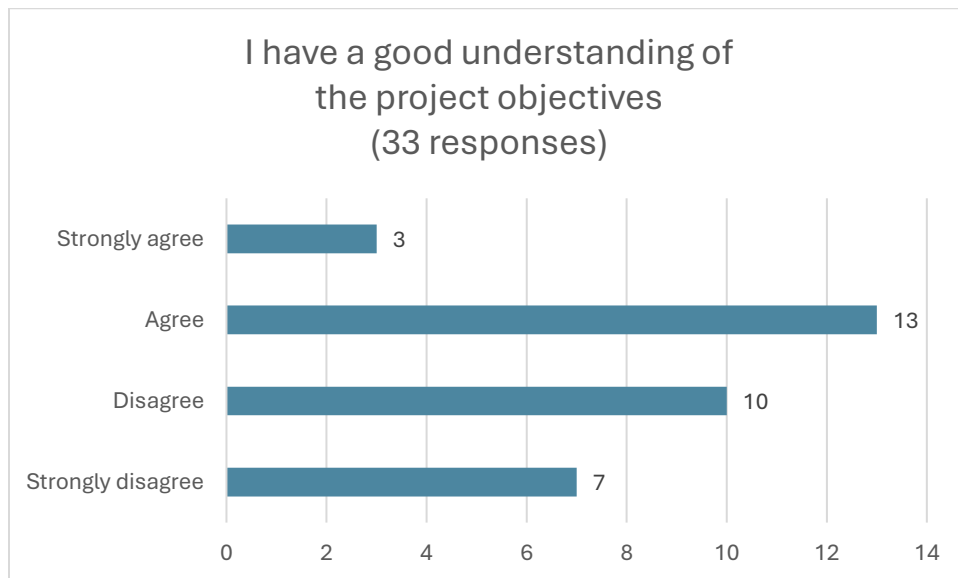
Question 1



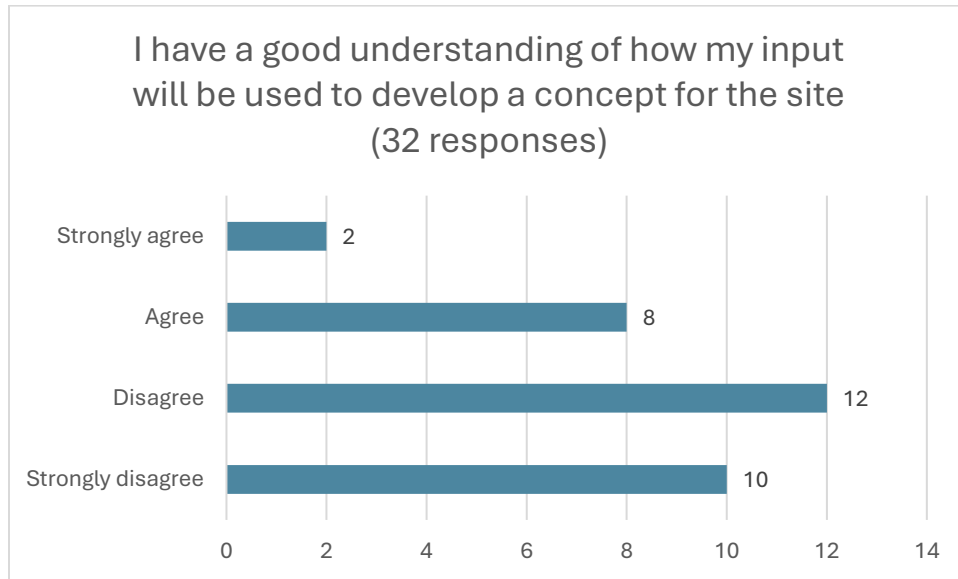
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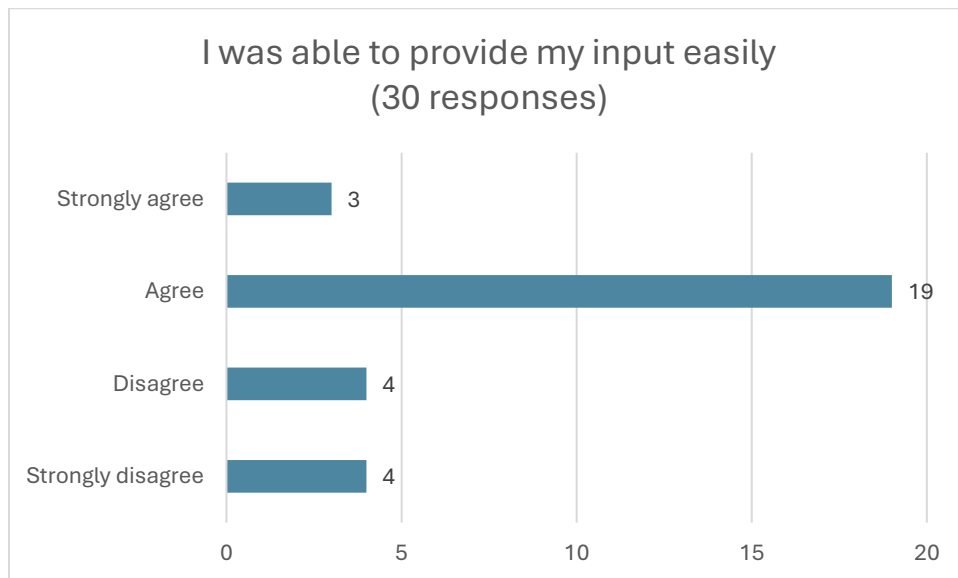
Question 3



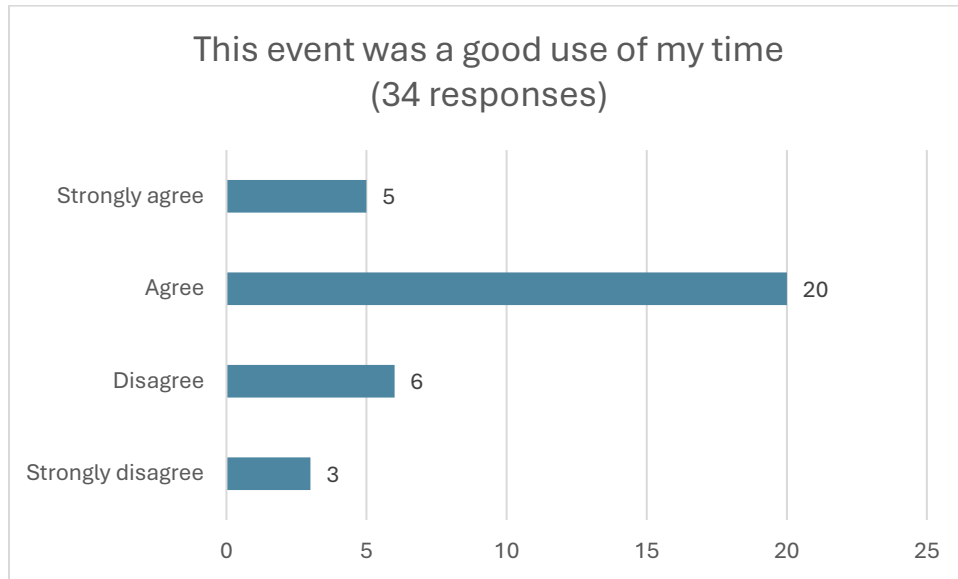
Question 4



Question 5



Question 6



Question 7

