

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

TO:	Planning Committee
FROM:	Administration
DATE:	November 30, 2020
RE:	Public Hearing Report – OCP Amendment – Whistle Bend Future Area C

ISSUE

A report on the public hearing for amendments to the 2010 Official Community Plan (OCP) to allow the Whistle Bend Future Area C to proceed to zoning and subdivision processes.

REFERENCE

- *Municipal Act*
- Whistle Bend Master Plan (2009)
- Official Community Plan (2010)
- Planning & Preliminary Engineering Design Report for Whistle Bend Future Areas & Town Square (2020)
- Whistle Bend Traffic Impact Analysis (2009)
- Whistle Bend Neighbourhood Phases 3-7 – Planning, Design, and Preliminary Engineering Servicing report (2013)
- Bicycle Network Plan (2018)
- Future Areas Plan (2020)
- Bylaw 2020-31 and Appendices A, B & C

HISTORY

Planning for the Whistle Bend neighbourhood began in 2006 and included an extensive community engagement process. This culminated in creation of the Whistle Bend Master Plan (2009), which identified a portion of land known as Area C as an active recreation site that would be reserved for the private use of the Yukon Horse and Rider Association (YHRA). Based on the Whistle Bend Plan, the area was designated as greenspace in the 2010 OCP. In the early 2010s, based on discussions between the City and the YHRA, the proposed move was abandoned and the City explored alternative uses for the site.

In 2018, the City hired WSP, in association with Associated Engineering, Tetra Tech and John Glynn-Morris General Consulting, to undertake planning and preliminary engineering work for new residential areas in Whistle Bend, including Area C. The resulting Planning & Preliminary Engineering Design Report for Whistle Bend Future Areas & Town Square (“the WSP report”) was completed in 2020 and addresses three future areas for the neighbourhood (i.e., Areas A, B, and C). For development to occur in Area C, amendments to the OCP are required.

The primary land owner and developer in Whistle Bend is the Yukon government (YG) which has an objective to proceed with detailed engineering for Area C in early 2021 to develop a continuous supply of available building lots in the coming years. The City has committed to continue to work with YG to help residents attain housing through its housing strategic priority. Whistle Bend remains the City's main growth area. These amendments are proposed in advance of the completion of the OCP review to ensure near-term lot supply within Whitehorse.

Bylaw 2020-31 passed first reading on October 26, 2020. Notices of public hearing were published in newspapers on October 30 and November 6, and a copy of the notice was sent to the Minister of Community Services, per the *Municipal Act*. A total of 797 letters were sent to property owners within 1000-metres of the subject site. YG Land Client Services, Kwanlin Dün First Nation, Ta'an Kwäch'än Council, and the Porter Creek and Whistle Bend Community Associations were notified by email.

The public hearing was held on November 23, 2020. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the public gallery in Council Chambers was closed to the public. Input was received through email and was posted to the City website. A total of nine written submissions were received:

- three opposed;
- five expressing concern; and
- one general input from YG (submission made in error)

A few issues were raised and have been grouped into the following categories:

- Impact on environment & recreation
- Need for a public meeting
- Impact on transportation
- Other concerns

ALTERNATIVES

- 1) Proceed with second reading under the bylaw process.
- 2) Amend the bylaw at second reading.
- 3) Do not proceed with second reading.

ANALYSIS

Impact on Environment and Recreation

Recreational Trails

Almost all submissions were concerned with impact on recreational trails. Many residents from Porter Creek use the trails in and around the site. The concerns pertain to potential loss of trails, maintaining them in their natural state and providing adequate screening between the trails and the development.

As part of the Porter Creek Bench Charrette in 2006, an Existing Conditions Map was created to identify existing trails, areas of high environmental sensitivity and areas with high wildlife value. The proposal would maintain most of the existing trails, provide new

accessible paved trails, preserve areas of high environmental sensitivity/high wildlife value, and some of the protected greenspace identified in the 2006 green space map.

One submission expressed concern regarding maintaining trails in this area in a 'natural state'. While many of the existing trails on the periphery of the proposed Area C either lie within the proposed greenspace setbacks or outside the development area, additional accessible paved trails are being proposed on the northern side of the development. If the OCP is amended, there will be opportunities for more detailed trail planning work through subsequent planning processes.

Jet Power Hill

One submission expressed concern regarding potential impact to 'Jet Power Hill' that is used for tobogganing and other recreational activities. Area C does not include this area and is unlikely to impact recreation activities on the hill. Measures would be considered during detailed design to avoid conflicts between vehicle traffic and recreational users.

