
ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

TO: City Planning Committee
FROM: Administration
DATE: June 29, 2026
RE: Official Community Plan (OCP) Map and Text Amendment - Mineral Exploration

ISSUE

An application to amend text and mapping of the Official Community Plan (OCP) to permit limited forms of Mineral Exploration within the Future Planning designation.

REFERENCE

- [Zoning Bylaw 2025-37](#)
- [Whitehorse 2040 Official Community Plan](#)
- [Quartz Mining Act SY 2003, c. 14](#)
- [Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act S.C 2003, c.7](#)
- [Prohibition of Entry on Certain Lands \(City of Whitehorse\) Order O.I.C 2012/145](#)
- [Draft Mineral Exploration and Development Framework](#)
- Applicant's proposed work areas (Map 1)
- [Active Crown Grants / Mineral Claims and Whitehorse 2040 OCP Designations](#) (Map 2)
- General location map of amended areas (Map 3)
- Aerial image of Greenspace to Future Planning-Arctic Chief (Map 4)
- Aerial image of Greenspace to Future Planning-Gem (Map 5)
- Aerial image of Greenspace to Future Planning-Little Chief (Map 6)
- Proposed OCP text amendment as applied for by applicant Bylaw 2026-25 (Attachment 1)
- Proposed OCP text amendment as modified by Administration Bylaw 2026-25 (Attachment 2)
- OCP Map 1 Amendment Bylaw 2026-25 (Attachment 3)
- OCP Map 5 Amendment Bylaw 2026-25 (Attachment 4)

HISTORY

An application was received to amend the OCP to enable limited forms of Mineral Exploration on existing claims within the Future Planning designation. Mineral Exploration is understood as the practice of using a diamond drill to remove core samples from subsurface layers to assess mineral potential. Mineral exploration is one of the first steps in determining if Mineral Development (mining) is viable in a given area.

The applicant has proposed to amend the OCP in three (3) interrelated ways:

1. Creation of new Glossary terms (Attachment 1 and 2) that define:
 - Mineral Exploration;
 - Disturbed Area;
 - Established Access; and
 - Temporary Equipment Access.

2. The addition of new policy within the Future Planning designation that enables limited Mineral Exploration to occur (Attachment 1 and 2).
3. An amendment to OCP Map 1-Greenspace Network Plan and Parks and Map 5 – Land Use Designations to change 0.81 square kilometres of land currently listed as Greenspace to Future Planning (Map 1)

The intent of the proposed amendment is to enable holders of valid mineral tenure to undertake limited scope exploratory drilling within the Future Planning designation provided:

- Exploration occurs within a Disturbed Area; Work areas can be reached using Established Access; and Temporary Equipment Access is utilized to position drilling equipment.

A decision document was issued under the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act (YESAA) and subsequently approved by Yukon Government that approves Class 3 exploration activities within four target areas for a period of five years within Whitehorse city limits. The proposed amendment will not enable the full scope of Class 3 exploration activities approved by the Government of Yukon. The activities would be both geographically and methodologically limited through proposed policies and mapping changes.

Prohibition of Entry on Certain Lands (City of Whitehorse) Order

Since 2012, entering municipal lands for the purpose of locating a claim, prospecting, or mining for minerals is prohibited on a large portion of the city through the approval of the *Prohibition of Entry on Certain Lands (City of Whitehorse) Order*. No new claims can be staked in the prohibited area; however, there are many stakes that were claimed in the prohibited area prior to the *Order* coming into effect (Map 2). These stakes are grandfathered and do not expire so long as they are kept in good standing. It is these areas, within the proposed work areas, that the applicant wishes to undertake Mineral Exploration through the proposed OCP amendment.

Development Review Committee and Administrative Review

On May 13, 2026 the application was reviewed by the Development Review Committee (DRC). The DRC provided the following comments:

- Careful review of areas being redesignated from Greenspace to Future Planning is required;
- Special attention is required for areas within the Greenspace designation that are also identified as Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESA);
- Time limits are needed on Temporary Use Permits for Mineral Exploration;
- Concerns were raised regarding long-term rehabilitation of disturbed areas;
- Need to address reclamation of these areas once work is complete;
- The disturbed condition of subject sites may be the result of inadequate reclamation in the past; and
- A new process would rely on more robust oversight and imposition of specific conditions.

Following DRC, Administration met with the applicant to discuss their proposed amendment. Administration requested minor modifications to proposed policies and definitions. Administration also advised that if the applicant wished to undertake Mineral Exploration in all proposed work areas, studies by an environmental professional would be required to consider redesignation of confirmed ESAs.

