

North Bench Neighbourhood Development Plan

October 6th

Community Meeting

Don McArthur, Planning & Development Services Manager

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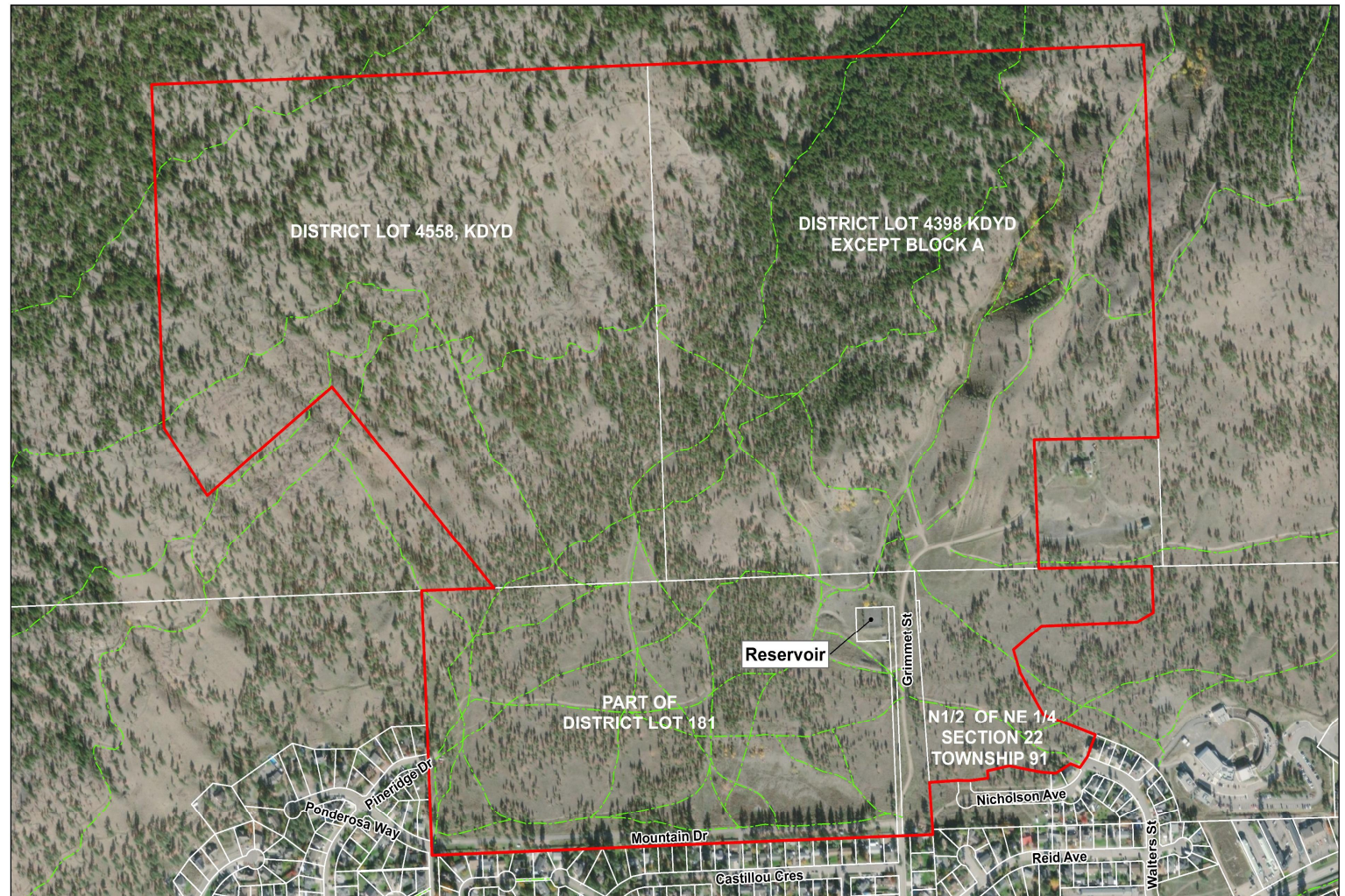
Objectives of Today

- Provide an overview of the project and work completed to date
- Outline the neighbourhood development planning process
- Obtain feedback on some potential directions for the North Bench Neighbourhood Development Plan
- Outline next steps

Who's on the Call?

