

Community Wellness Trail Feasibility Study

Phase 1

Sponsored & funded by Golden & District Community Foundation.

Project for Wildsight Golden.

Project managers:

Sam Foster, The Wild Lifers

Leslie Adams, Branch Manager of Wildsight Golden



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**Golden
Wellness
Trail**

Acknowledgments

Thank you to the Golden & District Community Foundation, community members and town staff for providing funding, input and guidance throughout the research process. Your participation and contributions are vital to realize the vision of a dedicated wellness space for Golden.

Golden is situated on the traditional unceded territory of both the Ktunaxa and Secwepemc people and is the chosen home of the Métis Nation Columbia River Society and many other diverse Indigenous People. We are honoured to have the opportunity to deepen our understanding of this history and grateful to have the opportunity to live and work in this territory.



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Executive summary



The purpose of this trail study is to investigate the feasibility of a wellness trail for the residents and visitors of Golden, BC. This document outlines the analyses and conclusions of the effort which was initiated in May 2023 by Wildsight Golden.

The study is values based with a focus on reciprocity, environmental impact and community priorities. The purpose of the study is to ensure that any proposal protects, and enhances the land, as well as the Golden lifestyle, culture and economy.

This study recognizes wellness, conservation and recreation as integral to our community. However, ultimately, it became clear during the assessment of values and community engagement process, that whilst the health of community remains important to the town, the initial concept for the wellness trail does not meet the needs of the land nor the community.

Given this outcome, recommendations have been made for a revised concept that offers reciprocity to the land, and better meets the needs, and wishes of the community, whilst minimizing environmental impact.

The end result is a study led from a place of care for our community and the land we live on, incorporating connection to nature, considerations for all members of our town, and future economic growth.

Our objective is to provide spaces of connection with nature for the purpose of recreation, healing, and education for the community, as well as conservation of ecosystems.

This document recognizes that a wide variety of factors will influence future development. Routes can and likely will change due to factors that cannot be seen by a study of this scope. Even during the course of this study, we came across considerations that necessitated a re-evaluation of potential routes. Flexibility will be key going forward. This study is intended to act as a guidepost for future development of a wellness experience for Golden, offering suggestions for routes and considerations.

In their contribution to this study, the Town of Golden has shown a commitment towards providing wellness and gentle recreation alternatives to community residents, a willingness to work hand in hand with community partners, and a desire to provide a higher quality of living for all Golden and Area A residents.

Overview



Background

This trail study was made possible through funding from the Golden & District Community Foundation and led by Wildsight Golden.

The inspiration for this trail study came from The Wild Lifers Nature & Forest School, who identified a need for a safe, accessible area close to town for residents to use for wellness and relaxation purposes. This concept was supported by Wildsight.

The Community Wellness Trail Feasibility Study began in May 2023, with a total of 80 hours over four months, dedicated to answering and documenting three primary questions: What would a wellness trail look like for Golden, how could it benefit or impact the community, and where could the trail be built?

Golden is surrounded by natural beauty, from the scenic mountains overlooking the town, to the serene lakes and river walks. The Columbia Valley presents numerous opportunities for outdoor recreation, environmental conservation and linking communities. However, there are many challenges in finding public, accessible, inclusive spaces dedicated to relaxation and wellness in the Golden area. Cyclists, motorized vehicles and animals all access existing outdoor recreational spaces, limiting their suitability for relaxation and wellness purposes as outlined in this document.

Phase 1, research & assessment includes:

“To conduct research and take steps to create a dedicated and protected space that can be used by the community of Golden and Area A for low-impact wellness activities including forest bathing, meditation, yoga, counselling, as well as for education purposes.”

- Definition of use
- Location scouting
- Identify trail build team
- Assess logistics for phase 2

NOTE: Identification of trail building team and assessment of logistics for phase 2 have been usurped due to a revision in concept.

What the study contains

This study documents the considerations, research, and conclusions drawn. The content has been split into what can be viewed as the **initial concept**, and the **revised concept**, with a view to progression of revised concept

Values



An Indigenous perspective

Shelly Boyd, an Indigenous citizen of North America, recognized as an Arrow Lakes member of The Colville Confederated Tribes and as of April 2021 via the Supreme Court of Canada an Aboriginal People of Canada as a Sinixt Citizen, shared a story* that has shaped the values that guide this study.

