

VTRA
VICTORIA THERAPEUTIC RIDING ASSOCIATION

Visioning & Next Steps Report

Prepared by Thriving Non-Profits & Smart Design Studio
in collaboration with
Victoria Therapeutic Riding Association
June 2026

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Executive Summary

Project Fire Horse is the name Victoria Therapeutic Riding Association (VTRA) has given to a defining moment in its history: the work of securing a permanent, purpose-built home for the organization and the community it serves. This report brings together the full arc of that process, from community survey to site analysis to the visioning sessions of May 30, 2026, into a single decision-support document for the Board and Leadership.

For more than forty years, VTRA has delivered therapeutic riding and equine-assisted programs to over 200 participants annually from a leased 4.85-acre property it does not own. The landowner has expressed interest in selling, the adjacent southern property may soon come to market, and the question of whether a larger property elsewhere could better serve VTRA's long-term needs is now firmly on the table. Three distinct possibilities have converged at the same moment, and the decisions made in the coming months will shape what is possible for VTRA over the next twenty-five years.

A community survey of 151 respondents and a day of collaborative visioning with twenty-eight participants confirmed what matters most: the indoor arena is non-negotiable, horse welfare and turnout are the most urgent physical need, a proper community hub is long overdue, and VTRA's culture and natural setting must be protected through whatever change comes next. Every program is full and every session has a waitlist. The research did not reveal a demand problem. It revealed a capacity problem and an opportunity.

Three options emerged from this process. Option A pursues a new, larger property, offering the greatest long-term upside and the strongest platform for resolving horse welfare constraints, growing programs, and building revenue, at the highest level of capital effort and organizational commitment. Option B expands to include the adjacent southern property at 6901 Veyaness Road, delivering meaningful near-term improvements on familiar ground while securing the southern boundary. It is the most achievable option in the near term, though the combined site is unlikely to fully resolve the long-term horse welfare picture. Option C invests in the current site, delivering the most immediately achievable improvements at the lowest cost, while leaving the southern boundary unprotected and horse welfare needs unresolved.

This report presents each option as an organizational commitment, outlines the key trade-offs, and sets out a recommended sequence of next steps to support the Board and Leadership in making a confident decision about the path forward.

Setting the Stage

About this Report

This report brings together the full arc of Project Fire Horse: the community survey, the preliminary site analysis, the comparable sites tour, the review of peer therapeutic riding organizations, and the visioning sessions of May 30, 2026. It is a single decision-support document. It summarizes what was learned, describes the options considered, outlines the key trade-offs, and sets out recommended next steps and sequencing to support Board decision-making and early conversations with potential donors and partners. This report is not a design commitment. It is intended to give the Board and VTRA's closest partners a shared understanding of where things stand, what the community has told us matters most, and what the realistic paths forward look like. Full background and research details are available in the Visioning Session Briefing Package (May 2026).

Project Fire Horse

VTRA's quest to secure its long-term home has a name: Project Fire Horse. Named by Executive Director Liz Gagel, this title draws on the spirit of the Year of the Fire Horse, a symbol of bold energy, transformation, and momentum, and reflects the ambition at the heart of this work: to ignite VTRA's future. Project Fire Horse is more than a planning exercise. It is a moment of organizational courage, an invitation to the VTRA community and to the donors and partners who believe in what this organization does to dream, collaborate, and shape what comes next. It gives this journey an identity that is as spirited as the organization itself.

The WHY of VTRA

There is a moment that happens at VTRA that is difficult to describe but impossible to forget. A child who struggles to move through the world with ease settles into the saddle. The horse begins to walk, and the rider's body responds, adjusting, reaching, steadying. It is therapy delivered through movement, through relationship, through trust built one session at a time. For the family watching from the viewing area, that moment is not incidental to the work. It is the work. It is what keeps them on the waitlist, what brings more than 275 volunteers back every week, and what makes VTRA the kind of place people do not just support but belong to. Ask any one of those volunteers why they show up, they will tell you about the people, the horses, and the feeling of being part of something that asks the best of them.

Founded in 1982, VTRA has spent more than forty years delivering therapeutic riding, adaptive driving, equine-assisted learning, stable management, early intervention, and camps to more than 200 children, youth, and adults each year throughout the Greater Victoria region. The organization operates with a small, dedicated staff team, a volunteer Board, and 12 horses. Every program is full. Every session has a waitlist. And every respondent to the recent community survey named culture and community before they named a single building. That is the **why** of VTRA. Everything that follows, the options, the trade-offs, the recommended next steps, exists in service of protecting and growing it.

Why Now

VTRA has leased its current property for decades but has never owned it. The landowner has expressed interest in selling, creating a rare and time-sensitive opportunity to change that. Securing permanent ownership would give VTRA the stability and confidence to invest in its facilities, plan for the long term, and build the kind of home its programs and community deserve. The adjacent southern property adds another layer to that opportunity: together the two parcels could meaningfully expand what is possible on the current site. And the question of whether a larger property elsewhere could better serve VTRA's long-term needs is now firmly on the table. Three distinct possibilities, converging at the same moment. What the Board decides in the coming months will shape what is possible for VTRA over the next twenty-five years.













What We Knew Going In

The visioning sessions on May 30, 2026, did not begin from scratch. They were built on a foundation of research, analysis, and community input gathered over the preceding months. This section distills what that process established. Full details are available in the Visioning Session Briefing Package (May 2026).

01	02	03	04	05
Site Analysis	**Community Survey**	**Comparable Sites Tour**	**Comparable Organizations**	**Visioning Sessions**
Current + southern property	*151 Respondents*	*April 28, 2026*	*8 peer TRAs reviewed*	*May 30, 2026*

The Process That Got Us Here

The research arc included five connected streams of work. A preliminary site analysis examined the planning and zoning context, ALR implications, building constraints, and revenue opportunities for both the current property and the adjacent southern parcel. A Facilities Experience and Future Needs Survey gathered structured input from 151 respondents across all VTRA stakeholder groups, including volunteers, program participants and their families, staff, Board members, and funders. A Comparable Sites Tour on April 28, 2026, evaluated two available properties against VTRA's current site. A review of eight peer therapeutic riding organizations across Canada examined how comparable organizations approach facilities, horse management, programs, and revenue generation. And the visioning sessions themselves, held May 30, 2026, brought twenty-eight participants together across two sessions to explore what VTRA's future could look like under three distinct scenarios.