Based on this information, the applicant revised their application in the following ways:

- Modified definitions as requested;
- Modified proposed policy; and
- Reduced proposed work areas to exclude ESA areas of concern.

Despite these changes, there remains two areas where Administration and the applicant are not in agreement. Administration believes policy 15.4.8 as proposed below, may result in a policy conflict and could limit the City's regulatory capacity related to Mineral Exploration:

15.4.7 Where valid mineral tenure exists in good standing within the Future Planning designation, Mineral Exploration activities including associated drill site preparation, clearings, and access may be considered a permitted temporary use where conducted in accordance with applicable territorial legislation, including the Quartz Mining Act and City bylaw, and utilizing Disturbed Areas, Established Access, and/or Temporary Equipment Access as defined in this Plan.

15.4.8 Where a valid authorization has been issued under the Quartz Mining Act for the Mineral Exploration activities described in policy 15.4.7, those activities shall be considered consistent with this policy for the purposes of Temporary Use Permit issuance.

The applicant has stated proposed 15.4.8 is a critical policy they wish to have considered by Council. Administration has received written comment from the applicant confirming they do not agree with Administration's position that 15.4.8 would result in a policy conflict. The applicant has stated without policy 15.4.8, Mineral Exploration allowances are "...permissive rather than mandatory." Administration's position is that proposed 15.4.8 could create a situation where valid authorization has been issued under the Quartz Mining Act that exceeds allowances granted through City Bylaw as outlined in 15.4.7. As a general rule, land use policies are written to be enabling. Policy language in an OCP does not mandate land use approval, rather it provides direction, contingent upon City policy and bylaw alignment. Administration's recommended changes are consistent with this approach to drafting OCP policy. Administration does not recommend adopting proposed policy 15.4.8, as applied for by the applicant.

Administration has also proposed a minor revision to the applicant's definition of Mineral Exploration as illustrated in bold below:

Mineral Exploration means activities undertaken for the sole or principal purpose of assessing land for its suitability for the production of minerals, including but not limited to drilling and associated drill site preparation, conducted in accordance with a valid

*authorization issued under the Quartz Mining Act or applicable territorial legislation
and City bylaw.*

The applicant has also provided written comment that opposes Administration’s recommendation to modify their definition of Mineral Exploration. The applicant has stated “...proposed definitions are intended to describe the activities and terms used throughout the amendment, while Policies 15.4.7 through 15.4.11 establish the circumstances in which Mineral Exploration may be considered...” They state adding “City bylaw” to the definition results in “..blurring distinction between the definition and the operative policies.” Despite this noted objection, the applicant has proposed including language in the Mineral Exploration definition that ensures alignment with the Quartz Mining Act or applicable territorial legislation. It is Administration’s position that if alignment with Territorial Legislation is explicitly listed in the definition of Mineral Exploration, alignment with a City Bylaw must also be explicitly listed to ensure both Quartz Act and Municipal Act compliance is upheld. Administration does not recommend adopting the applicant’s definition of Mineral Exploration.

Draft Mineral Exploration and Development Framework

Administration is in the process of developing a Mineral Exploration and Development Framework that is intended to more clearly regulate mineral exploration and development within city limits. The Draft Framework was released for public input in February 2026, with the engagement process closing on March 9. The Draft Framework relies on mapped OCP designations and their associated policies to determine the appropriate location for mineral exploration and development. The Draft Framework proposes a “tiered” system to regulate exploration based on land use impact. Broader allowances are given to lower impact forms of exploration. A phase two “What We Heard” report was released to the public on June 5, 2026. It is anticipated that Administration will bring the Draft Framework to Council for consideration in summer / fall of 2026.

The applicant is aware of the Draft Framework but has indicated it does not enable exploration in their desired work areas. The applicant’s proposed work activities align with the Draft Framework subject to the approval of the proposed OCP map amendments. It is the proposed OCP map amendments that will enable exploration in the applicant’s desired work areas.

OCP Amendment Proposed Schedule

The proposed schedule for the OCP amendment is:

Planning Committee:	June 29, 2026
First Reading:	July 6, 2026
Newspaper Ads:	July 10 and July 17, 2026
Public Hearing:	August 10, 2026
Public Hearing Report:	September 8, 2026
Second Reading:	September 14, 2026
Ministerial Review:	November 5, 2026 (assuming full 45-day review period)
Third Reading:	November 9, 2026

ALTERNATIVES

1. Proceed with the proposed OCP amendment as applied for under the bylaw process as outlined in Attachment 1;
2. Proceed with the proposed OCP amendment as modified by Administration under the bylaw process as outlined in Attachment 2; or
3. Do not proceed with the proposed amendment

ANALYSIS

Whitehorse 2040 Official Community Plan (OCP)

The OCP contains general policy statements that reference mining and mineral activity. Currently the OCP does not define Mineral Exploration, nor does it contain policy that explicitly enables Mineral Exploration to occur. The proposed amendment seeks to define Mineral Exploration, write policy that enables Mineral Exploration in the Future Planning designation (Attachment 1), and to redesignate specific Greenspace areas to Future Planning to enable Mineral Exploration to occur (Attachment 2 and 3).

