

MOUNT ST. FRANCIS RETREAT CENTRE
SOUTH LANDS

Stakeholder and Public Consultation
What We Heard Report
May 2019

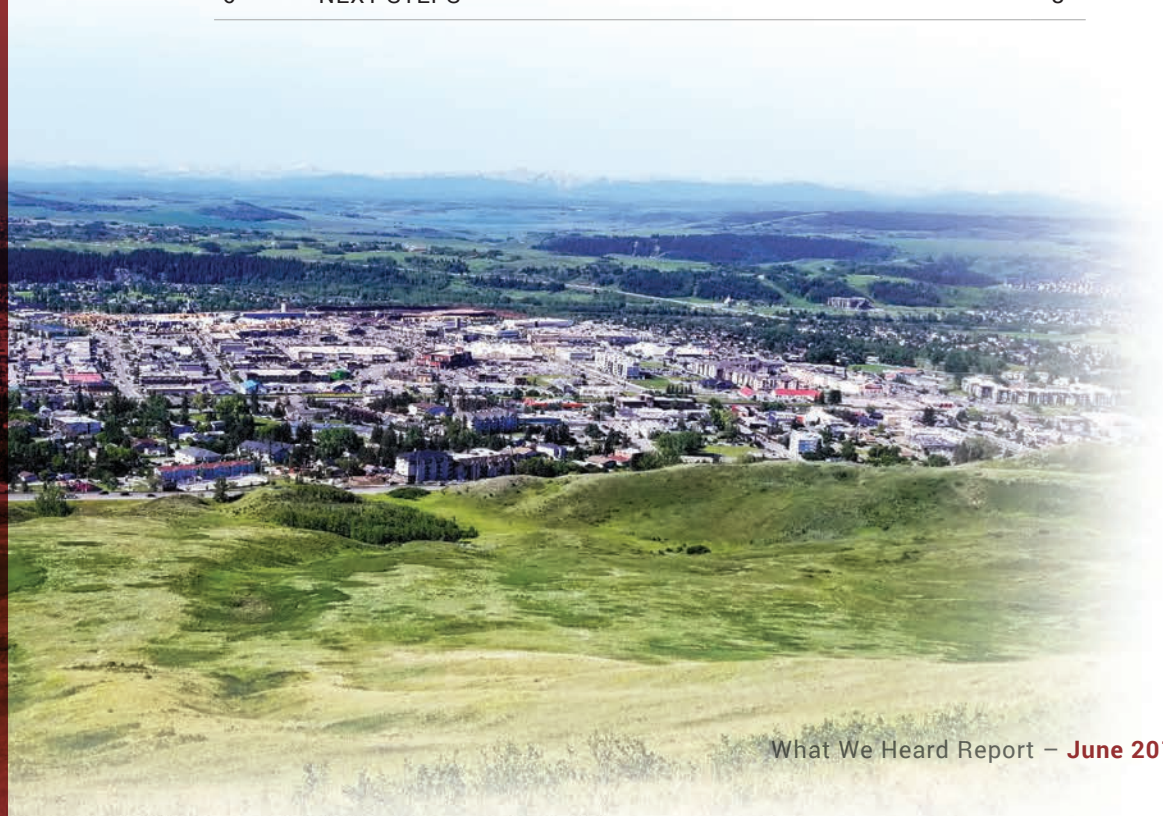
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This “What We Heard” Report has been prepared by B&A Planning Group on behalf of the Canadian Franciscans’ “South Lands” Ad Hoc Committee.



INTRODUCTION



The Franciscan Friars of Canada became united into the Holy Spirit Province of Canada in 2018 and are now revisioning their presence throughout Canada. The Franciscans own approximately 450 acres of land in Cochrane and Rocky View County, upon which the Mount St. Francis Retreat Centre is located. As part of their planning, the Franciscan “South Lands”, which include hillsides and bench lands within the town of Cochrane have

undergone a skillful and comprehensive examination by qualified consultants. Subsequent considerations by the Franciscan Administrative Council may include re-purposing portions of the South Lands for the benefit of all.