Every program at VTRA is full. Every session has a waitlist. The research did not reveal a demand problem. It revealed a capacity problem — and an opportunity.

What the Research Confirmed

Across this process, the same priorities surfaced with remarkable consistency:

- The indoor arena is non-negotiable. It scored highest of any space in the survey and was named by every respondent group as something to be protected under any future scenario.
- The herd lacks adequate turnout space and pasture, described consistently across all respondent groups as a genuine welfare concern.
- The clubhouse and office are at end of life. Both scored among the lowest of any spaces in the survey. A proper community hub, welcoming and clearly separate from, but adjacent to the working office, is a top priority for the community.
- Accessibility must improve. Gravel parking, uneven surfaces, and the absence of clear wayfinding are barriers, particularly for wheelchair users and families with participants who rely on visual cues. Acoustical challenges in the barn and arena present an additional barrier to full inclusion and broader programming.
- Community culture and the natural setting are VTRA's greatest assets. Every respondent group named them before naming any building, and every group was clear that they must be protected through whatever change comes next.

The Visioning Sessions

About the Day

On May 30, 2026, twenty-eight members of the VTRA community gathered at 6917 Veyaness Road for a day of collaborative visioning. Working in four groups of seven across two sessions, morning and afternoon, participants explored three future scenarios for VTRA's long-term home. Each group worked with a large aerial site plan, a kit of parts representing existing and proposed buildings, and the support of an architect and facilitator. Guided tours of the property were available before each session.

The morning session drew more heavily from program participants, families, and frontline volunteers, bringing a distinctive and grounded lens to the conversation. The afternoon session included more representation from leadership, governance, and organizational partners. The two sessions produced complementary rather than contradictory insights, with strong alignment on what matters most and genuine differences in how far to reach.

The morning session participants concluded their roundtable with a process reflection rather than a scenario preference, so VTRA followed up by email in the days after the session to capture individual views. Eight responses were received. The afternoon session closed with a live roundtable in which participants shared their leanings directly. Both sets of responses inform this report, with care taken not to over-compare the two given the different formats.

What was consistent across both sessions was not which scenario participants preferred, but the energy in the room. Every group engaged with genuine enthusiasm, filling their boards with ideas, debating trade-offs thoughtfully, and returning again and again to the same core values: the horses, the community, and the feeling of belonging that makes VTRA what it is.





Scenario A: Blue-Sky Dreaming

Premise: A generous donor gifts 40 acres of agricultural land and $50 million to develop an entirely new, purpose-built site.

The Blue-Sky scenario was designed to remove constraints and invite participants to dream without limits. It served that purpose well. The ideas that emerged were not so much a plan as a portrait of VTRA's deepest aspirations, and many of them will carry forward into whatever direction the Board ultimately chooses.

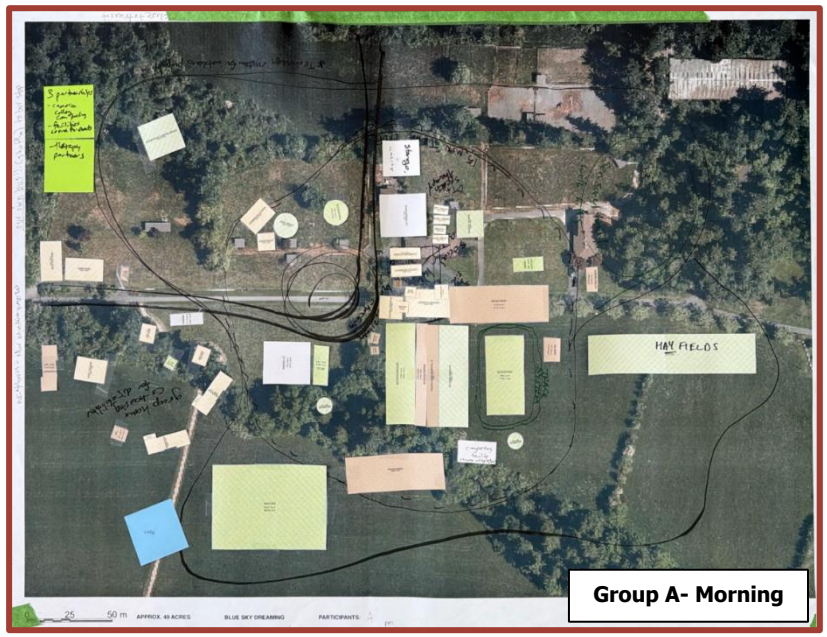
Across all four groups, the indoor arena was retained and protected as the heart of any new site. Greatly expanded turnout, pasture, and space for horses to move freely appeared on every board. A proper community hub, welcoming and clearly separate from staff offices, was a near-universal priority. A purpose-built Tack Shop, trail access, and covered outdoor spaces featured consistently. Residential accommodation to support staff and generate revenue was present on every board in some form.

Beyond the familiar priorities, the Blue-Sky exercise surfaced several aspirations that speak to where participants see VTRA's potential reaching over the long term. Multiple groups envisioned a dedicated health and therapy centre alongside the core therapeutic riding program, reflecting a desire to expand into physiotherapy, occupational therapy, and broader equine-assisted services. A leadership or community retreat centre appeared on three of the four boards. A cluster of social enterprise ideas emerged consistently: a cafe, a farm stand, composting, and agri-tourism activities that would both generate revenue and deepen VTRA's connection to its agricultural setting. Partnerships with organizations including the Garth Homer Society, Together in Stride, and Camosun College were named repeatedly as desired neighbours or collaborators.