Where is the North Bench?

- Comprised of 4 undeveloped parcels of land directly north of Mountain Drive, in the City's Bench Sector
- The four parcels total 153 hectares (378 acres)
- All parcels are currently Provincial Crown lands and the City is in the process of obtaining a crown land tenure
- Initial crown tenure is to focus on recreational uses



Where is the North Bench?



View from Mountain Drive

Project Background

- The North Bench area has long been identified as an area of future expansion for the City of Merritt
- Identified within the City's 2010 Integrated Growth Strategy
- The 2011 Official Community Plan (OCP) identifies the North Bench as an area of future residential development
- The 2011 OCP outlines several policies for future development of the area
- Previous plans for the North Bench did include an industrial component – this is no longer the case



Why Undertake a Neighbourhood Development Plan for the North Bench?

The 'Direction for Future Development' for the Bench Sector outlined in the 2011 OCP states:

“Work cooperatively with Crown land agencies with respect to future expansion of areas in the northern areas of the Bench. This may include the preparation of a neighbourhood development plan or a comprehensive development plan that would address the following: land use and density, infrastructure requirements, wildfire interface issues, transportation.....open space and parks, existing habitat and vegetation, and design guidelines for form and character development.”

Why Undertake a Neighbourhood Development Plan for the North Bench?

Undertaking this Plan will help to:

- Obtain input and recommendations from residents, local First Nations and various stakeholders on how the land should be used moving forward;
- Determine infrastructure servicing requirements to enable new development;
- Better understand the development opportunities and constraints of the North Bench area;
- Provide greater clarity regarding future land uses on the lands; and
- Assist the City in obtaining a Provincial Crown land tenure.

