

1 INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

1.1 PROJECT PURPOSE

The Riverfront Plan is a result of an overall strategic initiative of the City to reaffirm its links with the historic waterfront of the Yukon River. This Riverfront Plan is intended to establish broad land use policies for the area, and is intended as a guide to implementation of other development initiatives by both the public and private sectors.

The focus on river front planning is part of a larger City program related to establishing policies on land use along the Yukon River corridor. To facilitate public discussion and participation the City also prepared a scale model of the riverfront area in the downtown region, has held a number of public events, carried out more detailed environmental and historic assessments of the area, and also commissioned a broad land use planning study for the entire Yukon River corridor. This Plan focuses specifically on the core downtown portion of the river.

With a variety of development initiatives under discussion by the City, this land use plan is intended to identify the general approach to area land use, but also considers, where appropriate, general design considerations.

1.2 LOCATION

The riverfront area for purposes of this Plan was identified as including both shorelines of the Yukon River in and near the downtown region, extending from the SS Klondike site in the south to Kishwoot Island in the north. The west boundary includes parcels of land fronting First Avenue, and extends further to the east side of Second Avenue from Black Street to where Second Avenue curves to the west.

On the east bank of the Yukon River the study area includes the hospital site and adjacent institutional uses, and part of the escarpment. Each of the maps in this document provide an indication of the study area boundaries.

1.3 PLANNING PROCESS

Throughout completion of the Plan liaison was maintained with the Riverfront Advisory Committee comprising members of various local stakeholder groups, City Council and technical agencies. Meetings with the Advisory Committee were supplemented by a very well attended public open house on June 18, 1998, and a workshop for interested citizens on June 19, 1998. (Maps and related material also continued to be on display for some weeks afterwards at City Hall.) The open house, conducted in a tent at the SS Klondike site, was arranged by the City and allowed members of the public to acquaint themselves with the various land use options considered for the study area and also permitted viewing of a scale model of the area, environmental, historic, and land use information. At the open house the consultants made available

a questionnaire to solicit comments on each of three land use options including various land use elements and design considerations. A synopsis of questionnaire results was prepared by the City. A special workshop with the Riverfront Advisory Committee on land uses to be included in the draft Plan was held on August 6, 1998. It offered an opportunity to review public input and to synthesize those aspects that merited inclusion in the Riverfront Plan. A further Advisory Committee and a public meeting on the draft plan was held September 22, 1998.

1.4 RELATION TO CITY PLANS

The Riverfront Plan builds on two other key documents affecting land use in the area. An initial Downtown Plan was prepared in early 1994. Key components of this Plan were later incorporated in the more global City Official Community Plan, adopted as bylaw 94-30 in August 1994. The Official Community Plan sets out general policy guidelines for growth and development of Whitehorse. It offers the foundation for land use decisions which affect land use throughout the city. With reference to the Yukon River waterfront the Community Plan notes:

- that a maximum height of two stories be maintained along First Avenue (2.3.4.16)
- the importance of public access to the Yukon River waterfront Downtown, and linkage provisions to commercial areas, and passive recreation activities along the waterfront (adapted from 2.3.9.11)

- the Community Plan contains a special section (Part Four), which deals specifically with the downtown. It reflects policies and land use recommendations embodied in the Downtown Plan adopted earlier as bylaw 94-05, which amended the 1987 Official Community Plan. Components relative to the riverfront as noted in the current Official Community Plan include:
 - integration and linkages to and along the Escarpment and Waterfront in a manner that recognizes each feature's natural amenities and allows development in a beneficial and safe manner (4.4.4.1)
 - the waterfront shall be developed as a link between people and places of activity in the Downtown (4.4.2.2)
 - development of the waterfront area shall provide opportunities for a year round mix of commercial, residential, recreational, historical and interpretative activities development (4.4.2.3)

The Community Plan document stresses the opportunity for public private partnerships to develop buildings and linkages along pedestrian routes, and encourages incorporation of historic features.

Land uses for the riverfront as noted in the Community Plan includes the designation Waterfront, extending for the entire study area along First Avenue. The emphasis here is on development of linkages to the downtown. At the north end of the Riverfront on either side of Second Avenue, the land use

classification is Commercial Residential Mix, and the area at Strickland and Alexander along Second Avenue is also proposed as a Commercial/Residential mix zone. The actual density per hectare is not defined in the Community Plan.

The overall policies of the Community Plan as it reflects the Riverfront area were given consideration in preparation of the current document.

2 EXISTING LAND USE AND TENURE

A review of current land use and tenure for the study area was completed by Gartner Lee in May 1998. A summary of this information is provided below.

2.1 LAND TENURE

Lots along the Yukon River titled after 1950 have retained a 30 metre (100 ft.) reserve along the river. Many of the other lots along the river are titled, but 13 untenured residences or squatters are found along the waterfront, mainly in the area known as sleepy hollow, but some squatters also reside east of the river. Lewes Boulevard, Hospital Road, and Wickstrom Road are untitled and Commissioners land. The City owns two large tracts of land (consisting of several parcels) known as the Taga Ku site, and the Motorways site. The White Pass and Yukon Route retains title to some rail right of way near the bridge. Other right of way has been transferred to the Government of Yukon. Several land uses are based on leasehold occupation. Notable leases include the Yukon Electrical Substation which is on a lease which expires in 2004. The Kanoe People occupy a lease in the 30 metre reserve, renewable on an annual basis. Kishwoot Island is a settled land claim owned by the Ta'an Kwach'an First Nation and is leased to the city (expires in year 2021). The White Pass depot is owned by the Yukon government with office space leased. Details on land tenure can be found on Map 1.

2.2 CURRENT LAND USE

Land use in the riverfront area consists of both permanent and temporary or seasonal uses, with the seasonal uses largely occurring on leased properties.

Principal current land uses within the downtown portion of the study area include:

- the SS Klondike sternwheeler historic site south of the bridge
- Rotary Peace Park
- Yukon Territorial Government Building and the Yukon Visitor Reception Centre
- the Closeleigh Manor apartment building west of First Avenue between Lambert and Elliott Streets
- commercial retail, restaurant and hotel uses on the west side of First Avenue
- the MacBride Museum at the foot of Main and Steele Street
- the old Motorways building (much of the surrounding property is vacant)
- several buildings from the operational history of the Yukon White Pass Route railway, including the train depot at the foot of Main Street, two old crew quarter buildings, and the train shed building (roundhouse)
- the Northwest store, a fast food restaurant, and bus depot on the east side of Second Avenue at Ogilvie Street

- several utility buildings, and the Yukon Electrical Company substation along the river near Alexander
- Kishwoot Island park area
- a number of squatter residences along the river shore in proximity to Kishwoot Island

On the east bank of the Yukon River, the buildings are largely institutional in nature, and the area is dominated by the Whitehorse General Hospital. Other buildings on the east side include several country residential properties, a church, educational building, and an extended care home complex, as well as a First Nations cemetery. Land use is illustrated on Map 2.