

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

TO: Planning Committee
FROM: Administration
DATE: August 1, 2022
RE: Zoning Amendment – Puckett’s Gulch/Airport

ISSUE

An application to amend the zoning at Puckett’s Gulch/Airport from PE – Environmental Protection to IAX(a) – Airport (modified) to allow for the transfer of land to the Government of Yukon to extend an airport runway, and relocate a trail, airside road, fence, and sanitary sewer line.

REFERENCES

- [Canadian Aviation Regulations SOR/96-433](#)
- [2015 Transport Canada Aerodromes Standards and Recommended Practices – TP 312 5th Edition](#)
- [2010 Official Community Plan \(OCP\)](#)
- [2012 Downtown Escarpment Land Use Policy](#)
- [Zoning Bylaw 2012-20](#)
- Location Map (Appendix A)
- Proposed Zoning Bylaw Amendment 2022-31

HISTORY

The Government of Yukon (YG) has applied on behalf of the City of Whitehorse (City) to rezone a portion of City land in Puckett’s Gulch to IAX(a) – Airport (modified) to allow for the extension of an airport runway at Erik Nielson Whitehorse International Airport (Airport).

The proposed rezoning involves portions of the following parcels (Appendix A):

1. LOT 1183, QUAD 105/D, PLAN 85401 CLSR YT;
2. LOT 423, GROUP 804, PLAN 52105 CLSR YT; and
3. LOT 18, GROUP 804, PLAN 8406 CLSR YT.

The purpose of the application is to bring the airport into compliance with federal aviation safety standards. Canadian Aviation Regulations require a runway end safety area (RESA) if the volume of passengers at an airport surpasses a certain threshold. Once passenger volumes at the Airport return to pre-pandemic traffic volumes, it is expected that runway 14L will require the addition of a new 150 metre RESA. The current Airport property boundary does not leave sufficient space to construct the 150 metre RESA.

Furthermore, the existing fence along the airside road and trail system is within the Runway 14R runway strip which does not comply with Transport Canada Standards which state that a runway strip must be clear of all fixed objects. In addition to extending

Runway 14L to add a 150 metre RESA, YG is proposing to move the airside road, fence, and a section of the Airport Trail in order to come into compliance with TP 312 standard 3.1.4.5.

There is also a raised manhole within the airfield that is a safety concern. It services a sanitary sewer line that runs beneath Runway 14R. YG is proposing to relocate the City sanitary sewer line around Runway 14R and tie-in within Puckett’s Gulch which would remove the manhole of concern.

Runway 14L, once extended, will act as a backup for Runway 14R which is the primary runway for large airplanes. Recent closures to the Alaska Highway south of Whitehorse have highlighted the importance and reliance the city has on air transportation. Upgrades to Runway 14L are necessary to ensure the transportation of goods and services to the City if Runway 14R was, for any unforeseen reason, inoperable.

Development Review Committee

On May 25, 2022, the Development Review Committee (DRC) reviewed the proponent’s rezoning application and several concerns were raised. In light of the escarpment slides that had recently occurred in the city, the DRC felt it was necessary that geotechnical, surface drainage, escarpment stability, and construction plans be provided. Additionally, it was noted that the proposal did not conform to the Downtown Escarpment Land Use Policy. YG Tourism and Culture also notified the City that the project area was in the process of a Heritage Review Impact Assessment (HRIA) and that work should not proceed until the results of the HRIA had been completed.

The application was further reviewed by Administration and it was concluded that the issues noted by DRC could be addressed through other processes.

The proposed schedule for the Zoning Bylaw amendment is:

Planning Committee:	August 1, 2022
First Reading:	August 8, 2022
Newspaper Ads:	August 12 and August 19, 2022
Public Hearing:	September 12, 2022
Report to Committee:	October 3, 2022
Second and Third Reading:	October 11, 2022

ALTERNATIVES

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

ANALYSIS

Site Context

The portions of the subject parcels to be rezoned are located east of the Airport and south of the Black Street stairs (Appendix A). The Airport and subject lands are located approximately 60 metres in elevation above Downtown. There are residential lots zoned

RD – Residential Downtown to the east of the subject site, at the bottom of the escarpment. The entire escarpment along the Airport is at risk of slope instability, although generally vegetated slopes are more stable than barren slopes.

Official Community Plan

The subject parcels are designated as Greenspace – Recreation Areas in the OCP which protects areas of high recreational value including primary trail routes. The impacted trail will be rerouted and public access to it will be maintained. The on-site geotechnical study, once complete, will determine the type of vegetation that should be replanted in disturbed areas in order to provide the best slope stabilization.

A small portion of the proposed RESA and airside road are located within the Greenspace – Recreation Areas designation. The maps in the OCP are not precise and are intended to be used as a guide. The map boundary in the area between the Airport and Puckett’s Gulch is being considered approximate and therefore an OCP amendment is not required.

Zoning Bylaw

The purpose of the PE – Environmental Protection zone is to protect and preserve environmentally sensitive areas, wildlife habitat and other significant natural areas. The PE zone is restrictive, only allowing nature interpretation facilities as a secondary use and some recreation-oriented conditional uses.

The Airport is currently zoned IA(a) (modified). The special modification removes the development regulations of section 11.1.5 of the Airside portion of the Airport. The zoning of the portion of the subject parcels should be consistent with the current Airport zoning if Council is to contemplate disposition, subdivision, and land transfer processes in the future.

Downtown Escarpment Land Use Policy

The subject parcels are located within the Downtown Whitehorse Escarpment control zone and are subject to the Downtown Escarpment Land Use Policy. Since the proposed project does not comply with some of the general policies, the Downtown Escarpment Land Use Policy will need to be amended following the rezoning to remove portions of the subject parcels from the control zone.

Overall Process and Future Requirements

As the portions of the subject parcels are currently owned by the City, further steps will be required should Council approve the rezoning to allow for the transfer of land. Due to the sensitive location of the land transfer being located within a geo-hazard area, it is proposed that additional steps are added to the land transfer process to ensure works do not increase geo-hazards within the area. The proposed process to transfer the land to YG for the subject project is outlined below:

1. Zoning Bylaw Amendment
2. Amendment to the Downtown Escarpment Land Use Policy
3. Disposition

4. Subdivision
5. Land Transfer
6. Development Agreement

If Council approves this amendment, an amendment to the Downtown Escarpment Land Use Policy would be next, followed by the City land disposition, subdivision, and land transfer processes.

As a condition of the subdivision approval, a development agreement will be required. Conditions of this development agreement will include that YG will need to submit a detailed engineering design for approval by the City’s Manager of Engineering Services. The detailed engineering design will need to address the following items:

- Potential impacts to the escarpment area and slope stabilization;
- Potential impacts to the escarpment hazard zones at the bottom of the slope;
- Current slope stability issues in the project area and the expected stability issues after slope modification;
- A storm management plan around the area of interest for existing and modified conditions;
- Design of the proposed sanitary sewer manholes configuration; and
- A geotechnical review addressing any groundwater concerns.

The detailed engineering design will need to demonstrate that the proposed project will not extend the moderate geo-hazard area boundary further into the Downtown area.

Additionally, the development agreement will address issues such as financial and safety responsibilities and snow storage management. YG will be required to communicate with the public about the project and minimize any disruptions to the Black Street stairs and active transportation corridor.

ADMINISTRATIVE RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council direct that Bylaw 2022-31, a bylaw to amend the zoning of a portion of three parcels in the Puckett’s Gulch/Airport area, be brought forward for consideration under the bylaw process.