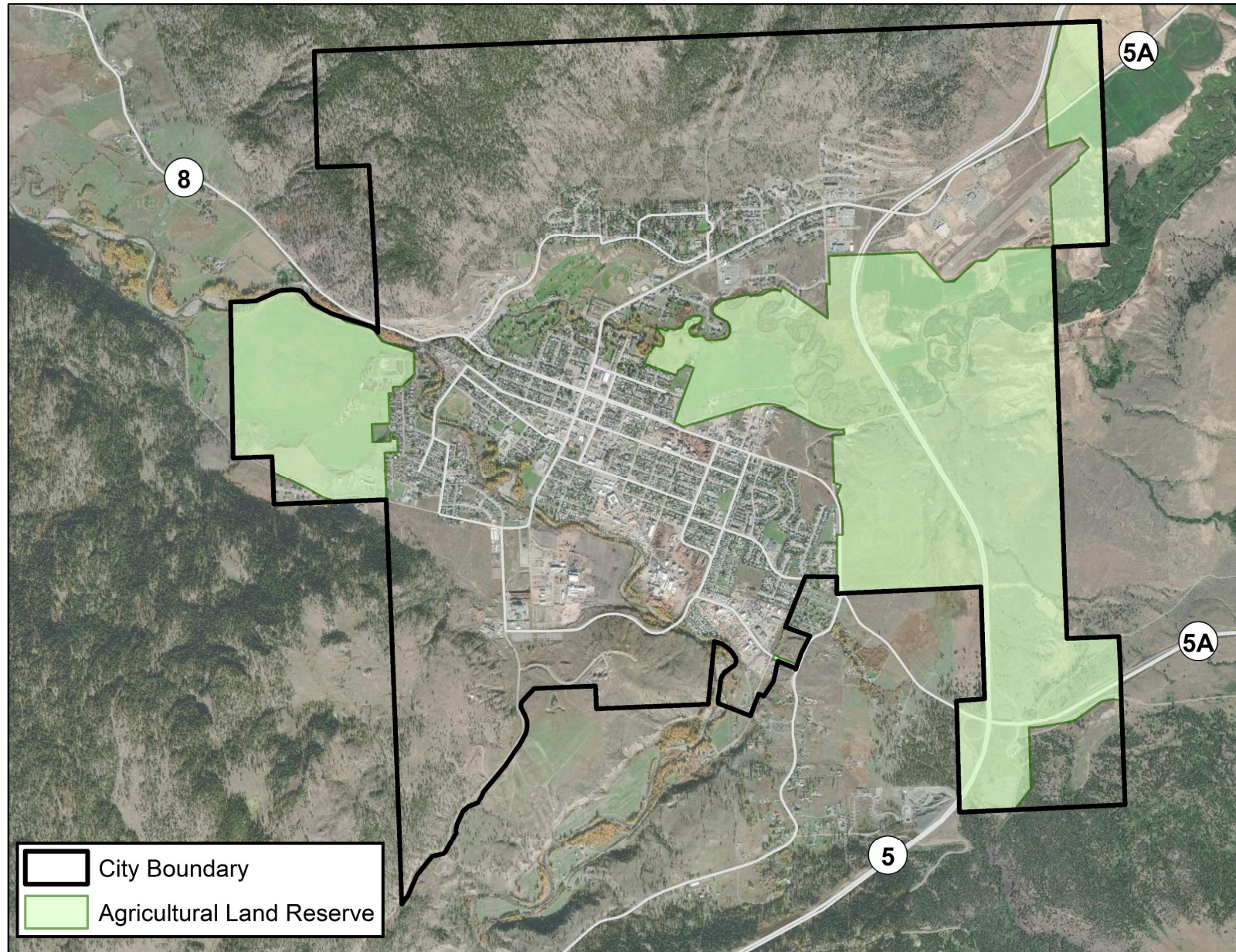
Rationale

Why the North Bench?

- Important to note that this is a medium-long term initiative, as the engagement and crown land tenure process takes time - the City of Merritt is just getting the process started
- Identified by the community as a priority growth area in previous plans (OCP, Integrated Growth Strategy)
- The parcels are currently owned by the Province and there is a desire to have more local control over the lands
- There are not a lot of large tracts of land within Merritt suitable for the development of a complete neighbourhood
- With limited lands for long-term expansion – it is important to get this right!