The lens we use to make decisions:

In order of importance

- What is best for the land?
- What is best for the water?
- What is best for the wild things?
- What is best for the people?

It is with this lens that it became clear, a new wellness trail carved into living forest or woodland, does not benefit the land, water or wild things.

The lens of reciprocity

When we view the land as a priority, we can ask the question “how can the people give back to the land?”. This perspective led to the idea of taking vacant or under-utilized town land, already zoned for use, and reviving it.

By regenerating an existing area, and pivoting on the original concept we’d be meeting needs without acting against the values of the study and the lens of reciprocity.

This space could be an opportunity for story telling - indigenous partners, Golden’s rich history or the geological history of the land. This contemplative and emotional space offers a space to facilitate education for future generations.

* Reference

Columbia Mountains Institute of Applied Ecology: Responsible Recreation: Pathways, Practices and Possibilities

Wildsight’s contracted project manager attended this two-day conference. An increasing number of people are pursuing outdoor activities, and there is growing recognition of the limited information, tools, and resources for managing and monitoring the impacts of these pressures on wildlife and habitat. The event addressed key questions regarding effects of current and future development and showcased best practices of established commercial and community managed recreation and adventure tourism tenures. The stories and research shared have influenced the concepts and approach to this study.

Concepts

Concepts



Initial concept

The Golden Community Wellness Trail

A dedicated, accessible ‘wilderness’ trail that can be used by the community of Golden and Area A for low-impact wellness activities including forest bathing, meditation, yoga, walking, and wandering. The trail could also feature a space be utilized by nature-based wellness practitioners tp have a quiet place to hold workshops, classes, therapy and other low-impact activities.

Assumptions:

- Forest/woodland
- Away from traffic
- Quiet
- Dirt trail
- Flat & accessible
- Marked for non-motorized use only
- No access to dogs or pets
- Parking
- Access to washroom or outhouse facilities

Revised concept

The Golden Peace Garden

An accessible, public wellness garden for the community of Golden and Area A. Built on vacant town land, zoned for use. Designed for low-impact wellness activities and education, e.g. gardening, meditation, wandering, foraging, nature bathing, painting, and sitting.

Assumptions:

- Flat & accessible
- Planted with flowers, shrubs, trees, grass areas
- Garden beds for food
- Trail suitable for mobility aids
- Within walking distance of town facilities
- On zoned land, vacant or regenerated
- Managed & maintained by town & community groups

Initial concept



The Golden Community Wellness Trail

An accessible and inclusive trail located in the Town of Golden or Area A that is used for the purposes of wellness and education.

This trail would not be accessible to bikes, motorized vehicles, other forms of sporting activities, or pet walkers.

The trail would be open to the community with local practitioners being able to book the trail for private use for a limited period of time each week.

Suitable for:

- meditation
- forest & nature bathing
- wandering
- yoga
- interpretive walks
- physiotherapy
- physical rehabilitation
- gentle strolls
- walk and talk therapy

Features:

- Flat & accessible pathways
- Forested trail
- Clearing for low impact activities
- Trail suitable for mobility aids
- Parking
- Washroom facilities
- quiet, good distance from industry or traffic noise

Logistics:

- Within walking distance of town facilities
- On crown land or private
- Managed & maintained by volunteer or community groups

Bonus features:

- Water feature
- Sculpture
- Interactive learning opportunities
- Sound & sensory experiences
- Little sharing library
- Spaces for hammock hanging

Revised concept



The Golden Peace Garden

An accessible, free, public garden for the community of Golden and Area A. A therapeutic environment, designed for low-impact wellness activities and education. A peaceful sanctuary, built on vacant town land, zoned for use.

Definition of 'garden':

A garden is a planned space, usually outdoors, set aside for the cultivation, display, and enjoyment of plants and other forms of nature.