Environmental Consideration

A few submissions expressed concern regarding the potential environmental impacts to the creek that runs along the western perimeter of the proposed development, as well as the associated wildlife and vegetation. As identified in the initial master planning process, areas of high environmental sensitivity and high wildlife value, including the creek and the existing trails, have been excluded from development and greenspace setbacks that are over and above the OCP requirement will act as natural buffers to the proposed development area. Furthermore, Area C will be adequately buffered from both McCauley Creek (235 m) and the Yukon River (150 m) including maintaining existing riparian vegetation.

The Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board (YESAB) has reviewed the proposed concept for Area C and recommend that the project be allowed to proceed. The assessment report submitted for YESAB approval took potential environmental and socio-economic impacts into account and provided suitable mitigation and monitoring measures. These recommendations will be further reviewed at the neighbourhood construction and subdivision stages.

Loss of Green Space

A few residents were concerned about the proposed conversion of greenspace and wilderness area to development areas.

As the city grows, the City faces hard choices. There is significant demand for new homes within Whitehorse. The City and YG have allocated resources to meet this demand through work on Whistle Bend, infill development, rezoning, and subdivision applications. While the proposal would facilitate the conversion of greenspace land into a residential area, it strikes a balance between preservation and the need to provide additional opportunities for housing in the city. The preliminary design for Area C preserves existing trail networks and areas of high environmental sensitivity, and creates 15.5 hectares of public greenspace with new accessible trails, in an area previously set aside for a private recreation facility. Public greenspace will comprise

27.6% of the site, which is much higher than the minimum 10% area required to be reserved for public use in a new land subdivision under the *Municipal Act*.

In order to preserve as much publicly accessible greenspace as possible and reduce its overall land development footprint, the City also has various policies in place to promote higher density housing, infill and redevelopment, as well as smaller lot and unit sizes. Whistle Bend has been planned with a higher density than previous neighbourhoods, with more than 40% of the housing units in Whistle Bend Phases 1-7 estimated to be multifamily, townhouses and suites. The development of Area C will also help delay the need to develop a new neighbourhood within Whitehorse.

Noise

One resident raised concern regarding noise from existing Whistle Bend construction work and potential for further noise. The City has restrictions for construction equipment within the Maintenance Bylaw. Mitigation and monitoring measures have been proposed as part of the assessment report for YESAB approval process. These include limiting hours of operation during daytime, reduced weekend hours, undertaking a noise study and on-going noise monitoring.

Need for a public meeting

One submission expressed the need for community engagement regarding this development. The City has undertaken extensive community engagement for Area C. In 2018, the City held four public and stakeholder engagement events, as well as an online survey to gather input on the town square and phasing concepts. The public engagement events included:

- Ted'ish' Talk – What Makes a Great Town Square (May 16th)
- Government Partners Workshop – Planning and Design (May 17th)
- World Café – Town Square Planning (May 17th)
- Ta'an Kwäch'än Council Citizen Workshop – C-9B Planning (June 11th)
- Pop-Up at the Pond – Evaluating Concepts (July 19th and 25th)

Detailed engagement reports were created for each opportunity and are available on the City website for reference. Engagement and technical analysis resulted in a land use plan including block and road layouts, housing mix and engineering pre-design work. There would be further engagement opportunities during the detailed design and zoning amendment processes.

Impact on Transportation

Traffic

There were concerns raised regarding the potential impact of the proposed development on existing traffic issues, especially during peak travel times between Whistle Bend and Downtown. The traffic concerns pertain specifically to Range Road and Mountain View Drive/Copper Road/Quartz Road corridor, as well as a new connection to the Alaska Highway.

City Engineering staff are currently developing the Citywide Transportation Study to update their understanding of the city's transportation network. A key component of this

study is development of a travel demand model to understand the general travel patterns within the city. The study will investigate the validity, necessity and the timing of implementation of various capital improvements proposed in previous studies given the existing transportation context, with specific focus on the Range and Mountain View Drive/Copper Road/Quartz Road areas and other potential improvements that have been recommended in previous reports and studies. The Whistle Bend Traffic Impact Analysis proposed upgrades to provide adequate traffic capacity at various growth horizons for Whitehorse and specifically, Whistle Bend. The major improvements proposed include a new connection to the Alaska Highway (via Pine Street), twinning of Mountain View Drive, the addition of auxiliary lane capacity to allow for turning movements, signalization, existing signal optimization, among others.