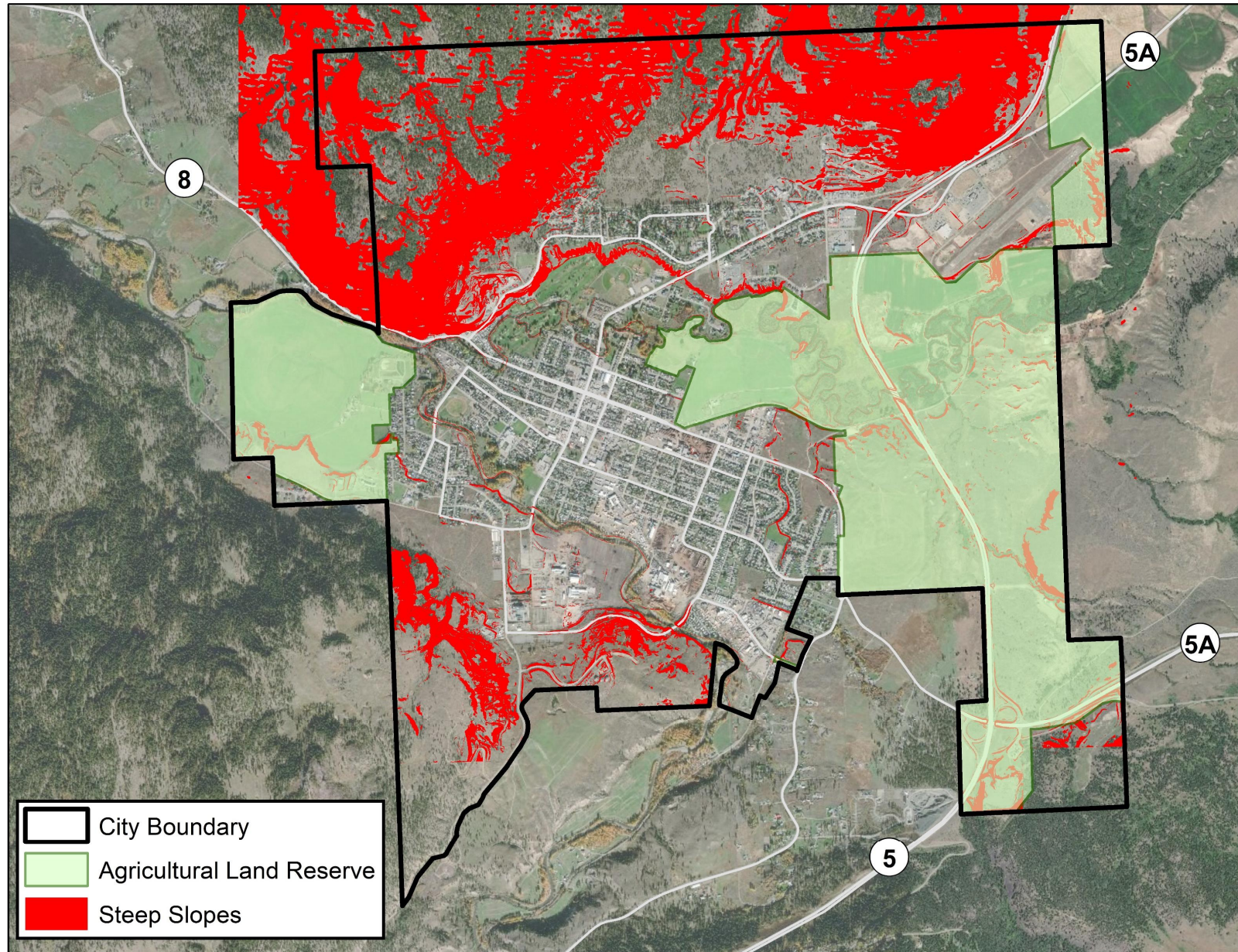
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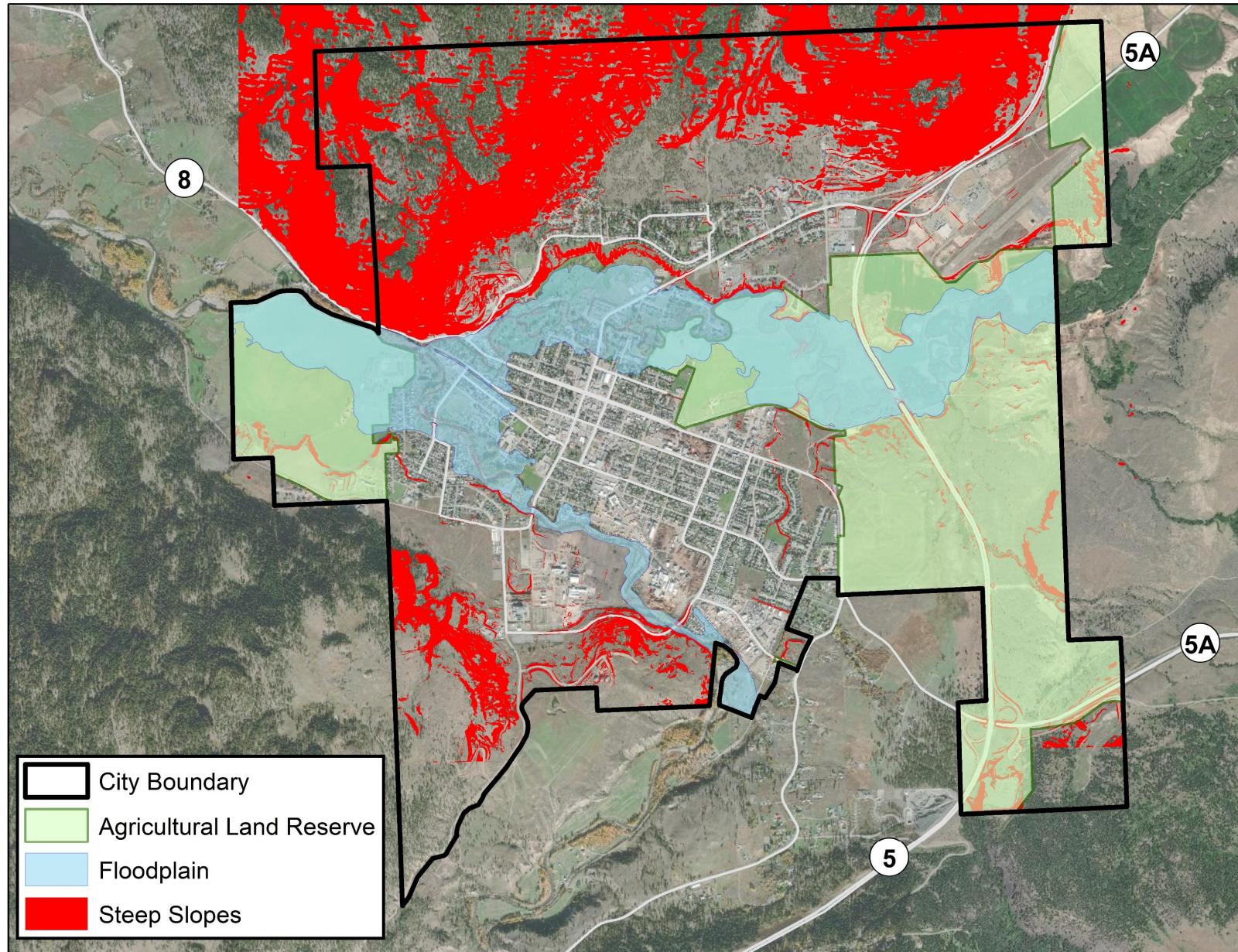
