

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

TO: City Planning Committee
FROM: Administration
DATE: February 3, 2025
RE: Public Hearing Report – Zoning Amendment - Copper Ridge Master Plan Area

ISSUE

Public Hearing Report on a bylaw to amend the zoning of lots 519, 520, and a portion of lot 518, known as the Copper Ridge Development Area Land Use Master Plan (the Plan) site, from PS – Public Services, PS(x) – Public Services Modified, and PR – Parks and Recreation to FP – Future Planning, to ensure certainty and flexibility for future rezoning.

REFERENCES

- [Zoning Bylaw 2012-20](#)
- [Whitehorse 2040 Official Community Plan](#)
- [Copper Ridge Development Area Land Use Master Plan \(the "Plan"\)](#)
- Copper Ridge Development Area Land Use Concept Plan (Attachment 1)
- Location Map (Attachment 2)
- Proposed Zoning Amendment Bylaw 2024-52 (Attachment 3)

HISTORY

The City of Whitehorse (the “City”) approved the Plan on April 22, 2024 to guide future development in the area between Copper Ridge Place and Falcon Drive. In line with the Plan, the City passed a land disposition bylaw on August 26, 2024, to transfer Lot 520 to the Government of Yukon (YG). This transfer aims to facilitate the orderly development and sale of the land to a developer. In exchange, the City will receive an equivalent 2.02 hectares of land through the development process, ensuring no net loss of City-owned land.

YG submitted a zoning amendment application to rezone the area from PS – Public Services, PS(x) – Public Services Modified, and PR – Parks and Recreation to FP – Future Planning, to ensure certainty and flexibility for future rezoning.

Bylaw 2024-52 received First Reading on November 25, 2024. Public Hearing notifications were sent out in accordance with the Zoning Bylaw 2012-20, including:

- Newspaper ads were posted in the Yukon News on December 20, 2024 and January 3, 2025;
- Email notifications were sent to Kwanlin Dün First Nation, Ta’an Kwäch’än Council, Government of Yukon Land Management Branch, and the Copper Ridge Community Association;
- Notification letters were sent to property owners within 100 m of the subject site; and
- Two notice signs were placed on the subject site.

A Public Hearing for this item was held on January 13, 2025. Four written public input submissions and three verbal submissions were received from six submitters.

The Copper Ridge Master Plan area is required to support to the City’s Residential Growth Strategy. To meet the City’s housing goals and fulfil its commitment under the Housing Accelerator Fund program, this development is essential to not risk the funding received and enable the City in achieving its housing objectives.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Proceed with the second and third readings under the bylaw process; or
2. Do not proceed with the second and third readings.

ANALYSIS

It is noted that the zoning bylaw amendment application proposes rezoning the area to FP—a zone that allows minimal development to occur. The submissions generally focus on the future development outlined in the Plan. Implementation of the Plan cannot occur under the proposed FP zone, as its implementation requires rezoning to residential zones.

Nevertheless, to provide clarity on the submissions, the Plan has been considered in the analysis below to address the comments received.

The following matters were raised in the public hearing submissions:

- Loss of greenspace;
- Drainage issues;
- Density impacts;
- School designation; and
- Public consultation.

Loss of Greenspace

Concerns were raised about the loss of trees, trails, and natural habitat. A resident highlighted the need for a safer, paved forest trail. Additionally, it was suggested to implement a consistent 30-meter buffer along the entire western edge, citing a proposed 10-meter buffer was deemed insufficient to preserve tree coverage during development.

Although the site is currently left in a natural state, it is zoned PS, which allows for the development of institutional facilities, and PR, which allows for recreational facilities and related infrastructure. While the area is appreciated for its opportunities for passive recreation, it is important to recognize that the current zoning does not guarantee its preservation. Both the PS and PR zones allow for the construction of buildings to support their respective uses.

The Plan envisions providing for an amount of land equivalent to the current PR zoning to be maintained as a mix of PG – Greenbelt and PR zoning. While these zones will be reconfigured across the Plan site, they provide for some areas to be maintained in a natural state. At least 30% of the site will feature trees, trails, and native landscaping, including along streets and greenspaces and a 3-meter-wide, all-ages, non-motorized paved path will run along Falcon Drive, Diamond Way, and the western edge of the Plan area, avoiding tree removal where possible.

