



# Engage Resource Unit

## Research and Engagement Library // Document Overview

### Document Overview

Project Name: **McCall Lake Redevelopment Feasibility Study**

Document Type: **Final Summary Report**

What is an <b>Engagement Plan</b> or <b>Strategy</b> ?	What is a <b>What we Heard Report</b> ?	What is a <b>Final Summary Report</b> ?
<i>A document that outlines the objectives for conducting engagement, who we planned to engage with and what engagement activities were planned.</i>	<i>A document that outlines the feedback that was heard through an engagement process.</i>	<i>A document that describes the purpose for engagement, who we talked to, and how their input was used by The City to help make decisions.</i>
Why are we engaging?	To gather feedback regarding the potential redevelopment of McCall Lake Golf Course.	
What stakeholders are involved?	The City of Calgary – Recreation, Calgarians, “Save McCall Lake” Group, Golf Management Advisory Committee	
What are we talking to stakeholders about?	Whether the positives of redeveloping McCall Lake outweigh the drawbacks.	
When did this engagement happen?	January – April 2014	

# **McCall Lake Redevelopment Feasibility Study**

## **Public Engagement Findings**

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## 1.0 Public Engagement

As part of the feasibility study, Administration held several engagement opportunities pertaining to the potential redevelopment of McCall Lake golf course and golf sustainability in general. This work was completed from 2014 January to April and included seven focus groups, two open houses, a telephone survey, an online weblink survey that mirrored the telephone survey, and comments captured through 311.

Engagement time line:

- Six focus groups with randomly selected participants – 2014 January 27-30
  - 52 people
- Telephone survey of a random sample of 400 Calgarians and of 400 golfers– 2014 February 17 – March 2, 2014
  - 800 people
- Online weblink survey open to all citizens (questions mirrored the telephone survey) 2014 February 17 – March 7
  - 1,140 responses
- Open House forums – 2014 February 25 and 27
  - 105 people
- One focus group with the Save McCall Lake group – 2014 April 14
  - 7 people
- Comments captured through 311 and letters provided to The City

The focus groups, telephone survey and online weblink survey were conducted by Leger Research, an independent research group procured by The City.

### 1.1 Focus Groups

Six focus groups were held between 2014 January 27 – 30, with a random selection of participants including non-golfers in the northeast, non-golfers city-wide, a mix of non-golfers and golfers, golfers who frequent McCall Lake, golfers who use City-operated courses and golfers who use non-City courses. An additional focus group took place on 2014 April 14 specifically with members of the Save McCall Lake group (SMLG).

During the focus groups, participants were asked to provide feedback on the benefits and drawbacks of the proposed redevelopment of McCall Lake and any alternatives they would like The City to consider to address the current \$35 million needed for capital requirements.

Some of the potential benefits indicated by the randomly selected participants for proceeding with the proposed closure and redevelopment of McCall Lake golf course include financial benefits, improvements to other City-operated courses, new year-round recreational opportunities for citizens and better support for the long-term sustainability of City-operated golf in Calgary. The SMLG did not identify any benefits with the proposed redevelopment.

When asked about the drawbacks to proceeding with the redevelopment, participants identified several concerns including the loss of a City-operated golf course, lack of tee-time availability and overcrowding at other City-operated golf courses, loss of green space, environmental impacts and negative social impacts for citizens' quality of life. It should be noted, that while many residents who indicated that they reside in the Northeast, were protective of green space, some did become enthusiastic about "new" recreation possibilities that could take place on the land.

Of the 59 randomly selected citizens who participated in the focus groups, the large proportion of participants indicated that they are not convinced the benefits of redeveloping McCall Lake outweigh the drawbacks of losing the golf course and valuable green space. Some participants perceived the McCall Lake redevelopment to be a "band-aid" solution that would not address the long-term sustainability needs of City-operated golf courses.

In addition to the drawbacks mentioned above, participants at the SMLG session expressed concerns that the removal of a full-service, family-friendly golf facility will negatively impact the quality of affordable golf in the city. Safety issues due to the location being so close to the airport were also raised. A report and PowerPoint presentation were provided by the SMLG sharing their views on the proposed redevelopment. The SMLG also brought documents, including letters, a petition, notes from open house discussions, and comments which have been captured from citizens, through the SMLG.

The McCall Lake Golf Course Summary Report of Engagement Sessions prepared by Leger is provided in Appendix A.

Documents provided by the SMLG at the 2014 April 14 focus group are provided in Appendix B.

## ***1.2 Telephone Survey and Online Weblink Survey***

A telephone survey was conducted with randomly-selected Calgarians from 2014 February 17 – March 2. An online weblink survey that mirrored the questions in the telephone survey was available on The City of Calgary's website from 2014 February 17 – March 7 for members of the general public.

### *i) Phone survey*

The phone survey reached 800 people, 400 of which represented a random selection of the general public and 400 of which represented a random selection of golfers. Approximately one-third (32%) of adult Calgarians reported having golfed within City limits over the past 12 months with slightly less than one-quarter (23%) having played at a City-operated course.

Respondents were provided with a brief overview about the proposed McCall Lake Golf Course redevelopment. Among both general public and golfer respondents 60% agreed that the primary benefit of the proposed redevelopment is to support the long-term sustainability of City-operated golf courses.

Benefits related to new recreational opportunities resonate more strongly among the general public (64%) than among golfers (39%). Loss of green space is the biggest drawback identified by both the general public (78%) and golfers (81%) and resonates more strongly than any potential benefit of the

redevelopment. If redevelopment does proceed, a strong majority of the general public (81%) and golfers (82%) feel it is important that a portion of the land is retained as green space.