OCP policy in the Greenspace designations is intentionally protectionist. The intent of the Greenspace designation is as follows:

“Greenspaces are intended to protect and maintain the integrity of the environment as described in section 7 Environmental Stewardship, acknowledge and promote connectivity between people and the environment, and support community well-being. Within the Greenspace designation, there will be a mix of parks and related facilities, trails, Regional Parks, and other natural areas.”

Policies that guide development in the Greenspace designation include:

- 15.5.1 *The City is committed to pursuing efforts that preserve the integrity and connectivity of environmentally sensitive areas to keep habitat intact and prevent fragmentation. Areas identified as Greenspace are primarily kept in their natural state, with minimal disturbance or development. The only exception will be for wildfire fuel abatement activities.*
- 15.5.2 *Uses that may be suitable for inclusion in areas designated as Greenspace include, but are not limited to, trails, and parks and related facilities.*
- 15.5.4 *All development in Greenspaces may be subject to environmental or other reports that identify measures required to protect environmentally sensitive areas and avoid or mitigate impacts to Whitehorse’s ecosystems.*
- 15.5.5 *Activities or development proposed in Greenspaces that may impact environmentally sensitive areas will be subject to the policies found under Section 7 Environmental Stewardship.*

Based on the Greenspace policies, it is not appropriate to consider introduction of Mineral Exploration as a land use in areas designated Greenspace. In order to consider Mineral Exploration in the applicant's proposed work areas, a redesignation in the form of OCP map amendment, into a designation that can accommodate Mineral Exploration, is required. As a result, the applicant is proposing to change specific work areas from Greenspace to Future Planning.

In addition to the Greenspace policies, land identified as an ESA is subject to additional policies in the OCP including:

- 7.1 *Environmentally sensitive areas include water bodies, water courses, wetlands, high value habitat areas, and wildlife corridors; these areas are shown generally in Map 1 Greenspace Network Plan and Parks.*
 - 7.1.1 *The City will continue updating mapping of environmentally sensitive areas within the city boundary as new information becomes available.*
 - 7.1.2 *Development will be limited in environmentally sensitive areas. Only uses that are shown as needing to cross an environmentally sensitive area or be in an environmentally sensitive area because they cannot occur elsewhere. These exceptions will be based on the findings of professionally prepared studies or reports.*
 - 7.1.3 *Where a proposed development may have a negative impact on an environmentally sensitive area, the City will work with the appropriate authority to ensure that protective measures and mitigations are implemented.*
 - 7.1.4 *Where development is proposed in environmentally sensitive areas, mitigative measures will be taken to ensure impact to ecosystems is kept to a minimum.*

The applicant is proposing to redesignate select previously disturbed areas from Greenspace / ESA to Future Planning (Attachment 3 and 4). Administration has conducted careful policy and mapping reviews as well as field investigations of these select areas. Field investigations of the specific work areas, in regions known as Arctic Chief, Gem and Little Chief (Map 4, 5 and 6), revealed these sites have been significantly impacted by previous mineral resource activities and / or clear cutting for fire protection. Based on field investigations, and in the opinion of Administration, these areas do not meet the intent of the ESA definition.

As stated in policy 7.1.1, the City will continue to update mapping of ESAs as new information becomes available. It is acknowledged the quality of the City's OCP mapping could be improved, and there are instances where on the ground verification of conditions are warranted to enable accurate land use decisions. Detailed understanding of previously mined or explored areas, presence of existing trails previously used for exploration purposes, and ongoing clear cutting as part of fire protection are new pieces of information that have informed Administration's position regarding ESA mapping boundaries. Given

that the proposed work areas have already been disturbed by previous mineral activities and that fire protection measures have resulted in significant clearing, Administration considers it reasonable to explore redesignating portions of Greenspace/ESA lands without requiring an independent environmental study. Further restrictions on how mineral exploration may proceed, as outlined below, will provide additional mitigation measures should such activities occur.

In addition to identifying Greenspace and ESA lands, The Greenspace Network Plan and Parks map in the OCP illustrates conceptual boundaries of future parks. A portion of the proposed work area is within the conceptual boundary of a future Wolf Creek Park. As stated above, the proposed work areas are largely disturbed from previous activities. Mineral Exploration of this nature is a temporary land use. Consideration of any permanent land use would require further investigation. A planning process will be required to formalize any “conceptual” park boundary currently illustrated in the OCP. Proposed exploration work does not preclude these areas from becoming park space in the future.