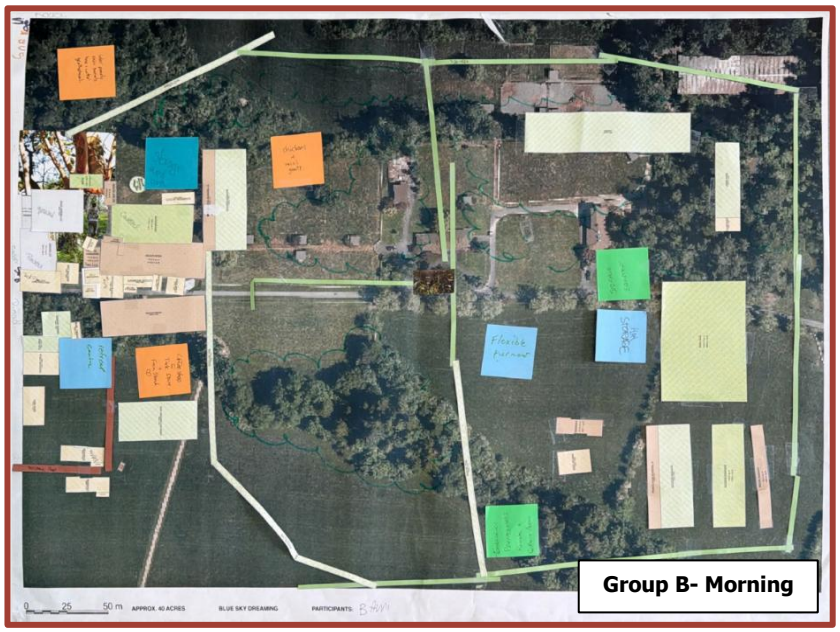
The Blue-Sky exercise was generative rather than directional. Even participants who engaged with the greatest enthusiasm with the 40-acre vision tended to acknowledge, in their reflections, that the current site improved and potentially expanded to the south felt like a more realistic, comfortable scenario, that wouldn't put the existing community culture at risk. The value of this scenario was in naming what VTRA wants to become over a generation.

It is worth noting that this exercise was intentionally designed to stretch thinking rather than represent a realistic near-term option. The scale of land and budget were chosen to remove constraints, not to reflect what is achievable today. That said, it is significant that several participants concluded the sessions expressing that pursuing a larger property could prove to be the most future-proof path forward for VTRA, providing the greatest opportunity for long-term growth and expansion, if the right funder came to the table.





Group A- Morning



Group B- Morning



Group A- Afternoon



Group B- Afternoon

Scenario B: Expanding at Home

Premise: A donor purchases both the current site at 6917 Veyaness Road and the adjacent southern property at 6901 Veyaness Road, creating a combined site of approximately 8.7 acres, with investment in new facilities including a purpose-built Tack Shop, new dwelling units, and a new clubhouse.

This scenario generated the most practical and site-specific discussion of the day. Participants engaged with it as a real and achievable possibility, and the boards were detailed and considered.

The most significant finding from this scenario was what participants wanted to do with the southern parcel: not build on it, but leave it largely open for the horses. Across all four Expanding at Home boards, the southern property was primarily allocated to expanded turnout, grazing fields, and trail access connecting to Cooperage Park. Buildings placed on the south parcel were mostly residential, staff housing and accessory dwelling units, consistent with what zoning would allow. The message was clear: participants see the adjacent property as a relief valve for the horse welfare and outdoor program constraints of the current site, not as a development opportunity.

The north parcel, the current site, was where participants concentrated the new facilities: a new clubhouse, a purpose-built Tack Shop, covered outdoor rings, and improved accessibility and wayfinding. Two approaches to residential emerged across the four groups, with some proposing to keep the two lots' housing separate to maximize units and others connecting them more loosely. A sensory forest ride through the treed southeastern corner of the south parcel appeared on multiple boards as a specific and valued new program element.

The scenario also surfaced a genuine tension that will be important for the Board to hold: the combined site is meaningful and achievable, but it does not fully resolve the horse welfare picture. Even with the southern parcel, turnout space remains limited relative to the direction the industry is heading and the ambitions participants expressed.

Several afternoon participants noted that the combined cost of approximately five million dollars for the two properties may offer less long-term upside than a single larger site. This scenario addresses the near term well. Whether it is a sufficient answer for the next twenty-five years is the question at the heart of the Board's decision.




Group A- Morning
0 25 50 m
EXPANDING AT HOME
PARTICIPANTS:


Group B- Morning
0 25 50 m
EXPANDING AT HOME
PARTICIPANTS:


Group A- Afternoon
0 25 50 m
EXPANDING AT HOME
PARTICIPANTS:


Group B- Afternoon
0 25 50 m
EXPANDING AT HOME
PARTICIPANTS:

Scenario C: Investing in a Compact Community

Premise: The existing 4.85-acre site at 6917 Veyaness Road is optimized with targeted investments to realize its full potential within its current footprint.

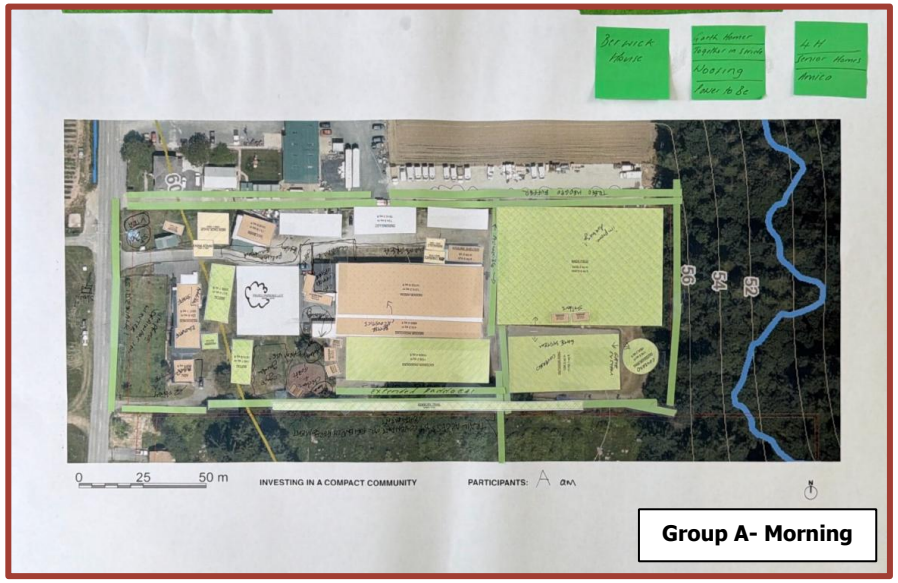
This scenario surfaced the most pragmatic thinking of the day, and the clearest expression of what participants believe is achievable in the near term. It also revealed how much potential participants believe still exists within the current site, if the right investments are made.