At the end of the survey, 52% of general public respondents expressed support for the redevelopment, while 40% opposed it and 8% either weren't sure or needed more information. In comparison, 37% of golfers support the redevelopment, 60% oppose it and 5% weren't sure or needed more information.

However, it should be noted that the majority of general public and golfer respondents hope that The City would explore alternatives to closing the golf course and that many expressed sadness over the loss of a City-operated golf course.

#### *ii) Online weblink survey*

The online survey garnered 1,140 responses.

Of the weblink respondents, 85% reported having golfed within city limits over the past 12 months, with 80% indicated having played at City-operated courses during this time.

The majority (77%) of weblink respondents oppose the proposed redevelopment of the McCall Lake golf course. If redevelopment does proceed, three-quarters (76%) feel it is important to retain a portion of the land as green space. A sizeable majority (88%) expressed hope that The City would explore alternatives to closing the golf course.

It's important to note that the data in the online survey is only representative of those who volunteered to complete the questionnaire and that duplicate responses may have been submitted. It is therefore not representative of the population of Calgarians

The McCall Lake Golf Course Overview of Telephone Surveys & Weblink Input summary prepared by Leger is provided in Appendix C. The Executive Summary of the Telephone Surveys and the Online Weblink Survey is provided in Appendix D.

### **1.3 Open House Forums**

Administration hosted two open house forums to provide a public forum for information dispersal and to gather input from citizens. The sessions were held on February 25 at the Southland Leisure Centre and on February 27 at the Genesis Centre. In total, 105 people attended the Open House forums.

The sessions were designed to provide citizens with more information on why and how the potential redevelopment of McCall Lake evolved the overall situation of golf sustainability in general.

The details of the Open House Forums were advertised publicly and also provided to the current lease holder groups that have agreements with The City pertaining to this parcel of land, the Save McCall Lake group (SMLG), and the Golf Management Advisory Committee (GMAC).

Within the design of the "open house", several information boards were developed based on responses from the focus groups. This helped provide a broader based understanding of golf course sustainability

issues and how the potential McCall Lake redevelopment option was derived. The content that was displayed on the information boards can be found in Appendix E.

A presentation was also delivered to provide further context to the overall issue of golf course sustainability. Participants were offered various opportunities to provide feedback at the open house forums including through open comment cards, a dotmocracy exercise (based on comments garnered from focus groups), and a workshop hosted by The City's engagement resource staff. This allowed participants to ask further questions and provide suggestions for The City to consider as part of this project.

Key themes that emerged from the Open House revealed strong opposition to the potential redevelopment of McCall Lake, that many people support golf courses being tax supported similar to other recreation facilities/services and that alternatives to the redevelopment should be considered.

The results from the dotmocracy exercise are provided in Appendix F.

### ***1.4 Input into alternatives to redeveloping McCall Lake golf course***

The focus groups, phone and web surveys and open house forums offered an opportunity for participants to suggest alternative solutions to redeveloping the McCall Lake golf course as a means to fund golf course capital requirements. Input received across all engagement streams has been compiled.

The most frequently suggested alternatives to redeveloping the McCall Lake Golf Course site falls within the following themes:

- Funding Options – i.e. alternative funding sources, operating models and possible reallocation of current City priorities and funds.
- Golf Sustainability Mandate –i.e. review of why municipal golf is funded differently than other City recreation facilities/services
- Other development thoughts/options – i.e. other redevelopment options that would be more feasible and supportive of citizen recreation needs.
- Operations/Maintenance – i.e. alternatives to increase revenues and realize cost savings, as well as changes that would increase feasibility and sustainability at McCall Lake

## **2.0 Other Communications Received**

Separate from the public engagement, a letter was sent by the Slow-Pitch Society (Appendix G) in 2014 February expressing their concerns over a potential loss of their space that has over 40 years of history and acts as a destination for league tournaments. The Society feels there is no other place in the Calgary area that offers the same experience and that teams would be forced to look for somewhere else to play.

The Golf Management Advisory Committee (GMAC) also sent a letter, in the form of an email, responding to the proposed McCall Lake redevelopment as found in Appendix H.

### **3.0 Public Engagement Conclusion**

While citizens, including golfers and non-golfers, may understand the reason for the potential redevelopment and some are supportive of it, the public engagement findings indicate that overall, there is uncertainty as to whether the positives of redeveloping McCall Lake outweigh the drawbacks. The loss of valuable green space, concerns as to whether the redevelopment would really ensure the long-term sustainability of City-operated golf courses, and hope that The City would explore alternatives to the redevelopment were key themes that emerged across all public engagement streams.

Many citizens, especially golfers who frequent City-operated courses expressed concerns over the negative impacts of the closure including lack of availability and over-crowding at other City golf courses and sadness over the loss of a full service golf course that provides a recreational service to all ages and families.

While there are many different findings that can be gleaned from the public engagement, Administration concludes that support for the redevelopment is contingent on other uses for the site, the amount of green space that is retained and if there are alternatives that could be explored as opposed to closing and redeveloping the McCall Lake golf course.

Concerns raised by lease holders on the site, the Save McCall Lake Group and the Golf Management Advisory Committee echo concerns raised through the public engagement and more specific impacts to groups/individuals that use the site, either as lease holders or golfers who do not want to see the only City-operated golf course in the northeast close.

Based on the information received, in conjunction with the findings from the redevelopment and financial analysis, Administration recommends other alternatives be explored to redeveloping and closing the McCall Lake Golf Course.