The Greenspace Network Plan and Parks map also shows the “conceptual” boundary of Chasàn Chùà Territorial Park. Despite this boundary being formalized through Territorial Legislation, the Greenspace Network Plan and Parks map has not been updated to reflect this change. This change will need to be conducted through a future OCP amendment. None of the proposed work areas subject to this amendment are within the Chasàn Chùà Territorial Park.

Future Planning policies in the OCP states:

- 15.4 *Future Planning Areas are intended to identify areas in the city that may be suitable for future development but need additional planning work to determine their most suitable mix of uses.*
- 15.4.1 *Uses primarily associated with Greenspaces, such as outdoor recreation trails or domestic fuel woodcutting, may be permitted subject to approval by the appropriate authority.*
- 15.4.2 *To preserve Future Planning Areas for future development, limited new uses such as trails and public utilities should be considered.*

The subject amendment proposes to add policies that enables limited forms of Mineral Exploration as an investigative and temporary land use in the Future Planning designation (Attachment 1 and 2). Administration is supportive of using Future Planning as a designation for this purpose as it grants narrow allowances to conduct temporary, exploratory work. Using other enabling designations such as the Natural Resource Extraction designation would enable broader scope, longer-term, and higher impact land uses that may not be appropriate in this context.

Zoning Bylaw

In recognition that mineral exploration functions as a temporary land use, Administration currently enables mineral exploration to be established through a Temporary Use Permit (TUP) in alignment with section 2.13 *Temporary Use Development Permit* in the Zoning

Bylaw. Regulations in section 2.13(1) allow Administration to approve development through a Temporary Use Permit provided it is "...not contrary to the Official Community Plan." If the proposed Future Planning OCP policies were approved, this regulation enables approval of mineral exploration through TUP in the Future Planning designation.

Proposed OCP policy 15.4.9 makes explicit mention that a Temporary Use Permit is required to authorize Mineral Exploration. The proposed policy also enables the renewal of TUPs for Mineral Exploration in accordance with the Zoning Bylaw.

How would this amendment work?

If the proposed amendment were approved, the following process would occur to evaluate and assess an application to undertake Mineral Exploration in the Future Planning designation:

- Confirm that existing mineral tenure in good standing is in place;
- Confirm that the proposed work aligns with the definition of Mineral Exploration;
- Confirm that the work area is within a defined Disturbed Area;
- Confirm that the work area is served by Established Access; and
- Confirm that the drills will be located using Temporary Equipment Access.

If all above criteria are met, the City may issue a TUP subject to standard conditions of approval.

Conclusion

The subject application is in response to an applicant wanting to undertake Mineral Exploration within a specific subset of broader work areas approved by the Yukon Government. As stated above, the proposed work would not be enabled by the Draft Mineral Exploration and Development Framework as proposed work areas are currently within Greenspace designations where Mineral Exploration uses are not allowed.

Upon investigation, these specific work areas have been significantly disturbed by previous mineral, industrial, and wildfire resilience activities. Despite being designated as Greenspace, and in some instances ESA, the on the ground character is different than what current OCP mapping suggests. ESA Policy in the OCP urges caution when contemplating any development activity in these areas. Policy 7.1.1 also commits the City to "continue updating mapping of environmentally sensitive areas within city boundary as new information becomes available." Based on detailed field inspections and careful consideration, Administration believes it is appropriate to consider redesignation of these select work areas.

In addition to the proposed mapping changes that more accurately reflect on-site conditions, newly proposed definitions provide clear limitations on how exploration can occur. Mineral Exploration can only occur in the Future Planning designation if it is within a Disturbed Area, is accessed by an existing road or trail, and low impact drilling techniques are employed.