The priorities that emerged were focused and consistent. A new two-storey or expanded clubhouse, with community and family spaces on the ground floor and staff offices, meeting rooms, and Board space above, would address one of the most frequently named deficiencies while making efficient use of a constrained footprint. A purpose-built Tack Shop in a well-located, visible position on the site would give the revenue-generating retail operation the home it has long needed. Covering the outdoor rings was identified as a targeted investment that could meaningfully extend the usable season and potentially double programming capacity without requiring additional land. Improved accessibility, paved pathways, clear wayfinding, and better landscaping particularly along the North side of the property were all featured consistently across all four groups.

Sustainability thinking was most clearly articulated in this scenario. One group produced a detailed sustainability note cluster that included solar panels on the arena roof, wind and geothermal energy, water collection via barrels and cistern, and additional water outlets and troughs. These are practical and fundable improvements worth carrying forward as design requirements regardless of which direction the Board ultimately chooses.

The trade-off that every group acknowledged, whether they named it directly or not, is that this scenario does not resolve the horse welfare picture and does not position VTRA to grow its herd in any meaningful way. It also leaves the southern boundary at risk: if the adjacent property sells to an incompatible neighbour, VTRA's options become significantly more constrained. For most participants, Scenario C represented an important fallback and a valuable source of ideas to carry into whichever direction is chosen, rather than the preferred path forward on its own.

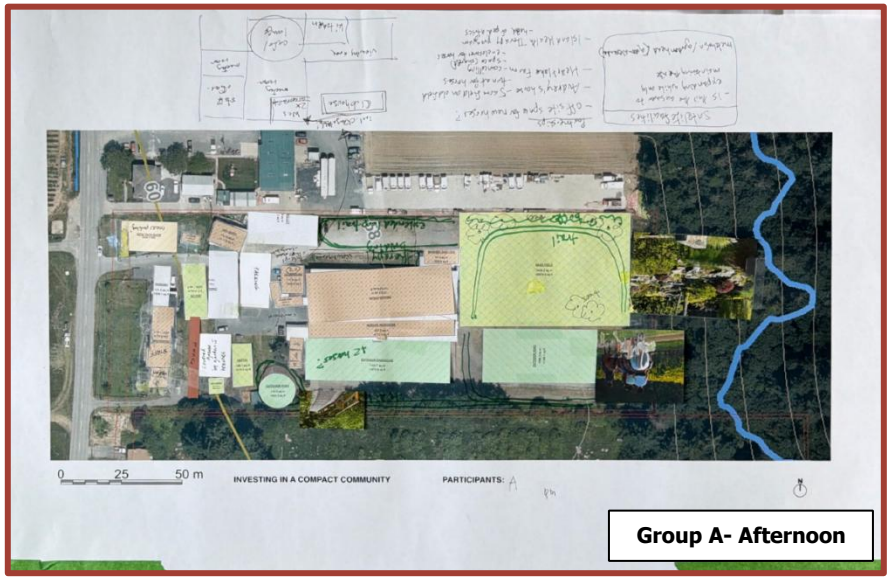




Group A- Morning



Group B- Morning



Group A- Afternoon



Group B- Afternoon

The Three Scenarios at a Glance

	Option A: Blue Sky Dreaming	Option B: Expanding at Home	Option C: Investing in a Compact Community
Premise	A generous donor gifts 40 acres and $50M to develop an entirely new site	A donor purchases both the current site and the 3.86-acre southern property (6901 Veyaness Rd), doubling programming capacity	The existing 4.85-acre site is optimized with targeted improvements to shine
Site scope	New location, ~40 acres	~8.7 acres combined	4.85 acres
What it enables	Full herd expansion with proper group turnout and pasture; purpose-built facilities designed from the ground up; clinical and therapeutic program expansion; meaningful revenue diversification including social enterprise, agri-tourism, and partnerships; long-term program growth unconstrained by current site limitations	Expanded turnout and grazing for the existing herd; trail access connecting to Cooperage Park; a new clubhouse, purpose-built Tack Shop, covered outdoor rings, and improved residential accommodation; secures the southern boundary against an incompatible neighbour	A new community hub and staff workspace; a purpose-built Tack Shop in a road-visible location; covered outdoor rings that could meaningfully extend the usable season and expand programming capacity; improved accessibility and wayfinding throughout
Key constraints	Highest capital requirement; requires identification of a suitable property; requires a transition plan to maintain programming during acquisition and build-out; site search and due diligence take time	The south parcel adds land but limited usable acreage given the ravine; meaningful herd expansion remains constrained; does not position VTRA for the direction the industry is heading on horse welfare. Uncertainty of tack shop and clubhouse approvals on ALR land	Does not address horse welfare space needs; does not support meaningful herd growth; leaves the southern boundary at risk if the adjacent property sells to an incompatible neighbour. Uncertainty of tack shop and clubhouse approvals on ALR land
Horse welfare fit	Best fit: sufficient land for group turnout, expanded pasture, and a herd of meaningful scale	Partial improvement: more rotation and rest for the existing herd, trail access, some additional turnout; meaningful near-term gain but limited long-term capacity	Lowest fit: no additional land for turnout or pasture; horse welfare constraints of the current site remain unresolved
Culture & community risk	Lowest long-term risk if transition is managed carefully; greatest opportunity to build right from the start; transition period carries real risk of disruption if not planned intentionally	Low risk: familiar site, familiar community, incremental change; culture well protected through the transition	Lowest disruption risk in the near term; however, leaving the southern boundary unresolved introduces long-term risk to the site and the organization
Revenue potential	Highest potential: purpose-built Tack Shop, residential accommodation across a larger site, social enterprise and agri-tourism opportunities, potential clinical partnerships, event hosting	Moderate: purpose-built Tack Shop, maximized residential units across two lots, some agri-tourism potential; however, the combined site constrains the most lucrative revenue options	Moderate near-term: purpose-built Tack Shop, optimized residential accommodation; revenue potential limited by site footprint and the absence of additional land