Suitable for:

- meditation
- gardening
- wandering
- nature bathing
- playing
- painting
- foraging
- sitting
- meeting
- eating
- resting
- learning

Logistics:

- Within walking distance of town facilities
- On zoned land, vacant or regenerated
- Managed & maintained by town & community groups
- Seasonality

Features:

- Contemplative gardens
- Flat & accessible pathways
- Flower beds
- Seating
- Edible plants
- Fruit trees
- Garden beds for food
- Trail suitable for mobility aids
- Garbage cans on periphery
- Gathering space
- Meditation seating

Bonus features:

- Water feature
- Sculpture
- Interactive learning opportunities
- Sound & sensory experiences
- Little sharing library
- Spaces for hammock hanging
- Labryinth
- Reflexology path
- Wooden arch swing

Revised concept



The Golden Peace Garden: A therapeutic environment, designed for low-impact wellness activities and education.

A growing body of research clearly shows that engaging in activities within appropriately designed outdoor settings can improve overall health and wellness - a goal prioritized within the vital pulse survey of 2023. A community wellness garden provides an outdoor experience that is engaging, and encourages residents to go outdoors to reap the many benefits provided by interacting with nature.

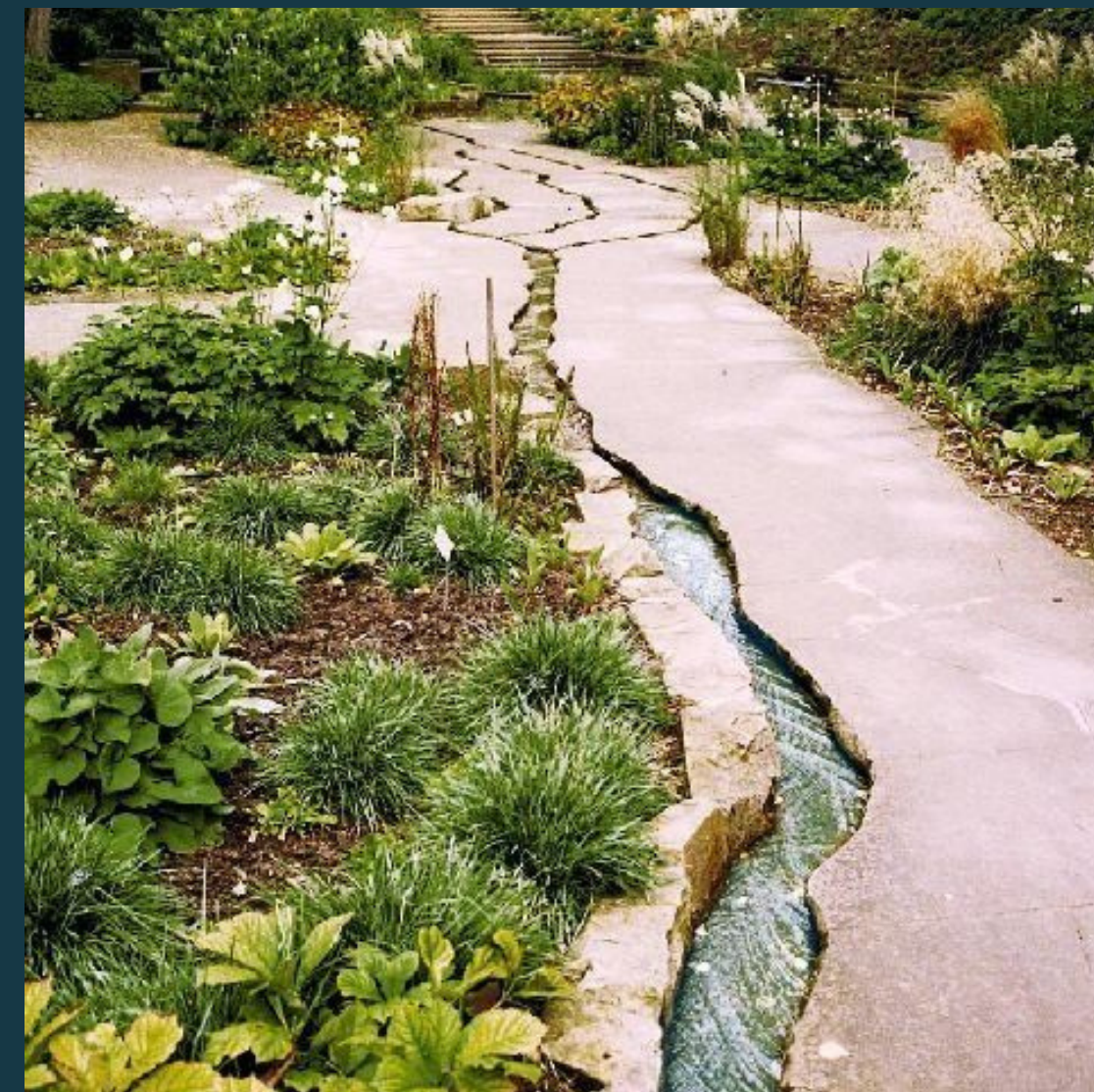
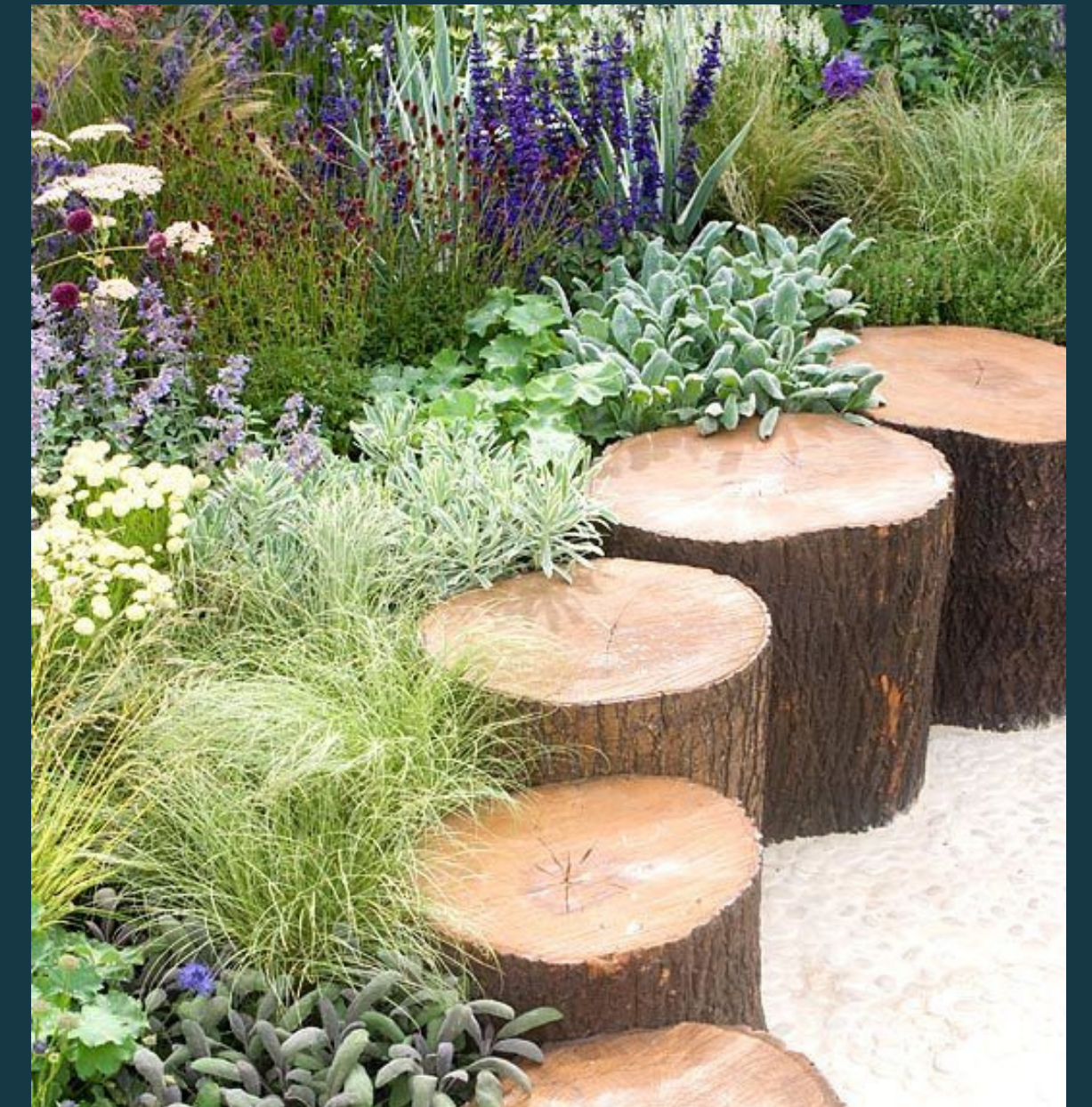
This form of landscaping aims to restore, reinvigorate and renew, where it uses 70% of nature and 30% of hardscape allowing humans who visit the space to relax through all their five senses. The sensory garden should evoke the sights, sounds, smells, and textures one finds in a woodland or wild space. It should also offer opportunities to nurture the underlying and more foundational sensory systems: proprioception, kinesthesia, and vestibular.