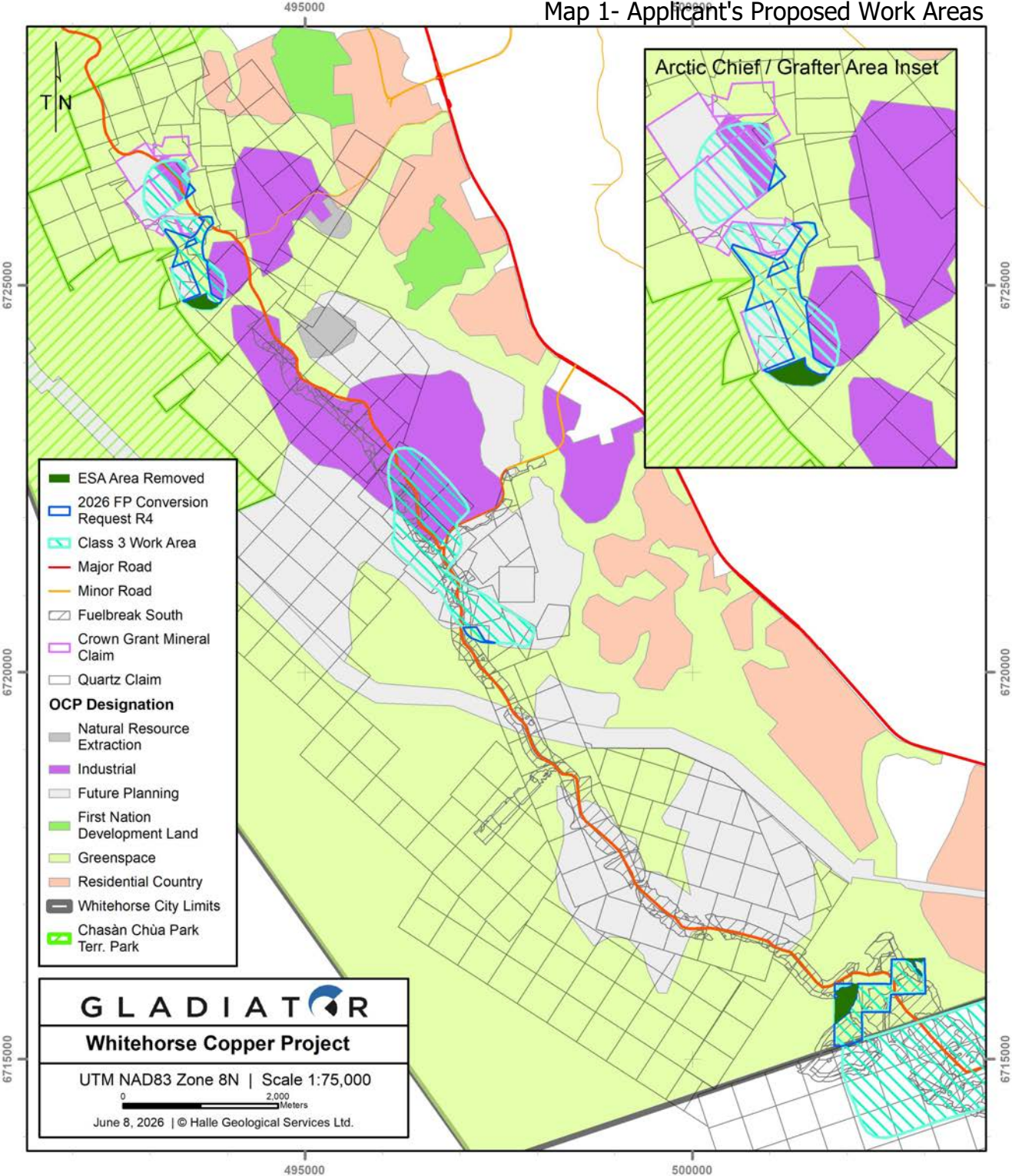
The proposed amendment is consistent with the draft Mineral Exploration and Development Framework. It would enable work equivalent with draft Tier 1 exploration

methods in the draft Framework. This amendment differs from the draft Framework in that it requests to expand the Future Planning designation to select disturbed areas to enable low impact exploration. In this instance, Administration believes limited expansion of the Future Planning designation for this purpose is reasonable. As stated above, Administration does not support adoption of proposed Future Planning policy 15.4.8 given its potential to enable Territorial Government approvals to override OCP policy governing Mineral Exploration. Administration also recommends adding one line to the “Mineral Exploration” definition as described above to ensure City Bylaw has equal regulatory power with Territorial authorization in the context of mineral exploration as a land use. Both recommended changes are illustrated in Attachment 2. Administration is in support of all other aspects of the proposed amendment.

ADMINISTRATIVE RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council direct that Bylaw 2026-25, a bylaw to amend text and mapping of the Official Community Plan (OCP) to permit limited forms of Mineral Exploration within the Future Planning designation, as modified by Administration and shown on attachments 2, 3 and 4, be brought forward for consideration under the bylaw process

Map 1- Applicant's Proposed Work Areas



- ESA Area Removed
- 2026 FP Conversion Request R4
- ▨ Class 3 Work Area
- Major Road
- Minor Road
- ▨ Fuelbreak South
- ▨ Crown Grant Mineral Claim
- ▨ Quartz Claim
- OCP Designation**
- Natural Resource Extraction
- Industrial
- ▨ Future Planning
- First Nation Development Land
- Greenspace
- Residential Country
- ▨ Whitehorse City Limits
- Chasàn Chùà Park Terr. Park