Between February and April 2019, the Ad Hoc Committee facilitated an intensive stakeholder and public engagement campaign to share what has been learned through the exploration of the South Lands and discuss the Franciscans’ vision moving forward as a newly unified body. Through a series of stakeholder meetings and a large public event, the Ad Hoc Committee collected valuable feedback and insights that will be shared with the Administrative Council while they determine a strategic plan for the future of the South Lands.



The following is an overview of the consultation that has taken place to-date.

ENGAGEMENT SNAPSHOT



Stakeholder Meetings | x4

~53 Attendees

** Neighbours (x2), Cochrane Historical Preservation Society (CHAPS), Rocky View School Division*



Presentations & Community Discussions

~150 Attendees **18** Feedback Forms



Website Visitors

4,269*



Project Email Subscribers

183*



Facebook Followers

67*

** Numbers as of May 1, 2019*

Who Participated?

- Cochrane residents
 - » Sunterra Heights
 - » Cochrane Heights
 - » Sunset Ridge
 - » West Terrace
 - » West Valley
 - » Riversong
 - » Glenbow
 - » Glen Eagles
- Rocky View County residents
 - » Retreat Road
 - » Big Hill Road
 - » Bearspaw
 - » Water Valley
- Calgary residents
- Bike Cochrane
- Cochrane Tourism Association
- Big Hill Creek Preservation Society
- Cochrane Historic Archival Preservation Society (CHAPS)
- Rocky View School Division

**As of May 1, 2019*

COMMUNITY OUTREACH & PROMOTIONS



September 2018 – current

Project website (mountstfrancis.ca/70years)

September 2018 – current

Project Facebook page (@MSF70years)

September 2018 – current

Facebook advertisements (x5)

February 2019

Introductory letters and meeting invitations to ~400 neighbours

April 2019

Newspaper advertisements (Cochrane Eagle, Cochrane Times, Rocky View Weekly)

March 22 – 29, 2019

Online event postings

March 26, 2019

Email invitation and reminder to subscribers (120)

April 6 – 13, 2019

Digital signage

MEDIA COVERAGE

Mount St. Francis Retreat gets set for next 70 years

Patrick Gibson

Published on April 15, 2019 | Last Updated April 15, 2019 1:55 PM EST



Representatives of the Order of Friars Minor and consultant BMA Planning host an informational session at the Ranchhouse about the future of Mount St. Francis Retreat Centre lands. Patrick Gibson/Cochrane Times JPD, CT

The Franciscans at the Mount St. Francis Retreat Centre have some major decisions to regarding the massive expanse of land they own around the northeast corner of town. The retreat centre sits on land straddling the border between the town and Rocky View County. The 450 acres of land make the Franciscans one of the town's largest landowners. Franciscans (or members of the Order of Friars Minor) are a subset of Catholicism dedicated to the teachings and spiritual disciplines of their founder, the Italian preacher St. Francis.

Canada's Friars Join Together

CHRIS NELSON, FOR THE CALGARY HERALD Updated November 27, 2018



Friars Robert Minkley, Daniel Gurnick, Pierre Chertland, and others joined the right time for together. The friars of the ancient order was held in Cochrane at the Mount St. Francis



Father Bob Minkley and advisor Mark Love were among those on the panel to discuss the friar lands and plans for the future on April 13. Photo credit: Lindsay Seewalt

ENVIRONMENT

Friars look to community input to determine future

As landowners of some 450 acres of land in Cochrane and surrounding Rocky View County, the Franciscan Friars are looking for community input to shape their place in the community for years to come.

BY LINDSAY SEEWALT APR 16, 2019

Major reorganization for Franciscans at retreat centre

Patrick Gibson

Published on November 19, 2018 | Last Updated November 22, 2018 2:39 PM EST



Friar Dan Gurnick, shares a laugh with attendees of a ceremony for the unification of Friars across the retreat centre on November 15. PATRICK GIBSON / CT

the structure behind Cochrane's Mount St. Francis



Friar Gerry Cline and Friar Dan Gurnick cheers at the 70th anniversary of Mount St. Francis Retreat on Nov 15. Photo credit: Amy Tucker

LOCAL NEWS

Franciscan friars celebrate 70 years in Cochrane

BY AMY TUCKER NOV 22, 2018

Cochrane's own friary celebrated its 70th anniversary last week and the message of the evening was that its future holds change.