Gently curved paths might wind through the entire garden, encouraging a slow paced wandering. While a continuous flat walk is provided, alternate paths with ramps, steps and a variety of surfaces could provide opportunities for physical therapy with opportunities for additional exercise and exploration.

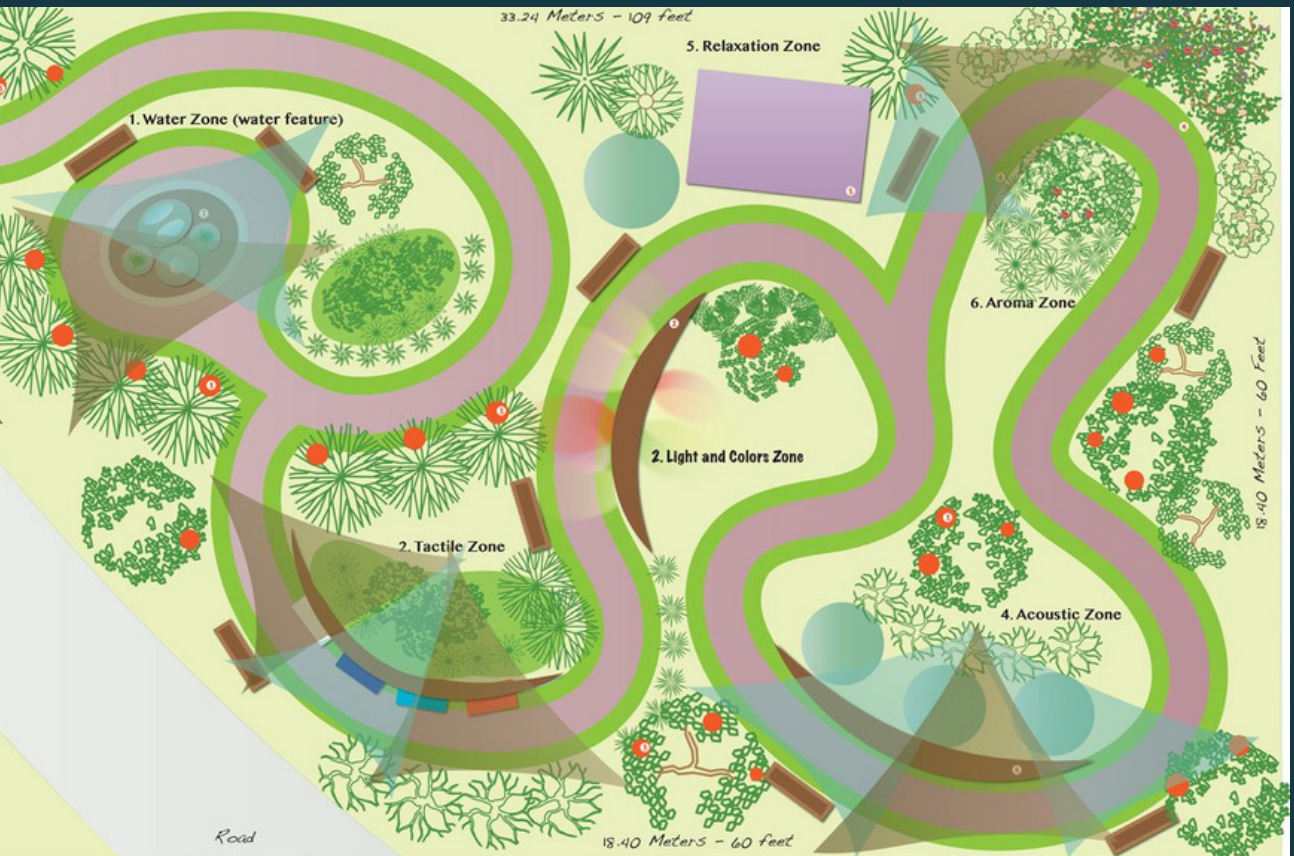
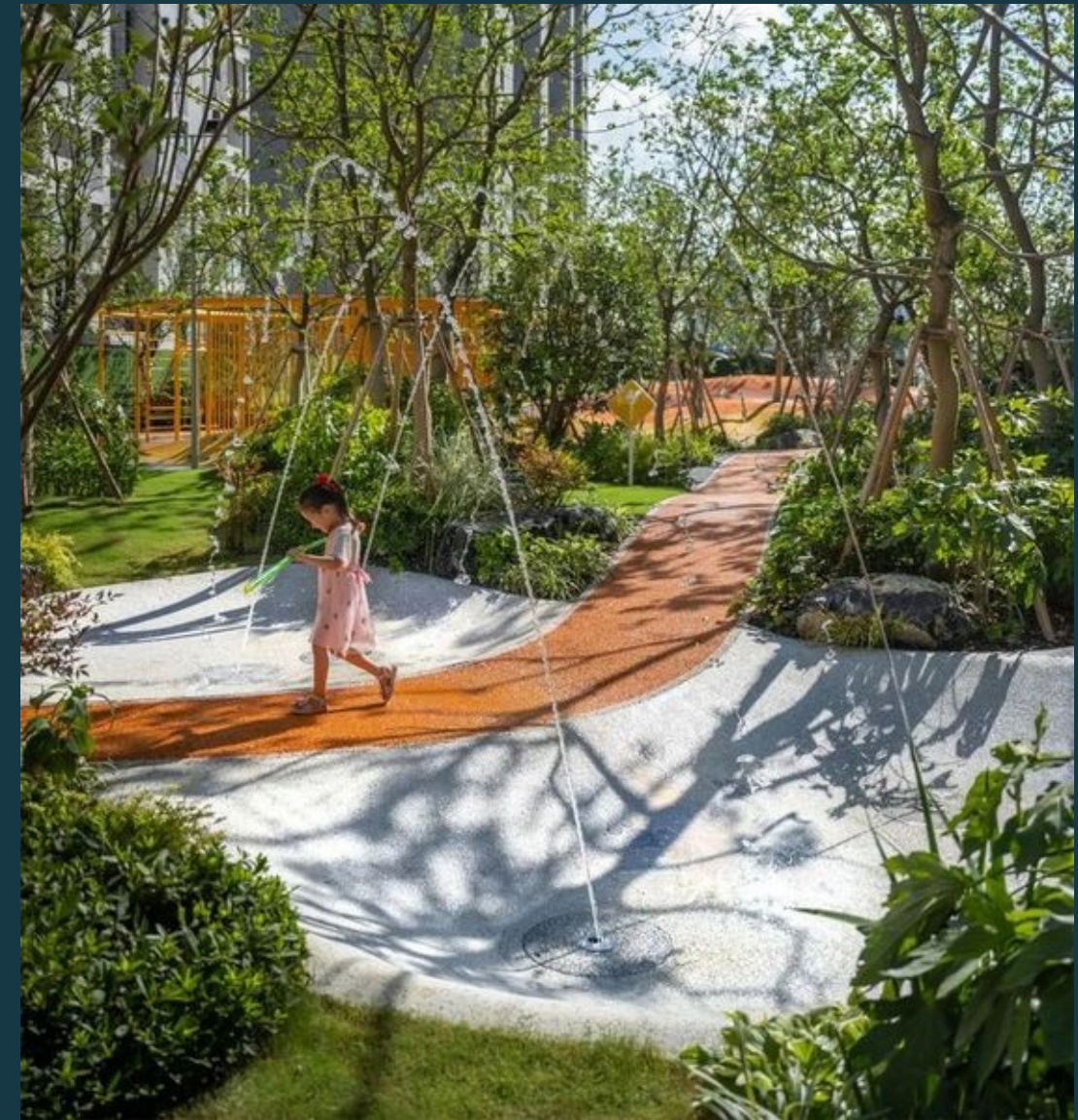
Paths should be wide enough to accommodate wheelchairs, strollers and pedestrians walking in pairs. There should also be places to sit with others. These spaces create socialization, either with visitors or among the residents.