Financial scale (est.)	Significant capital campaign required; scale to be determined through cost consultation and fundraising strategy development in the next phase	Estimated combined property cost in the range of $5M, plus capital improvements; to be confirmed through next phase	Lowest capital requirement of the three options; scope to be determined
Key trade-offs	Highest upside, highest effort, and longest horizon; the option most likely to serve VTRA well for the next generation	A meaningful near-term improvement that secures the site and addresses some current constraints; unlikely to be a sufficient answer for the next 25 years and if pursued may exhaust the organization's capacity for later moving to a larger site	Fastest and most affordable to implement; highest long-term operational risk if horse welfare standards evolve and the southern boundary remains unprotected
Community lean	Strong interest, particularly among those thinking long-term; the exercise was generative and aspirational for most participants	The strongest overall lean across both sessions, particularly driven by horse welfare and the desire to build on what already works	A meaningful fallback and source of ideas, but few participants advocated this as a standalone preferred direction

Non-Negotiables

Across all three scenarios and both sessions, several themes emerged with remarkable consistency. These are not preferences tied to a particular direction. They are the values and requirements the VTRA community insists on must be honoured through whatever path forward is chosen:

The Indoor Arena	Horse Welfare	Accessibility	Culture & Community	The Natural Setting
The indoor arena was treated as an unquestioned asset in every group and every scenario. No group proposed moving, reducing, or replacing it. It is the heart of the facility and the foundation of the program. Any future site must include a covered arena of equivalent or greater quality	Increasing turnout space and improving conditions for the herd was the most urgently named physical need across all four groups. Group turnout is limited, and the absence of pasture is a genuine welfare concern. More space for horses to be horses is not a wish. It is a requirement	Every group raised accessibility in every scenario, not as a compliance question but as a mission question. Paved pathways, accessible washrooms, clear wayfinding, and dignified access for wheelchair users and families with participants who rely on visual cues must be built into any future design from the start.	The culture of VTRA, the warmth of the community, the feeling of belonging that participants, families, and volunteers describe as the organization's greatest strength, must be protected through any transition. Physical changes should reinforce it, not disrupt it. Every group was clear on this.	The rural, green, calm character of the site is not incidental to VTRA's work. It is integral to it. The trees, the open fields, the sense of being somewhere removed from the city are part of what makes the therapeutic experience possible. Any future site must honour this.

Shared Aspirations

A Community Hub for Everyone on Site

Not the current clubhouse, but something genuinely welcoming: a warm gathering space for participants, families, and volunteers that is clearly distinct from, but adjacent to, the working office. Comfortable seating, a proper kitchen, an accessible washroom near the entry, a better arena viewing experience, and private workspace for staff were all named consistently. The phrase that came up repeatedly was a space where no one feels in the way.

A Purpose-Built Tack Shop

A road-visible, well-located Tack Shop was treated across all scenarios as both an immediate operational need and the most accessible step toward financial sustainability. Every group proposed consolidating the current fragmented arrangement into a single purposeful building near the entry.

Trail Access and a Sensory Path

Trails and natural movement through the landscape were a consistent theme across all groups for any scenario. A sensory trail through the treed portions of the property was named as something to protect under any scenario. For Scenario B, the southern parcel offers a direct opportunity to connect to Cooperage Park, a meaningful gain for horses and programming alike. For Scenario C, enhancing and expanding on-site trails through thoughtful landscaping was identified as a worthy and achievable alternative within the existing footprint.

Covered Outdoor Spaces

Covering the outdoor rings, adding shade structures in the back field, and creating sheltered gathering areas for families and horses waiting between sessions were all named as practical investments that would extend the usable season and have meaningful program impact.

Residential Accommodation

Maximizing what is allowable under zoning, keeping staff close to the horses, and treating rental income as a meaningful contributor to long-term financial sustainability were all consistent themes. Reconfiguring the residential building to improve privacy from the working facility, while allowing the clubhouse a visual connection to the front pasture, was raised as a meaningful design consideration.

Tensions and Trade-offs

The sessions surfaced five genuine tensions the Board will need to navigate as it moves forward.

Dreaming Big Versus Financing It

The Blue-Sky scenario generated real excitement but also honest questions about VTRA's capacity to mount a significant capital campaign. The right number is not yet known and a cost consultation is a necessary next step before any direction is confirmed.

Growth Versus Culture

Several participants raised the concern that growing too large, too fast, or without a clear transition plan could fracture something that has taken decades to build. The aspiration to grow and the commitment to protecting culture are not in conflict, but they require deliberate planning to honour both.

Near-Term Gain Versus Long-Term Fit

Expanding at Home is familiar, achievable, and secures the southern boundary. But participants were honest: it only addresses current constraints without fundamentally changing what is possible for the next twenty-five years. Most who leaned this way expressed seeing it as the right next step, not the final answer.

Revenue Versus Mission Alignment

The sessions made clear that realizing any of the three options will require a thoughtful and ambitious approach to revenue generation. Participants were noticeably cautious about uses that felt too commercial or too distant from the mission. Dedicating land or resources to revenue-generating activities rather than horses and program space required some participants to shift their thinking in real time. There is also notable uncertainty of what would be allowed on the site due to the many layers of approval required by zoning, the ALC and the Peninsula and Area Agricultural Committee.