WHAT WE HEARD & RESPONSES

The Ad Hoc Committee has spoken with over 200 stakeholders, neighbours and community members to-date. The dialogue from these meetings, including all comments and questions, have been transcribed, analyzed and themed into a number of categories. Please see the following categories, along with the responses provided by the Ad Hoc Committee.

Access

What We Heard: Many attendees utilize the South Lands frequently for personal use, including hiking, walking and observing wildlife, while understanding that the lands are privately owned. Those who had not experienced the lands due to trespassing concerns, expressed their desire and appreciation for the opportunity to access the lands.

Committee Response: We recognize the special nature of our lands and understand that many people use the lands today. We have not been diligent in the past regarding trespassing and will be looking into this more closely from a liability perspective. In alignment with the guiding principle of “improving mobility and access”, we are exploring the opportunity to formalize the space to allow for public access.

What We Heard: Many participants would like formalized access to the lands through multi-use pathways. Recommendations included natural, un-paved trails for walking and mountain biking, more formal paved pathways and a boardwalk area. A number of attendees suggested a parking/staging area to allow proper access to the trails, as well as educational and wayfinding signage.

Committee Response: Formalizing access to our lands through recreational pathways is in alignment with our guiding principles and is a consideration as we move forward.

Traffic

What We Heard: Sunterra Heights residents and Rocky View School division share concerns for any additional traffic on 4 Avenue should development be a consideration for the lands. Attendees would like the Franciscans to ensure that whatever takes place on the land enhances and improves mobility and integrates with the existing communities.

Committee Response: We understand the existing traffic concerns in the community, specifically along 4 Avenue. Improving mobility is one of our guiding principles, therefore we will be looking at integration and mobility improvements on the land throughout this process.

Wildlife & Environment

What We Heard: Many participants highlighted the need to consider the South Lands as part of a larger wildlife corridor and expressed concern for impacts to wildlife and the natural environment. Appreciation for the Franciscans' environmental stewardship to date was expressed.

Committee Response: We understand that there are a number of species that frequent these lands or call them home. As stewards of this land for over 70 years with environmental justice as a core tenant of the Franciscan mission, mitigation strategies will be implemented, regardless of the direction taken, to ensure minimal impact on the wildlife and vegetation in the area. Additional environmental studies will be completed in the spring.

What We Heard: A number of people expressed their concerns about the unmaintained lands as a fire hazard at the public event.

Committee Response: We will be considering fire hazard mitigation as we undertake this process.

Additional Feedback



What We Heard: The “Big Hill” is an iconic symbol for the Town of Cochrane and is special to many people due to its varied topography, wildlife and open space. A number of people expressed their desire to leave the land untouched.

Committee Response: We recognize the tangible and intangible value of the Cochrane Hill. Honoring the site and the history and heritage of the lands is one of our guiding principles. Regardless of the options we explore, the beauty, topography and natural landscape of the hill will be respected.



What We Heard: Residents along 4 Avenue shared their experiences with slumping in their backyards.

Committee Response: We are aware of the localized slumping on 4 Avenue SW and have undertaken slope stability studies to better understand the stability of the soils on our lands.



What We Heard: Appreciation for being informed and consulted throughout this process.

Committee Response: We value and respect our relationships with neighbours and the community and look forward to continue working together throughout this process.

FAQ and Answers

Question: Why are the Franciscans undertaking this work now?

Answer: The unification of the two Provinces (the east and the west) into one national body has initiated strategic planning and visioning for the Franciscans across Canada, which includes an assessment of all landholdings. The number of active Franciscans in Canada has decreased from 550 to 55, and there are currently 10 facilities across the country for us to manage, resulting in the need to review our presence in Canada and determine a mission and vision. With development taking place on all sides of our land within the Town of Cochrane and Rocky View County, we want to ensure that our few remaining friars can plan for their own future, rather than be planned for.

Question: Will the Retreat Centre stay in its current location?

Answer: Mount St. Francis Retreat Centre is a holy site, with its own graveyard for our friars from the past 70 years. We have been here for 70 years and hope to stay.

Question: What is the Franciscans' vision?