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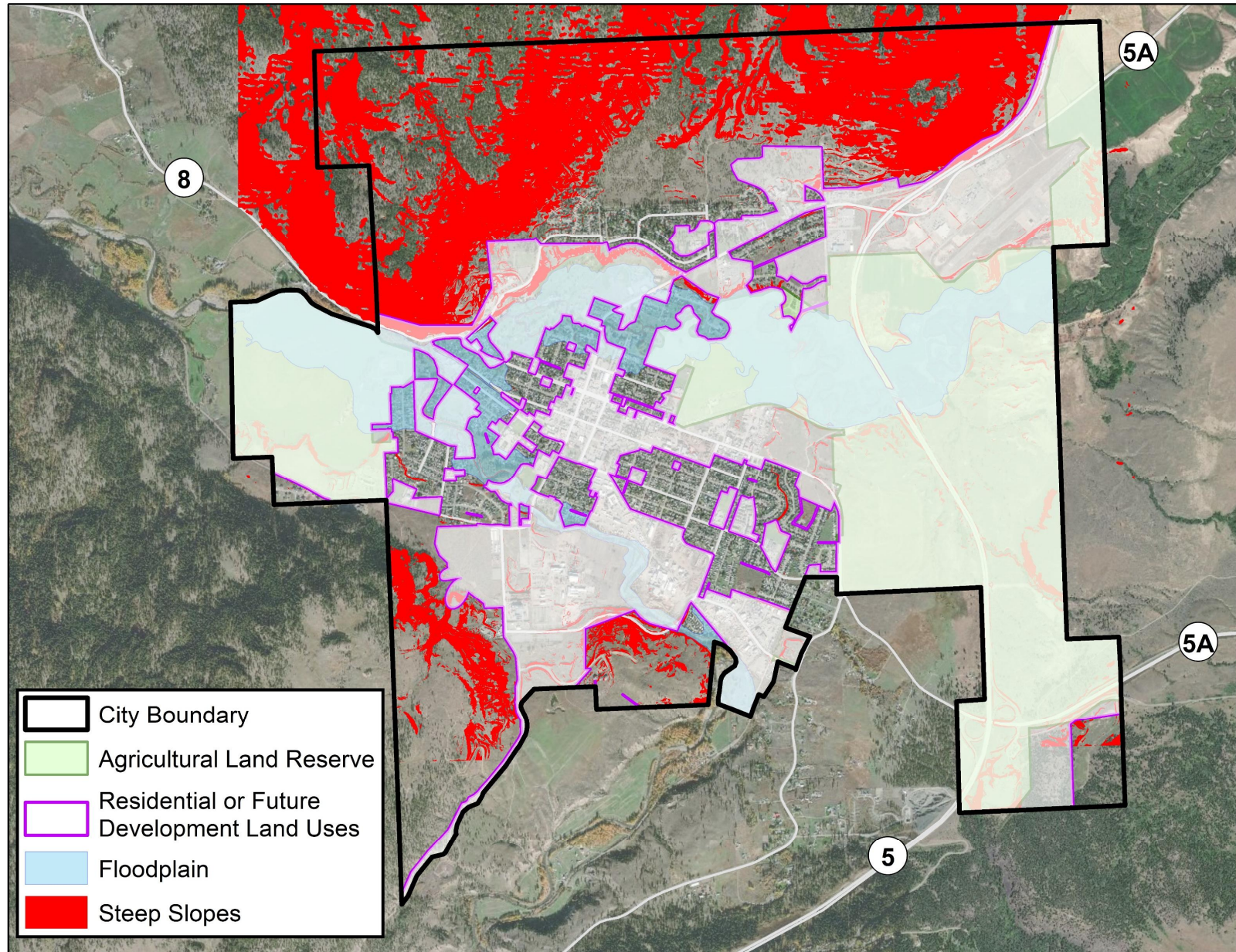
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Why the North Bench?