On-Site Versus Off-Site Tack Shop

A minority but genuinely held view emerged that the Tack Shop might generate significantly more revenue in a higher-traffic commercial location off site. A retail operation dependent on community donations and resale relies on foot traffic that a residential agricultural property may never provide. This was not resolved through the visioning process. A feasibility assessment of both an on-site and off-site model would give the Board a clearer basis for decision-making.



Emerging Ideas Worth Exploring

A Satellite or Distributed Programming Model

VTRA already has an early pilot of this model at Heart Lake. The idea of remaining anchored at a home site while sending instructors and horses to partner facilities across the CRD to reduce waitlists and extend reach came up in both sessions. It carries real promise and real risk: a distributed model could dilute the culture and community that make VTRA what it is if not designed intentionally. Worth exploring further, at a later date, as it may distract from the primary project objective of finding a secure home.

Partnerships with Disability-Serving Organizations

The Garth Homer Society, Together in Stride, and Power to Be were each named by multiple groups as desired co-location or partnership candidates. The recurrence suggests genuine interest in VTRA as an anchor in a broader ecosystem of organizations serving people with diverse abilities, not just a standalone program provider.

A Phased Transition Plan as a Design Requirement

Whatever direction VTRA pursues, the organization will need to continue running programs and caring for the herd throughout any acquisition or build-out period. A phased transition plan is not optional. It should be treated as a core deliverable of whichever next steps the Board authorizes.

Options, Decisions and Next Step

The Options on the Table

Each option is presented here not as a physical scenario but as an organizational commitment. Choosing any one of them means committing to a particular level of ambition, scale of capital effort, and a set of trade-offs. This is the moment the Board and VTRA Leadership has been preparing for: to take everything the community has shared, everything the research has confirmed, and to align on a direction and lead VTRA forward with confidence.

Option A: Pursue a New, Larger Property

This option means committing to a generational vision. It requires identifying and acquiring a property of 10 to 25 acres or larger capable of accommodating VTRA's current program, a growing herd with proper turnout, revenue-generating uses, and long-term growth. It offers the greatest opportunity to build purpose-fit facilities from the ground up, resolve horse welfare constraints once and for all, and position VTRA for the next twenty-five years without the limitations of the current site. It also offers the strongest platform for revenue diversification, including social enterprise, agri-tourism, residential accommodation, and potential clinical partnerships. It requires mounting a significant capital campaign, developing a phased build-out plan, and maintaining programming continuity throughout a multi-year transition. It is the option with the highest upside and the highest effort required to realize it. While it is likely to be the most expensive option, it may be easier to generate higher levels of donations for a more visionary idea.

Option B: Expand to Include the Southern Property

This option means committing to a meaningful and achievable improvement on known, familiar ground. It requires purchasing both the current site at 6917 Veyaness Road and the adjacent property at 6901 Veyaness Road and investing in targeted facility improvements including a new clubhouse, purpose-built Tack Shop (should approvals allow), newly built or renovated residential units, and covered outdoor rings. It secures the southern boundary against an incompatible neighbour, adds some meaningful turnout and trail access for the herd, and delivers the community hub, Tack Shop, and accessibility improvements the community has clearly named as priorities. It builds on the strengths of a site the community knows and loves. The Board should also enter it with a clear understanding of its trade-offs: any additional infrastructure on the southern parcel, whether paddocks, support buildings, or revenue-generating social enterprise uses, would compete directly with the turnout space the site so desperately needs. Every decision about how to use that land involves a genuine trade-off between horse welfare and financial sustainability. The combined site is unlikely to accommodate the herd expansion and horse welfare improvements the organization needs as industry standards evolve. It is a meaningful near-term solution that addresses current constraints without fully resolving the long-term picture.

Option C: Invest in the Current Site

This option means committing to making the most of what VTRA already has, on a timeline and at a scale that is the most immediately achievable of the three. It requires focused capital investment in the existing 4.85-acre site: a new clubhouse, purpose-built Tack Shop (should approvals allow), covered outdoor rings, upgraded residential accommodation, and improved accessibility and wayfinding. It is the fastest to implement, and the most affordable entry point. It delivers several of the improvements the community named most consistently and could meaningfully extend the usable season and expand programming capacity through covered outdoor spaces. The Board should understand its boundaries: it does not resolve horse welfare space needs, does not support meaningful herd growth, and leaves the southern boundary unprotected. It is best understood as either a strong near-term foundation to build from or a meaningful standalone investment if the broader land question takes longer to resolve than anticipated.

Decisions Required from the Board

The most important near-term decisions are: (1) **indicate a direction to prioritize** from the three options, specifically which to pursue actively, which to keep warm while focusing elsewhere, and which if any to set aside for now. This is not a final commitment to a site or a design. It is the clarity of focus the organization needs to move forward; (2) **authorize sharing this report** with staff, key volunteers, identified donor prospects, and the broader VTRA community to build the alignment and momentum that any of the three options will require; and (3) **confirm which next steps to initiate immediately**, as several actions are recommended regardless of which direction the Board chooses while others are specific to a preferred option, and confirming both ensures work can begin without delay and that the organization is moving forward in a coordinated way.

Recommended Next Steps and Sequencing

The following steps are recommended to move from this visioning process into concrete action, organized into three groups: immediate actions to begin now regardless of direction; development and planning work that builds toward a confirmed direction; and steps to ensure VTRA is positioned to move decisively if a property becomes available. Priority, sequencing, and applicability are indicated for each.

Immediate Actions

The following actions are recommended regardless of which direction the Board confirms. They build the foundation of information, relationships, and organizational readiness that every option will depend on.