The Whistle Bend Neighbourhood Phases 3-7 – Planning, Design, and Preliminary Engineering Servicing report revisited the off-site traffic improvements proposed in the prior traffic impact study. The report summarized various improvements required in the medium- and long-term growth scenarios. A proposed connection from Whistle Bend to the Alaska Highway (via Pine Street) was recommended in the 2009 study to provide significant traffic benefits in the long-term growth scenario, once the population of Whitehorse reaches 50,000 people.

Another potential connection (via McDonald Road) between Area C and the Alaska Highway was also discussed during WSP report workshops and technical meetings with the City and YG. Additional planning and technical analysis are required to understand the feasibility of this connection. This is outside of the scope of the proposed OCP amendments.

Active Transportation

Some submissions expressed concern with the lack of safe bike routes to Downtown from Whistle Bend. The 2018 Bicycle Network Plan proposes a multi-use pathway along Area C, which will connect to a proposed multi-use pathway on Whistle Bend Way and Range Road that continues till the intersection at Mountain View Drive. A separated bicycle pathway is also proposed on Mountain View Drive, Copper Road and Quartz Road which connects to the Downtown's network of paved trails and other proposed bicycle paths and greenways. This system is proposed to be designed to All Ages and Abilities standards that ensures that it can accommodate a range of users of varying abilities.

Additional connectivity for people walking and cycling between Whistle Bend and Downtown is anticipated to be achieved in the near term with the Range Road North Reconstruction proposed in the 2021-2024 Capital Budget. This reconstruction project preliminarily identifies the integration of a cycling route.

Active transportation connectivity within Whistle Bend is provided through the Type 1 trails located on Casca Boulevard and the neighbourhood greenways proposed in the future. Further active transportation connections between Area C and the rest of Whistle Bend will be determined through future planning processes.

Bus Route

A few residents expressed concern with lack of existing bus routes to the proposed area. Transit Services is currently developing a Transit Route Modernization Plan. Proposed changes are anticipated to address transit frequency and level of service between Whistle Bend and the Downtown core.

Other concerns

Neighbourhood Concept

One submission expressed concern that the proposed residential development will shift Whistle Bend's character from a complete neighbourhood with a 'live, work, play' environment to a primarily housing-oriented neighbourhood. The Whistle Bend community plan is to have commercial businesses, schools and other amenities in close proximity to the town square. Area C is an extension of the Whistle Bend neighbourhood and will further increase the viability of services by bringing more people to the community. Moreover, additional commercial, civic and recreational uses have been proposed under the 2020 Future Areas Plan in balance with the new homes.

Operational Equipment

One submission was concerned with the City not having adequate operational resources in terms of equipment, vehicles, etc. to serve the additional population in Whistle Bend. If the OCP amendment is approved, a detailed design will inform future operational requirements.

Infrastructure

Some submissions were concerned with infrastructure capacities to adequately serve the new development. The WSP report indicates that the Future Areas A, B and C have adequate water supply for the planned housing based on a preliminary review of the existing supply main infrastructure. For wastewater, the report recommends further investigation to identify the possible expansions and upgrades that may be necessary in the future. For storm water, the report states that the proposed storm water system should accommodate expected flows over the life of the infrastructure. Infrastructure considerations will be studied in more detail during the zoning amendment and subdivision processes. Upgrades attributable to new development are paid for by the developer (YG).

Snow Dump

One public submission expressed concern with finding a suitable snow dump location. The City operates an area within Area C as a snow storage area that will need to be relocated prior to the development of residential development. The City is intending to start planning work on new snow storage locations in 2021. The WSP report identifies two potential snow storage areas - one located north of Area C, near the Force Main Road, and another off-site location south of the Whistle Bend Way and Mountain View Drive intersection.

Conclusion

The application under review is for an OCP land designation change. The proposed amendment is seeking Council's consideration of whether the proposed development of Area C is appropriate given the surrounding land uses and community needs.

If Council decides to approve this OCP amendment, there will be opportunities for more detailed planning work to address specific concerns. The best way to address these concerns is through subsequent zoning amendment, subdivision approval and development agreement with YG.

ADMINISTRATIVE RECOMMENDATION

THAT Bylaw 2020-31, a bylaw to amend the Official Community Plan to allow for the development of the area known as Whistle Bend Future Area C, be brought forward for 2nd reading under the bylaw process.