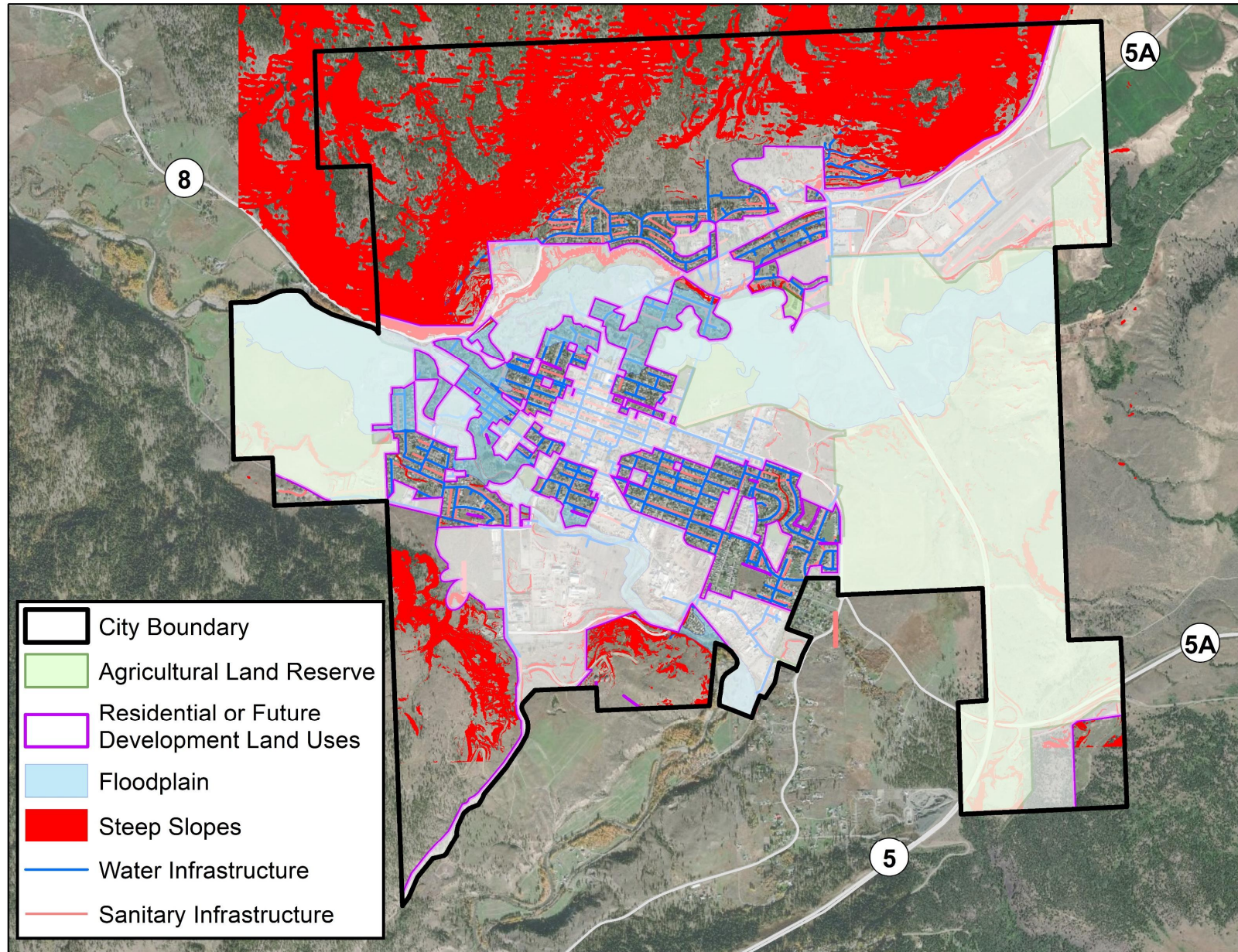
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Why the North Bench?