We recommend the inclusion of intergenerational elements for the gardens to support and encourage meaningful interactions between multiple generations.

Revised concept moodboard: Features



Revised concept
moodboard: Landscaping



Life on land



Lens of reciprocity

When we view the land as a priority, we can ask the question “how can the people give back to the land?”. This perspective led to the idea of taking derelict, damaged town land, already zoned for use, and reviving it.

Meeting the goals of ‘Life on Land’ to protect, restore and promote sustainable use of ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, and halt land degradation and biodiversity loss, we can operate with the awareness that we have an opportunity to create improvements to the wellbeing of the land.

By regenerating an existing area zoned for use, acting from a lens of reciprocity, we limit our impact on wild spaces, habitat loss and ecological degradation. This approach also lends itself to the accessing the brownfields funding initiative.

Giving back

A community wellness garden could:

- Create healthy soil
- Remove pollutants
- Benefit pollinators
- Provide habitat
- Offer food growing opportunities
- Create a relaxing space for the community & tourists to experience, improving wellbeing & sentiment.

Community engagement

Community engagement overview



Broad purpose and study area:

- To engage the community in discussions about the potential uses of a wellness trail and identify any additional needs or considerations
- Understand how access to a trail could be managed
- To understand the places and spaces that are important to the community and identify impact on the landscape and identify places of conflict between human and non-human users.
- This study will focus on Golden & Area A

Summary

An online survey was shared with the community via facebook and newsletter, also accessible via the Wildsight Golden website. In-person community engagement was held at the Wildsight farmers' market stand in July. A one-page handout was supplied for visitors to the stand along with a QR code they could scan to access the survey. Short engagement sessions with Forest School attendees were held to gather input from children in the community. Engagement with Indigenous communities is a priority and a lens of 'land first' will be adopted.

The broad goal of this community engagement project to set the stage for genuine collaboration and advocacy. The aim was to develop the "big picture" for the trail and its uses, that can be shared with the community and all who have decision-making authority. All findings have contributed to the study to facilitate well-informed decision-making and more sustainable outcomes for the community and potential trail ecosystems.

The outcomes from these engagement sessions have helped conclude that a wellness trail is not a priority or desired use of land to the community who contributed. Ideas and suggestions from participants has helped shape the revised concept of a community garden.

Coupling this outcome with the 'land first' lens has led to the conclusion that a wellness trail is not feasible and a pivot is required.

A huge thank you to the participants of the study for their feedback and engagement.

[BC Healthy Communities engagement toolkit](#) was consulted and referenced for engagement and research planning.

Community engagement



In-person Qualitative

Public - Measuring sentiment, idea generation & capturing needs

Private - Idea generation & early years/youth engagement

Online digital survey - Golden Community Wellness Trail: Feasibility Study Questionnaire Qualitative & quantitative

Public - Measuring sentiment, idea generation & capturing needs

See appendix for results



Community engagement



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In-person: Qualitative research

Measuring sentiment, idea generation & capturing needs

People were invited to contribute their ideas, wants, thoughts and questions to the engagement process at Golden Farmers' Market.

Post-it notes and pens were provided for anyone that wanted to add to the board.

Crayons and paper were provided for anyone that wanted to contribute a drawing or abstract idea for the wellness space.

People were also welcome to share their thoughts with the project manager, present at the stand and engage in a discourse around the trail concept.

Observations:

- **27 people made written contributions**
- **5 children drew pictures of their vision**
- **12 people offered purely verbal contributions**
- **Sentiment of in-person engagement was positive**
- **Participants showed lack of diversity in gender**



Community engagement

Child-led vision board collages

Outcomes from previous youth engagement sessions ages 3-12

Local children were given loose parts to create a vision board, or abstract design models, to represent their ideas and recommendations for a wellness trail experience. These ideas have been captured in the revised concept.



Community engagement

Online digital survey - Golden Community Wellness Trail: Feasibility Study Questionnaire

Quantitative & qualitative research

People were invited to contribute their ideas, wants, thoughts and questions to the engagement process.

A google survey was created to capture anonymous feedback and promote the accurate capture of community sentiment.