To minimize resident impacts, a greenspace buffer is proposed along the northern, western, and southern edges, incorporating accessible paths. While the buffer varies from 20 to 90 metres in size, expanding the buffer to a minimum of 30 meters in places where 20 metres are envisioned would require a complete reconfiguration of the Plan, and the amount and location of higher densities, to make up for the overall reduction in the residential area.

Drainage Issues

Two submitters expressed concerns about drainage on adjacent properties, noting that the new development could exacerbate existing issues. They emphasized the need for a water management plan, recommending it be addressed before construction begins.

A geotechnical assessment was completed during the master planning process. Site grading revisions and onsite stormwater infrastructure, where necessary, will direct runoff from the Plan area to Diamond Way, connecting to the existing storm sewer system. The Plan recommends conducting a geotechnical investigation prior to development to assess subsurface soil conditions, bedrock depth, and soil properties relevant to the proposed development. It also suggests completing a detailed stormwater management plan to address post-development runoff before specific zones are proposed as part of a future zoning amendment application.

Density Impacts

Concerns were raised regarding the Plan's development density, its impact on the neighbourhood character and the potential strain on existing infrastructure, citing it could exceed the capacity of current systems.

During the Master Planning process, a municipal servicing assessment was completed to determine the maximum additional residential density that can be accommodated with existing infrastructure and to identify the threshold when infrastructure upgrades would be required. While the proposed density in the Plan is below this threshold, detailed engineering will be undertaken before specific zones are proposed as part of a future zoning amendment application to confirm the conclusions of the preliminary servicing assessment.

It was also questioned why this location was chosen for development when other areas within the city had more space to accommodate higher density. The City's Residential Growth Strategy as described in the Official Community Plan requires intensification and redevelopment throughout the city. Over the life of the strategy, Administration will bring forward other infill sites for Council consideration.

Higher density development already exists in Copper Ridge with some multi-family sites in the vicinity of the Plan area and the location along a collector road makes the area a suitable location for denser development. To minimize impacts on adjacent residential areas, land uses are carefully distributed within the Plan area, and future built form considered. For example, medium density uses are centrally located or surrounded by a vegetated buffer. Smaller medium-density uses, in the form of cottage cluster housing are also envisioned nearest to the edges of the Plan area, while larger medium-density uses are envisioned within the central Plan area block.

School Designation

A submitter questioned whether the site, previously designated for a school, should remain reserved for that purpose, citing the potential need for another high school within the next 3-4 years.

The Yukon Government's Department of Education is responsible for school facility planning within the Whitehorse area and determined that Lot 519 was unsuitable for a school, transferring it to the Land Development Branch in 2018 for eventual development and disposition.

Public Consultation

A submitter noted that previous public input efforts seemed disregarded and questioned whether the concerns of the community were adequately considered in the planning process, as many participants voiced opposition to any development in the area.

The Master Plan process included numerous public input opportunities, such as a project webpage, surveys, presentations, open houses, and workshops. Input, included general opposition to the project due to the loss of greenspace and an area used for passive recreation. Fifty-four percent of survey respondents preferred to see only greenspace in this area, while the remaining respondents were open to other uses, such as residential (37%), mixed-use development (22%), and public service/institutional uses (17%).

The City balanced the input received with the need to accommodate growth and address housing demands as outlined in the Official Community Plan. The Plan thus maintains the same amount of public zoning, noting that the City-owned lot is currently zoned PR and therefore is not designated for passive recreation, but rather for recreational facilities and related infrastructure. Further, the other lot, owned by YG was zoned for a future school and not meant for passive recreation.

ADMINISTRATIVE RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council direct that Bylaw 2024-52, a bylaw to amend the zoning of the Copper Ridge Development Area Land Use Master Plan site, from PS – Public Services, PS(x) – Public Services Modified, and PR – Parks and Recreation to FP – Future Planning, be brought forward at second and third reading under the bylaw process.