Action	Now	Next	Later	Applies	Notes
Initiate pre-application consultation with the District of Central Saanich Planning Department regarding equestrian use and revenue-generating opportunities	✓			Regardless of direction	A pre-application consultation is an early, informal conversation with a municipal planning department. It is not a formal application. It establishes what is possible under current and potential zoning before any commitment is made and may provide suggestions for requesting a particular rezoning classification or seeking a property with existing zoning that would be more suitable to desired uses.
Meet with a member of the Agricultural Land Commission to discuss which potential VTRA revenue opportunities would be most supportable in advancing the ALC's goal of protecting agricultural use	✓			Regardless of direction	An early conversation with the ALC helps VTRA understand how to frame revenue diversification in a way that is consistent with ALR objectives, before any formal applications are made.
Meet with a member of the Peninsula and Area Agricultural Committee to gain an understanding of how VTRA can best support agricultural use on the peninsula while expanding revenue opportunities	✓			Regardless of direction	The Peninsula and Area Agricultural Committee provides local agricultural perspective and can help VTRA build relationships and possibly discover compatible revenue opportunities that may support future applications or land decisions.

Action	Now	Next	Later	Applies	Notes
Meet with the Minister of Agriculture and Food to gain an understanding of how VTRA can best support agricultural use on the peninsula while expanding revenue opportunities	✓			Regardless of direction	An early ministerial conversation positions VTRA as a proactive steward of agricultural land and may open doors to provincial support for the organization's long-term plans.
Confirm municipal and ALC approval pathways for key facilities including the clubhouse and Tack Shop before finalizing any property purchase	✓			Regardless of direction	There is risk in proceeding with any property purchase before it is known whether key facilities will be approved by the Municipality and ALC. Securing letters of understanding from all relevant approving bodies in advance reduces that risk. VTRA may feel comfortable proceeding on the basis of those letters, but the Board should understand that some risk remains until building permits are in hand.
Apply for property tax exemption under charitable use provisions	✓			Regardless of direction	Supports future financial outcomes
Confirm evolving industry standards for equine welfare with CanTRA and PATH International and establish an indicative timeline for compliance	✓			Regardless of direction	Industry standards for non-isolated paddocks and group turnout are evolving. Understanding the timeline for expected compliance informs the urgency of the land decision.
Continue to engage with the current landowner regarding their timeline and intentions	✓			Regardless of direction	Maintaining an open and ongoing dialogue with the current landowner ensures VTRA is not caught off guard by changes in timing or intentions. A similar conversation with the owner of the adjacent southern property at 6901 Veyaness Road is also advisable.
Assess Board governance capacity and skills required to lead a capital campaign of this scale	✓			Regardless of direction	A capital campaign of the scale required for any of the three options will place significant demands on Board leadership. Understanding whether the current Board has the right mix of skills, networks, and bandwidth, and identifying any gaps, is an important early step.
Board confirms preferred direction at a duly convened meeting	✓			Regardless of direction	A formal Board resolution, not just a conversation, establishes the mandate for next steps and signals organizational commitment to prospective donors and partners. This decision is best made after initial due diligence, including early consultations with the planning department, ALC, and agricultural committee, has been completed.

Development and Planning Work

These actions build toward a confirmed direction and move VTRA from visioning into concrete planning. Some apply across all options and others are specific to a preferred path.

Action	Now	Next	Later	Applies	Notes
Commission additional realtor tours of available 10 to 25-acre properties suitable for equestrian development		✓		Regardless of direction	Maintaining awareness of available properties keeps options open regardless of which direction the Board confirms. Suitable properties may be known within the VTRA community before they officially come to market. Acting on rumours and following up promptly on any sites that may be becoming available is strongly advisable.
Evaluate the top revenue-generating opportunities identified through the visioning process and model projected financial returns		✓		All options	Knowing which uses are more likely to support VTRA in a substantial financial way, may help bring clarity to VTRA's compatible revenue opportunities.
Engage an architect to develop a preliminary functional program, high-level cost framework, and site sketches to support fundraising		✓		All options	A functional program defines the spaces, capacities, and uses that a facility needs to thrive. Preliminary space planning will assist with establishing quantities needed to establish ballpark costing. Birds eye view site sketch(es) can help support initial fundraising strategies as they give prospective donors something tangible to respond to. Engaging an architect earlier rather than later is strongly advisable.
Engage a quantity surveyor or cost consultant to develop a high-level cost estimate for relocating and rebuilding VTRA's core facilities		✓		Option A	A quantity surveyor produces high-level construction cost estimates before detailed design work begins, providing a realistic capital target for the fundraising strategy. If costing is completed alongside the preliminary architectural work or following the development of an expanded functional program, a separate estimate for expanded facilities can be requested at that stage.
Retain legal counsel to advise on acquisition structure, ALR implications, and title for the adjacent southern property at 6901 Veyaness Road		✓		Option B	
Develop a phased capital improvement plan for the current site, prioritizing horse welfare, accessibility, and community facilities		✓		Options B and C	
Engage a consultant to support the development of a capital campaign strategy		✓		All options	

Action	Now	Next	Later	Applies	Notes
Develop a capital fundraising strategy, including campaign structure, gift table, lead gift prospects, and naming opportunities		✓		All options	A gift table maps the number and size of donations needed to reach a campaign goal. Lead gift prospects are donors capable of making a transformational opening commitment that anchors the campaign.
Conduct a feasibility assessment of a satellite or distributed programming model across CRD partner sites			✓	All options	VTRA already has an early pilot at Heart Lake. A feasibility assessment would clarify the staffing, transport, partnership, and financial model required to scale this approach alongside a home site.
Design and launch a public capital campaign informed by the fundraising strategy and confirmed preferred direction			✓	All options	
Engage architect to develop a site master plan for the preferred option			✓	All options	The scale and scope will vary by option. For Option A this follows property acquisition. For Options B and C this can proceed once a preferred direction is confirmed.

Getting Ready to Compete

Securing a property, particularly in a competitive market, requires preparation that begins well before a specific opportunity appears. The steps below are designed to ensure VTRA is in a position to move thoughtfully and decisively when the right property becomes available. None of them commit VTRA to a purchase. All of them reduce the risk of being unprepared when timing matters most.

Action	Now	Next	Later	Applies	Notes
Develop a clear property requirements document	✓			Options A and B	A written summary of VTRA's non-negotiable site requirements, preferred characteristics, and deal-breakers gives the Board, the realtor, and legal counsel a shared reference point and accelerates decision-making when a property appears.
Retain a realtor on deck for responsive property showings	✓			Options A and B	Having a trusted realtor engaged and briefed on VTRA's requirements means the organization can move quickly when a suitable property comes to market, without losing time to orientation and relationship-building.
Retain legal counsel on deck for offer review and acquisition advice	✓			Options A and B	Having a lawyer briefed and ready to review offers quickly is essential for an organization that may find itself competing with more nimble private buyers.