Observations:

- 30 people submitted their feedback
- 50 percent chose to remain anonymous
- 18 people offered additional comments
- Sentiment of online engagement was mixed, net negative
- Quantitative results can not be considered statistically significant due to low number of submissions.

See appendix for results



Community feedback



Sentiment - Negative

Mixed feedback with net negative sentiment towards the initial concept of a forest wellness trail to include private use.

“With so many other local endeavors which are underfunded, and under volunteered which are more inclusive to the wider community which have struggled recently. I do not believe this is the right time to put money and resources into yet another thing.”

“It seems like this trail might be accessible but it does not sound very inclusive. Is it inclusive to restrict the trail to certain users and private bookings (for limited time periods)?”

“I feel as though you’re maybe trying to reinvent the wheel here. We have a few trails that would be suitable for what you are proposing.”

“Gating a trail and managing a booking system for using said trail will create conflict.”

“I am opposed the creation of bookable trail space but am supportive of new trails.”

“This sounds an awful lot like a govt funded private park for a select few.”

“With so many other local endeavors which are underfunded, and under volunteered which are more inclusive to the wider community which have struggled recently. I do not believe this is the right time to put money and resources into yet another thing.”

“I am concerned that the community will lose access to a trail that is currently open to all. Trails connect places within the community and losing a trail can impact other user groups in a negative way. If this will be a newly created trail, this will not impact such user groups, which would be better. Also, I am wondering how the noise of the trains or highways will impact the peaceful experience of this trail.”

See appendix for results

Community feedback



Suggestions & ideas from the community

- Flowers
- Little library
- Volunteer opportunities available for maintenance
- Use of Dawn Mountain Trails for private booking
- A sensory wind phone
- Fruit trees
- A cleared area where a group could gather
- Sheltered area with seats
- Quiet area
- Moving water
- Sitting stumps / logs
- Phone free
- Hammocks
- Native plants
- Bird feeders
- Bug houses
- Boardwalk
- Waterfalls, waves, stream
- Wooden wind chimes
- Covered gazebo
- Fire pit
- Edible plants
- Open space for movement
- Animals welcome
- Washrooms
- Local wood carvings of animals
- Most important is a healthy natural environments with trees, plants, birds, possibly water etc
- Allow pets on leash
- Trail cams
- Medicinal herb garden
- Writing desks

Adapting the concept

What can we take forward?

Using the community engagement to revise the concept:

- Remove bookable business use from concept.
- Accessibility is a priority, lead with inclusivity and accessibility in design.
- Use existing space or regenerate town land zoned for use instead of creating new trail.
- Garden instead of trail.
- Relaxation and meeting space.
- Safety is a concern.
- Include needs of wider community.

Alternative route for business use.

Local private land owners have stepped forwards with the desire to offer use of their land to small wellness businesses. This addresses the need and removes an area of conflict from the concept.



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Indigenous voices



Create connections

Create opportunities to work with the local Métis nation, the Ktunaxa and Secwepemc Nations on the design and implementation of a wellness garden, continuing to advance reconciliation and listen to the voices of Indigenous People in our community.

Golden sits on the traditional unceded territory of the Ktunaxa and Secwépemc People and is home to the Métis Nation Columbia River Society. The Town recognizes the importance of learning about these communities, as well as their perspective. The Town can work with Indigenous communities on the design and implementation of a community wellness garden to ensure it meets their needs and fosters a relationship between the communities. This can be done by creating opportunities for input into the connections to First Nations communities, destinations, and sites of cultural significance.

Story telling

Connection to place, connection to nature.

The creation of a new nature-based experiential space for Golden offers an amazing opportunity to integrate the stories of our Indigenous community, and continue stepping towards reconciliation.

The importance of collaboration in the early design phases is crucial, as well as maintaining the lens of reciprocity, and land first approach.

Further consultation

“Public spaces are in their very nature democratic, so the process by which we design them must be equally egalitarian.”

- Hapa co

Consultation on the revised concept with a broad range of stakeholders would be beneficial. Below is a non-exhaustive list to consider

- Town planning
- Tourism board
- Indigenous leaders
- Build & design teams
- Interior health team for Golden
- Community groups
- All parties involved in strategic planning
- Trail alliance committee
- Wider community groups
- Youth groups
- Local food matters
- The Golden Food Bank
- Wildsight