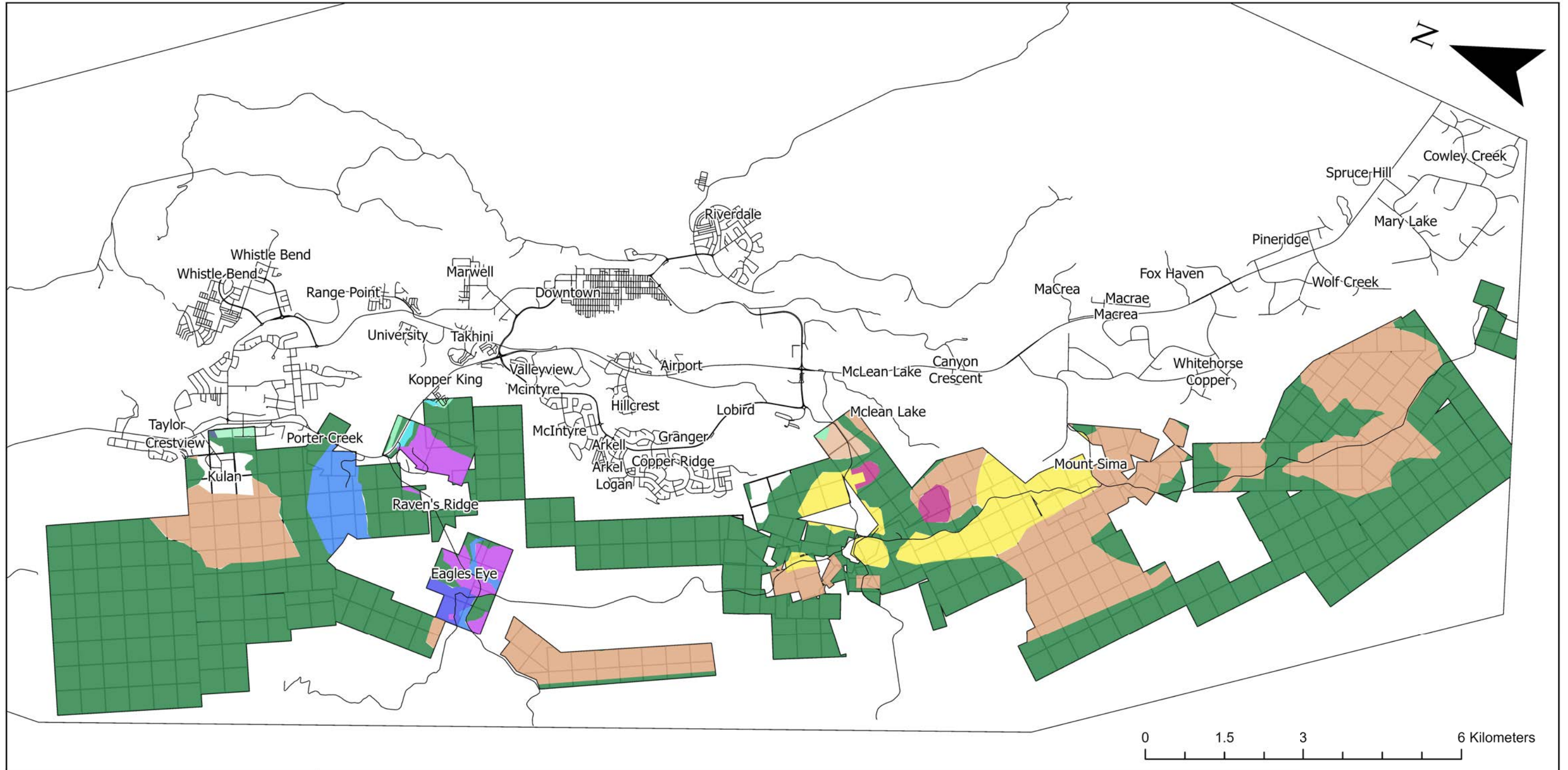
GLADIATOR

Whitehorse Copper Project

UTM NAD83 Zone 8N | Scale 1:75,000

0 2,000 Meters

June 8, 2026 | © Halle Geological Services Ltd.