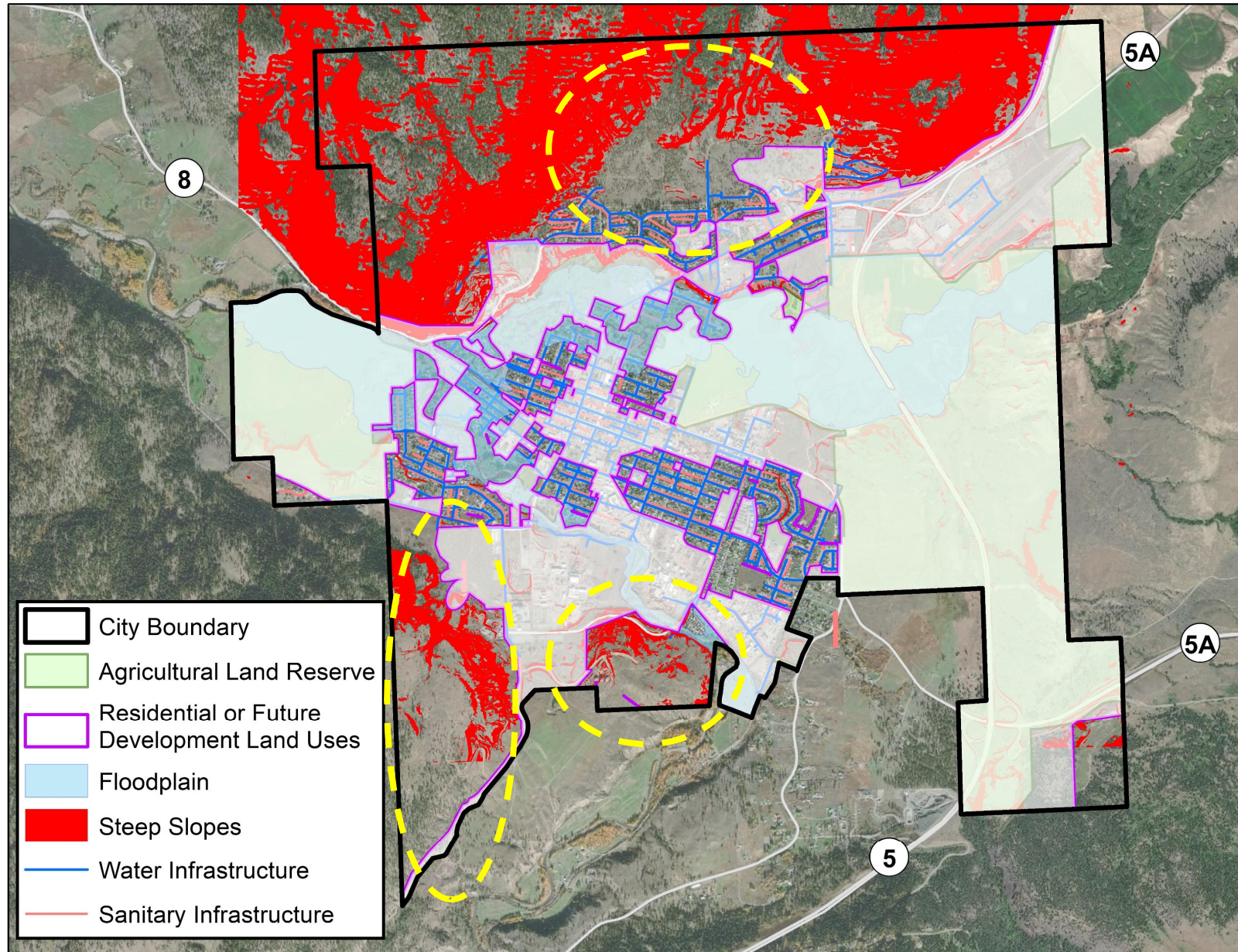
Rationale

Why the North Bench?



Rationale

Why the North Bench?



North Bench Neighbourhood Development Planning Process



What is involved in the Phase 1 Plan?

WE ARE HERE



①

Collection and Review of
Background Materials

Review background material and
prepare background reports for
the North Bench Area

②

Initial Community
Engagement

Community survey, community
meetings, First Nations, School
District, various stakeholders

③

Draft Neighbourhood Plan

Prepare draft plans and mapping
based on engagement and
background report information.