Answer: We are currently assessing all of our landholdings across Canada and are in the process of exploring options at this time. We are far away from making any concrete decision for the land, but would like to know what our options are as we move forward as a unified body. Recommendations provided by our consultants will be shared with the Canadian Franciscans' Administrative Council, who will ultimately make decisions regarding landholdings and assets across the country.

Question: Is there an intent for the Franciscans to sell their lands, and is a developer involved in the process?

Answer: We are very early in the process of looking at possible alternate uses for the South Lands, which includes exploring all options for the Franciscans and their future in Cochrane. There is no immediate intent to sell the lands and there are no developers involved in this process. We are far away from making any concrete decisions for the land, but we would like to know what our options are as we move forward as a national body.

Question: Has opening the Retreat Road been considered to alleviate traffic concerns on 4 Avenue?

Answer: Retreat Road will remain closed to preserve peace and tranquility at the Retreat Centre and for neighbours along Retreat Road.

Question: Are you considering the upcoming planned twinning of Highway 1A and the Highway 22 interchange?

Answer: Yes, we have been in touch with Alberta Transportation as they are a key stakeholder. We have requested regular updates to ensure our planning is in alignment with any work taking place adjacent to our lands.

Comments & Quotes

“

Thank you. Thank you for considering allowing other uses for this special area of Town, what a gift.

Thank you for sharing with us, for all that you have done communicating with us, and for being such an awesome neighbour.

Very good information and conversation presented which should be helpful in making final decision.

Any new pathways especially for mountain biking, hiking and after work and weekend activities connected to the community would be fantastic. A parking lot would also be great like West Bragg for users to drive and park to hike or bike.

I personally look at these lands from my home and dream of biking on them one day.

If it is legal land use for pedestrians and biking, these people help to keep the land safe i.e.. Watching out for others that may be starting fires/littering or otherwise abusing the lands.

It would be a wonderful addition to Cochrane to have an outdoor space where we could bring out family.

Any planning should take the stream and Big Hill Valley into consideration - link for the valley together with these South lands.

Acknowledge and structure existing access to the Franciscan lands. Promote stewardship of shared access.

There is a responsibility for the Friars to plan for their land and take proper precautions as a landowner.

Our beautiful spaces help to make Cochrane a special place to live.

The land is so stunning - views, topography, flora - would love for more access to trails in the land.

We love the stations of the cross trails offered and love the beauty of the hill and the wildlife it hosts.

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NEXT STEPS

Upon completing this extensive stakeholder and public engagement program to learn about the community's relationships and resulting values associated with the South Lands, the Franciscans' Administrative Council has directed the Ad Hoc Committee to begin a formal process that will establish statutory certainty over the future use of the lands.

The Town of Cochrane's planning process identifies an amendment to the Municipal Development Plan and adoption of an Area Structure Plan (ASP) as the tools to establish statutory certainty for future development (of any type or scale) of privately-owned land. While an ASP typically precedes land development, at this point in time, the Franciscans have no immediate plans to develop their lands but instead are seeking to formalize potential future land use opportunities within their lands.

The Franciscans will begin the process to:

- Pursue an amendment to the MDP
- Change the current "Urban Reserve" land use to another land use in accordance with the Town's Land Use Bylaw through the adoption of a new ASP for the South Lands.

The components of the MDP amendment and new ASP are undetermined at this time and will be based on professional recommendations, guidance from the national Franciscan body, and consultation with the Town of Cochrane, stakeholder groups and the community at large.

The Ad Hoc Committee will begin a process to begin drafting the components of the MDP amendment and new ASP for the South Lands. This process will include a robust engagement program that will facilitate collaboration with Town Administration and Council, key local and regional stakeholders, neighbours and the community at-large to help develop a plan for the South Lands that benefits all.

More details on the process and future engagement opportunities will be shared as details become available. We look forward to working collaboratively throughout this process.



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MOUNT ST. FRANCIS RETREAT CENTRE

SOUTH LANDS



The Links of GlenEagles
Golf Course

GlenEagles

HIGHWAY 1A

BIG HILL ROAD

RETREAT ROAD

Mount St. Francis Lands

Mount St. Francis
Retreat Centre

Sunterra

Cochrane Heights

Cochrane Heights
Cochrane Heights
Cochrane Heights

Sunset Ridge

HIGHWAY 22

Heartland

Glenbow

East End