Legend

OCP Designations

TYPE

- future-planning
- agriculture

- downtown
- mixed-use-ind-com
- natural-resource
- commercial-service
- greenspace

- industrial
- mixed-use-res-com
- public-service
- public-utilities
- residential-country


- residential-urban
- <all other values>
- Claims - Crown Grants
- City Limits

Map 3 - General location map of amended areas



DATE:
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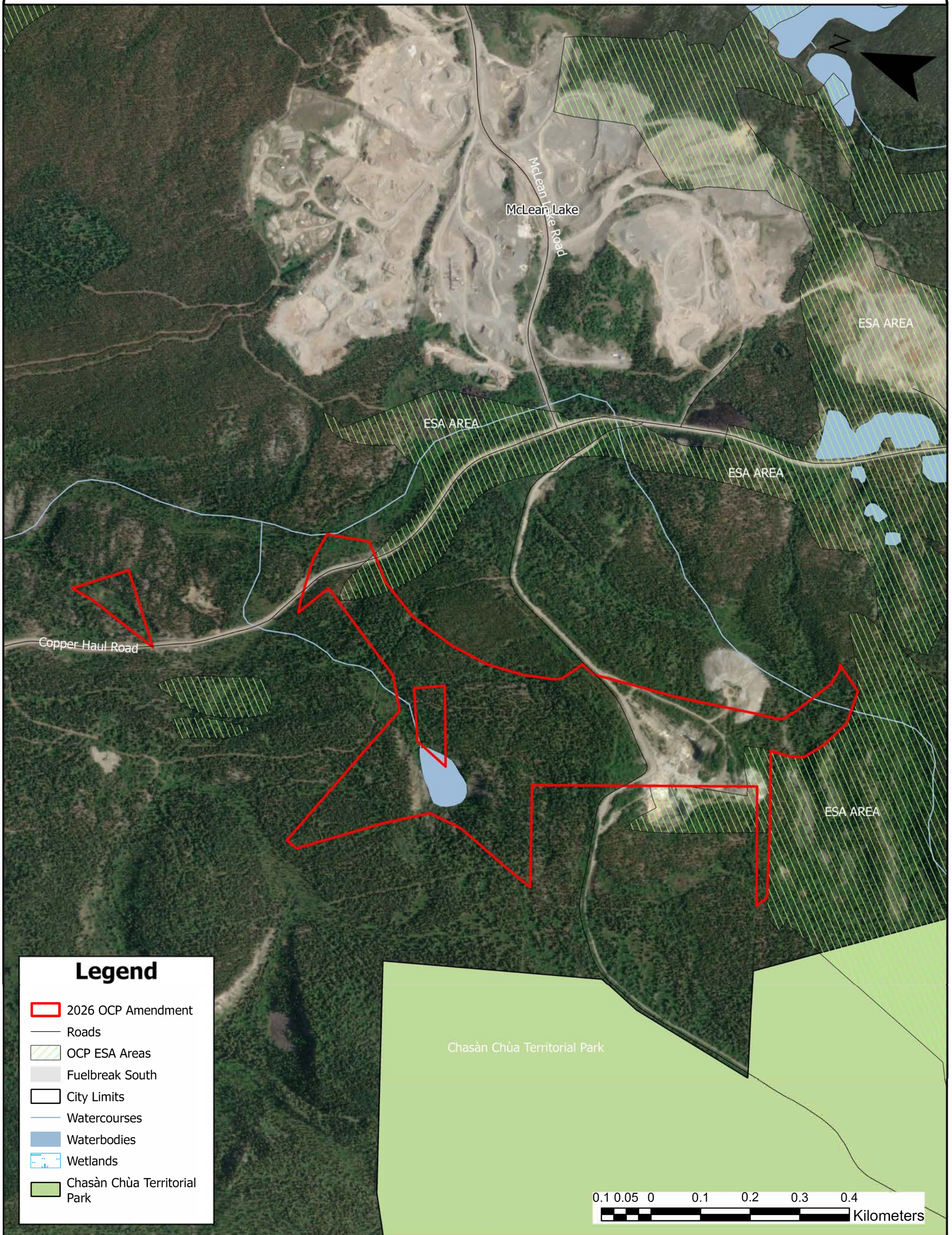
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OCP-02-2026

SUBJECT SITE: 

CITY OF WHITEHORSE - PLANNING AND SUSTAINABILITY SERVICES



Map 4 - Aerial image of Greenspace to Future Planning-Arctic Chief



Legend

- 2026 OCP Amendment
- Roads
- OCP ESA Areas
- Fuelbreak South
- City Limits
- Watercourses
- Waterbodies
- Wetlands
- Chasàn Chùà Territorial Park