④

Plan Refinement

Review draft plans and mapping
with project team and revise as
needed. Take draft plans to the
community.

⑤

Review and Adoption

Prepare final neighbourhood plan
and mapping and present to
Council



Initial Findings

- The North Bench is a place of recreational, environmental and cultural value to local residents
- The North Bench is used extensively by Merritt residents for recreational purposes and any future development plans must include a trail network and ample park space
- Significant infrastructure improvements are required in order to support development at the North Bench

Initial Findings

There are various development opportunities and constraints to consider with any future development of the area:

Opportunities

- Existing trail network
- Topography (in the south)
- Viewscales
- Proximity to adjacent developments
- Accessibility (trails and roads)
- Large area to work with
- Not within the Agricultural Land Reserve
- No registered contaminated sites and/or Species at Risk and their habitats

Constraints

- Topography (in the north)
- Infrastructure servicing investments
 - Water, Sanitary, Storm and Road network
- Current ownership
- Wildfire Interface
- Urban Wildlife Interface Area

Other Considerations

There are other considerations that impact future land use on the site:

- First Nations interest in the land
- Existing/Future market conditions
- Future school enrollment
- Population and demographic trends within Merritt

Common Questions and Concerns Raised So Far

- Tolko Site – could this be used for residential development?
- Is the plan to just build large, expensive single-family homes?
- Species at Risk and the Environment
- First Nations Engagement
- Steep Slopes/Unstable Soils
- Former use of the site as a landfill/mining?
- Infrastructure Upgrades and water supply
- Costs associated with developing the North Bench – Who will pay?



Project Objective

“Ensure the development of a complete neighbourhood at the North Bench which attempts to balance the future growth needs of the City of Merritt, with the preservation or enhancement of key recreational, environmental and cultural values found on the site”

Draft Guiding Principles

Building upon the policies and principles outlined in the City's OCP, as well as initial input from residents and various stakeholders, the North Bench will:

- Advance reconciliation efforts between the City of Merritt and local First Nations through open and on-going dialogue
- Preserve a trail network with linkages to the City's overall active transportation network
- Ensure the impacts of the built environment on the natural environment are mitigated to the furthest extent possible
- Provide a diverse range of housing types that will help to meet the future needs of the community
- Provide amenities that can connect and accommodate people of various ages

Draft Guiding Principles

Building upon the policies and principles outlined in the City's OCP, as well as initial input from residents and various stakeholders, the North Bench will:

- Ensure infrastructure services are constructed and maintained in a fiscally responsible and sustainable manner
- Provide a transportation network that links the North Bench to surrounding developments and neighbourhoods
- Act as a neighbourhood hub for the Bench Sector
- Showcase innovative ways of subdivision and neighbourhood design while complementing the existing character of the Bench Sector
- Work in harmony with the natural systems and landforms, including:
 - Steep slopes
 - Natural areas and waterways
 - Wildfire hazards

What are the Current Plans for the North Bench?

- Ideas for future land use at the North Bench are still evolving - there is still engagement that needs to take place
- Previous ideas regarding future land use include:
 - A mix of parkland, neighbourhood commercial, single family and medium density residential, as well as a potential elementary school in the southern portions of the subject area; and
 - A disc golf course and continued use of hiking and biking trails in the northern portions of the site.

Crown Tenure – Recreational Uses

- The initial crown tenure application is to focus on recreational uses, primarily the trail network and disc golf course
- This is due to the limited infrastructure requirements and relatively low impacts on the land that these activities pose
- A local disc golf club has approached the City about constructing a championship level disc golf course at the North Bench

What's Next?

- Upcoming Engagement with First Nations and the School District
- Residents workshop in late October or early November – **Stay Tuned!**
- Draft Plan will be made available on the City's website for review and comment (November)
- Comments received will be reviewed and considered for inclusion in the Final Plan
- Final Plan tentatively scheduled to be presented to Council November/December

Tonight's Engagement

WE WANT YOUR IDEAS!

- Do you have any thoughts on the North Bench Neighbourhood Development Plan?
- Comments can also be provided to Don McArthur at the City

Don McArthur, Planning & Development Services Manager

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Thank You!