

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

TO: Planning Committee
FROM: Administration
DATE: January 18, 2021
RE: Zoning Amendment – 410 Cook Street

ISSUE

An application to amend the zoning of Lot 5, Block 113, Plan 18415 LTO YT (410 Cook Street, Downtown) to reduce parking and loading requirements for micro-unit housing development.

REFERENCE

Official Community Plan (2010)
Zoning Bylaw 2012-20
Safe at Home: A Community-Based Action Plan to End and Prevent Homelessness in Whitehorse, Yukon (2017)
Downtown Parking Management Plan (2019)
Council Strategic Priorities 2020

HISTORY

The City has received an application to amend the zoning of 410 Cook Street. The applicant intends to construct a mixed use development with 16 micro-unit dwellings and two leasable commercial spaces. The average size of residential units is approximately 37 square metres.

The development has received funding from the Yukon Housing Corporation's Housing Initiative Fund for the development of affordable rental units, of which three units are proposed to be accessible and barrier-free. The Zoning Bylaw requires the applicant to provide visitor parking spaces, a loading stall, as well as residential parking at one space per two units.

Due to space constraints on site, this is unfeasible for the development of affordable micro-unit housing. The applicant is asking Council to waive requirements for guest parking and loading space, and reduce the parking requirement for the residential use.

This application was reviewed by the Development Review Committee on December 9, 2020 and no substantial issues were raised.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Proceed with the zoning amendment under the bylaw process.
2. Do not proceed with the zoning amendment.

ANALYSIS

Proposed Development and Adjacent Land Uses

The applicant proposes a four-storey mixed use development with 16 micro-unit apartments and two commercial spaces. Until early 2020, the lot contained a single storey structure which was demolished to make way for redevelopment.

The subject lot fronts onto Cook Street, has laneway access and is close to 4th Ave which is a major thoroughfare. The property is bordered by a multi-family development on the east and Heritage North Funeral Home on the west. On the opposite side of the street are a dental clinic and the Landmark Cinemas parking lot.

The subject lot is also close to several amenities within walking distance including:

- Wykes' Independent Grocery (100 m)
- Whitehorse Elementary School (170 m)
- A City Transit stop (100 m)
- Shipyards Park and Riverfront trails (600 m)
- Whitehorse Public Library (700 m).

Official Community Plan (OCP)

The OCP designation for the subject lot is Mixed Use – Residential/Commercial. This designation is intended to promote a mix of multi-family and commercial uses. OCP policies 6.5.1 and 6.52 support stand-alone residential and mixed-use developments within this designation.

OCP policy 5.1.3 states that the City shall promote a city-wide compact development pattern to ensure efficient use of infrastructure and transit services, as well as active transportation opportunities. As noted, the proposed lot is near an existing City bus stop, a bicycle route on 4th Avenue, the downtown trail network and other major amenities.

OCP policy 5.1.11 gives consideration to reduced parking requirement as an incentive to encourage redevelopment on under-utilized properties. The proposal to reduce parking requirements is in line with OCP policy 5.1.11.

Zoning

The existing zoning is CM2 – Mixed Use Commercial 2, which is intended for low intensity commercial and residential uses in the transitional area around the downtown core. Permitted uses include retail services, eating and drinking establishments, studios, multi-family housing, etc.

The following table provides a summary of parking requirements in the CM2 zone compared to the applicant's request.

Category	Zoning Bylaw Requirement	Proposed
Residential Parking	8 (@ 0.5 space per unit)	7 (@ 0.45 space per unit under 40 ² m) 0 (@ 0.5 space per unit over 40 ² m)
Residential Visitor Parking	2 (@ 1 space per 7 units)	None
Commercial Parking	1 (@ 1 space per 150 ² m – option to pay cash-in-lieu)	1 (option to pay cash-in-lieu)
Loading Spaces	1 (@ 1 space per 930 ² m Gross Floor Area)	None
Total	Parking spaces - 11 Loading space - 1	Parking spaces - 8

Micro-units are an emerging form of affordable housing targeted towards students, single/young professionals, couples without children and low-income individuals located in amenity-rich core areas close to transit. The average household size in Whitehorse is decreasing and demand for affordable smaller dwellings in areas such as Downtown is increasing.

Research suggests that traditional parking minimums under municipal zoning can be a hindrance to development of micro-unit housing as they indirectly restrict density and increase costs of development. Parking minimums are calculated based on the number of units and not on the size of units (or number of bedrooms). Many municipalities in recent years have allowed for reduction, or even removal, of parking minimums to make housing projects feasible and promote active transportation. To achieve the latter, the bylaw requires eighteen Class 1 and three Class 2 bike spaces for the development.

Administration proposes waiving the requirement for visitor parking and loading space, and to reduce the residential parking requirement from 0.5 space per unit to 0.45 per unit. To ensure the developer complies with micro-unit style housing, these special modifications will only be applicable for units that are less than 40 square metres in size. Should the developer choose to build larger units, the usual provisions of the zoning bylaw will apply. Additionally, no parking will be allocated exclusively to a unit to allow for efficient utilization by residents and commercial tenants. The developer may pay cash-in-lieu for the commercial space(s).

Other Plans and Policies

Downtown Parking Management Plan

Per the existing conditions survey conducted in 2018 under the 2019 Downtown Parking Management Plan, on-street parking occupancy on the subject lot's block is quite low (peak occupancy reaches 21%). This indicates that there may be adequate room for parking by potential customers and employees, which can alternatively be used by visitors during evening hours and weekends.

Safe at Home Plan

The 2017 Safe at Home action plan recommends exploring ways to provide incentives for 'micro home' developments that are safe and affordable and improving zoning by-laws to ensure timely construction of new housing options when opportunities arise. Cost-reduction measures such as relaxed parking minimums can help add additional affordable housing units to the development. Micro-unit type housing also allows increased density without adding to the height or building mass.

2020 City Council Strategic Priorities

Housing was identified as a strategic priority by Council for 2020, which included providing opportunities for housing development and working with partners in government and the private sector to help residents attain housing.

Conclusion

Reducing parking and loading stall requirements for this development may have limited impact in light of the low on-street parking utilization on Cook Street. The proposal is supported by City policies and the Safe at Home action plan.

The proposed schedule for the Zoning Bylaw amendment is:

Planning Committee:	January 18, 2021
First Reading:	January 25
Newspaper Ads:	January 29 and February 5
Public Hearing:	February 22
Report to Committee:	March 15
Second and Third Reading:	March 22

ADMINISTRATIVE RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council direct that Bylaw 2021-21, a bylaw to amend the zoning at 410 Cook Street in Downtown to reduce the minimum parking requirements to allow for micro-unit housing development, be brought forward for consideration under the bylaw process.