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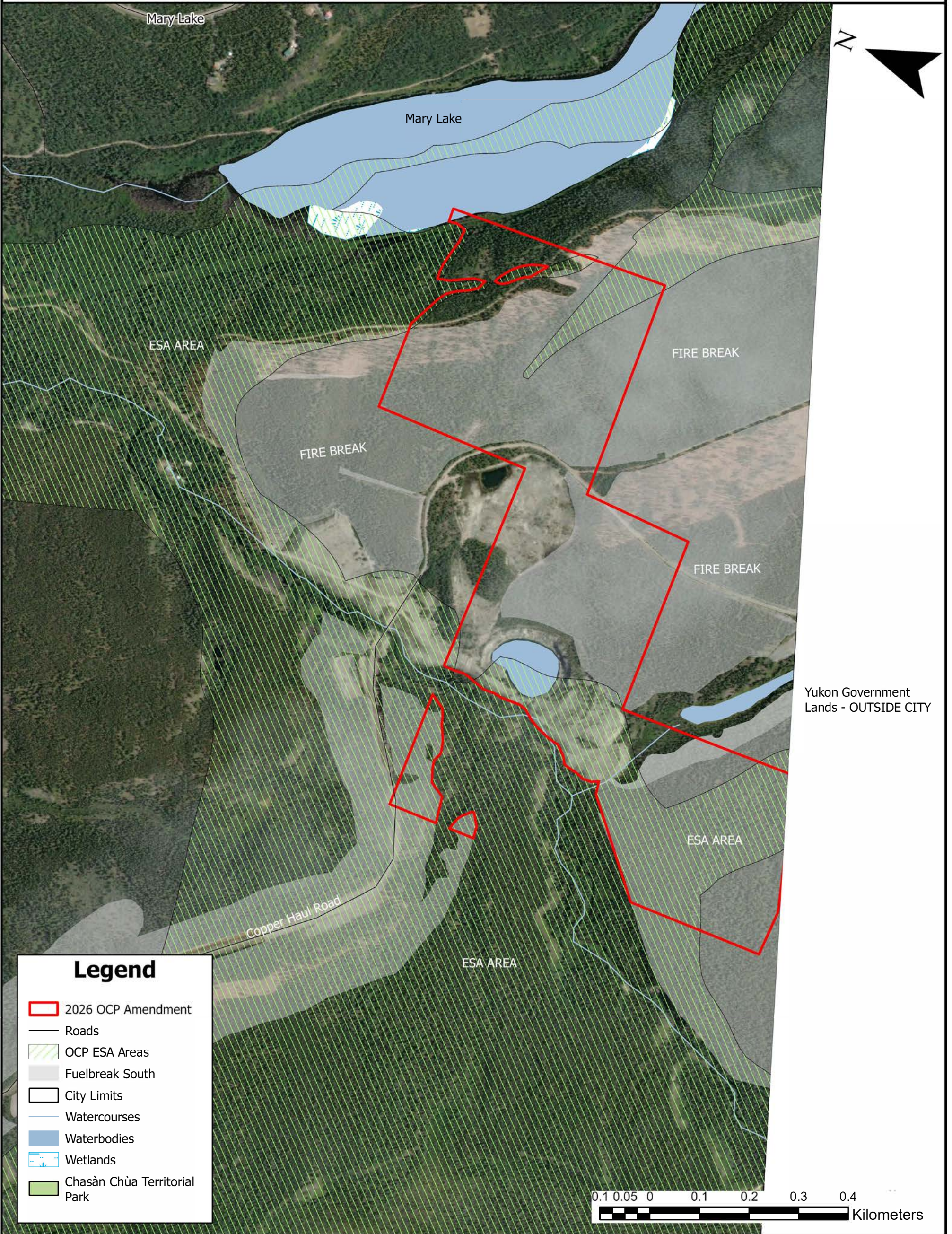
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OCP-02-2026

SUBJECT SITE:

CITY OF WHITEHORSE - PLANNING AND SUSTAINABILITY SERVICES



Map 5 - Aerial image of Greenspace to Future Planning-Gem



Legend

- 2026 OCP Amendment
- Roads
- OCP ESA Areas
- Fuelbreak South
- City Limits
- Watercourses
- Waterbodies
- Wetlands
- Chasàn Chùà Territorial Park

Yukon Government
Lands - OUTSIDE CITY



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OCP-02-2026

SUBJECT SITE:

CITY OF WHITEHORSE - PLANNING AND SUSTAINABILITY SERVICES

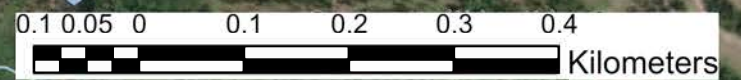


Map 6 - Aerial image of Greenspace to Future Planning-Little Chief



Legend

- 2026 OCP Amendment
- Roads
- OCP ESA Areas
- Fuelbreak South
- City Limits
- Watercourses
- Waterbodies
- Wetlands
- Chasàn Chùà Territorial Park



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