Action	Now	Next	Later	Applies	Notes
Develop a financial model clarifying what VTRA can afford and what it would need to raise or borrow to complete a purchase		✓		All options	This model should include a realistic picture of VTRA's current financial position, the gap between that and the likely cost of each option, and the combination of donor commitments, financing, and grants required to close that gap.
Arrange financing in principle		✓		All options	Understanding what financing is available to VTRA, and under what conditions, before a property appears means the Board is not managing that question under time pressure.
Secure advance donor commitments ready to be activated when needed		✓		All options	Lead donors who have signaled their intention to give are far more valuable when they are briefed, committed in principle, and ready to move. Waiting until a property is under offer to have those conversations is too late.
Negotiate a month-to-month tenancy arrangement with the current landowner, including a mutual notice period of three to six months		✓		Option A	A month-to-month arrangement gives VTRA maximum flexibility to move when the time is right, without being locked into terms that could constrain its options. It should include a mutual notice period of three to six months, protecting VTRA against an unexpected sale or change in circumstances while giving the landowner reasonable notice in return.
Develop a move and communications plan ready to activate			✓	Option A and B	A move plan covers the transition of programming, horses, staff, and community during a relocation. A communications plan covers how and when VTRA tells its community about a major property decision. Both take time to develop well and should be ready before they are needed.
Proceed with property acquisition in alignment with the Board's confirmed direction			✓	All options	

Closing

At the centre of every conversation in this process, every survey response, every vision board, every roundtable reflection, were the horses and the people whose lives are shaped by their relationship with them. That is what this decision is ultimately about. Not square footage or zoning bylaws or capital campaigns, but the child settling into the saddle, the volunteer showing up on a Thursday afternoon and the family watching from the viewing area.

The hard work of listening is done. The even harder work of deciding begins now. VTRA has everything it needs to move forward: a community that showed up, a body of research that is honest about the constraints and clear about the opportunities, and a set of options that reflect the full range of what is possible. Whatever direction VTRA chooses, it chooses in service of the people and horses at the heart of this organization. And everything in this report exists to help them do exactly that.



Photo Credit: Tara O'Grady Photography

Acknowledgements

This report was prepared by Scale Collaborative and Smart Design Studio in collaboration with the Victoria Therapeutic Riding Association.

We are grateful to the twenty-eight members of the VTRA community who gave their time, energy, and ideas to the visioning sessions on May 30, 2026. The quality of engagement on that day was remarkable: the drawings were detailed and imaginative, the conversations were honest and generous, and the care participants brought to thinking about VTRA's future was evident in every group. That quality of engagement is a reflection of the organization itself and of how deeply this community believes in what VTRA does and what it could become.

We also thank the 151 people who completed the Facilities Experience and Future Needs Survey. Their generosity in sharing what they know, what they love, and what they hope for has made this report possible. We thank the VTRA Board and staff for their trust in this process, their openness to big questions, and their steady commitment to getting this right for the organization and for the community it serves. And we thank the landowner and other partners whose long-standing support has made VTRA's work possible.

Appendices

Appendix A: Visioning Session Briefing Document

The Visioning Session Briefing Package can be found in a separate PDF accompanying this report (file name: "20260526 VTRA Visioning Session Briefing Package")

Appendix B: Project Fire Horse Digital Document Library

The following documents have been compiled to support VTRA's decision-making process and are available in the Project Fire Horse Digital Document Library.

A. Project Fire Horse	
A1	*Final Report (forthcoming)*
A2	Visioning Session Briefing Package
A3	Survey Findings
A3.1	*Survey Questions (to be added)*
A4	Comparable Sites Review
A5	*Existing Spaces Chart (to be updated)*
A6	*Project Horse Branding (to be added)*

B. Reports, Bylaws and Plans	
B1	VTRA Strategic Plan 2025-2030
B2	Valuation Report
B3	Residential Building Condition Report
B4	Facilities Condition Report
B5	VTRA 2024 Survey
B6	VTRA Bylaws
B7	Policies and Standards

C. Floor Plans and Surveys	
C1	Arena Permit Set 2014
C1.1	Arena Structural Drawings
C2	Existing Clubhouse
C2.1	Clubhouse Structural Drawings
C2.2	Proposed Clubhouse
C3	Paddocks
C4	Principal Residence
C4.1	House Move Permit 2024
C4.2	Residential Full Permit Set
C5	Original Cottage
C6	Survey 2009
C6.1	Survey 2022
C6.2	Survey CAD File 2022
C7	Erosion District Map
C8	Existing Building Inventory Diagram

D. Photographs	
D1	Aerial Photographs
D2	Photographs of the Site from Valuation Report
D3	*Photographs of the Visioning Session (to be added)*

E. Zoning	
E1	A1 Zoning
E2	A3 Zoning
E3	RN Zoning
E4	Zoning Bylaw Part 4
E5	Zoning Map

F. Agricultural Land Reserve	
F1	ALR Event Policy L-22
F2	ALR Necessary Farm Use Structures Guidelines
F3	ALR Farm Retail Sales Policy L-02
F4	ALC Act Relevant Section Summary
F5	ALC Email Correspondence

G. Legal and Financial	
G1	Title Search
G2	BC Assessment
G3	Adopted Budget 2026
G4	Trial Balance 2025
G5	Audit 2025
G6	Financial Statement Grouping 2025
G7	Adjusting Journal Entries 2025
G8	Financial Statement 2024
G9	Financial Statement 2023
G10	Expenses and Income 2020-2024

H. Neighbouring Property	
H1	BC Assessment

I. Visioning Day Documentation	
I1	Site Plans
I2	*Recording Sheets Summary (to be added)*
I3	*Roundtable Summaries (to be added)*

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