



# Meeting Notes

## Zoning Bylaw Public Engagement Session

### March 11, 2024

#### **Purpose of engagement:**

The purpose of the March 11, 2024 Zoning Bylaw Public Engagement Session was to get input on residential zoning.

#### **Comments raised during the discussion:**

##### R1 - Single Family Residential Zone

- A request was made to either use the same units in tables (m or ft) or to provide measurements in both units.
- The smaller minimum dwelling size will result in less property tax to the Village. [Note: this could be mitigated by setting a minimum property tax e.g. equivalent to that collected from a 752 square foot dwelling]
- Smaller homes have lower resales than larger homes, on a square foot basis.
- Provide flexibility for property owners to build their garden suite first, then their larger home.
- Garden suites are nice sized projects for smaller contractors.
- Concern was raised over the potential for the amalgamation of lots within the Willow Acres Infill project, and the possibility for there to be larger R1 lots than is possible under the current bylaw, and for there to be fewer lots available for development if lot amalgamation is permitted (which doesn't help with addressing the current housing shortage). It was noted that amalgamation is covered under the Subdivision Act, which is under YG's Authority. YG has a policy of consulting the OCP and with Council to confirm that an application is in keeping with the OCP. The current bylaw has a maximum lot size that is permitted in the R1 zones.
- Recommend allowing 21feet, not 16 feet, for the maximum height of an accessory building with a dwelling as this would allow for a shop with a suite on top. This height is permitted in the Whitehorse Zoning bylaw. [Note: the desire is to get away from primary and secondary residences all together and have same requirements for both].

- Outdoor wood boilers should not be allowed on single serviced lots (it is ok in country residential). Check with Environmental Health to see if this is already restricted.
- Building code for wall thickness has changed since the zoning bylaw was passed in 1996. Then, walls could be 6” thick. Now, walls must be 18” thick. Because this increases the exterior footprint of a building (to have the same interior footprint), this makes an argument for reducing setback requirements. It was further noted that in the building code, homes under 486 square feet don’t need 16” thick walls.
- Consider having a maximum buildable footprint on a property (being aware that this may push up the height of homes to have the same floorspace)
- It was noted that detached secondary suites usually run services through the primary residence, and that the building code requires secondary residences to be smaller. It was further noted that there seems to be a desire to construct dry cabins as secondary residences.

## R2 – Multi-Family Residential Zone

- With today’s building costs and mortgage costs, it is not possible to rent out a duplex at the cost of building it. This has changed within the past three years.
- Allowing the staged construction of multi-family developments would be more affordable for the local developer (e.g. pull a permit for the first duplex which is built and finished, then pull a permit for the second duplex etc. The development agreement with YG could cover the whole development, but construction financing would be allowed to happen in stages. A concern was raised over this approach – what would happen if the development was not finished?
- Concerns were raised over the lack of enforcement by YG and the Village, neither are seen to enforce the bylaw or development agreements. It was noted that YG just reclaimed a lot on spruce street that was being used to store heavy equipment (which was noted as being a first).

## CR – Country Residential Zone

- Concerns were raised over the appropriateness of a minimum dwelling size of 256 square feet. Concerns include that someone could come in and build a small dwelling for \$20,000 just to get title, and then move the shack once title is secured.
- To the contrary, others argued that tiny homes is the best way to allow for affordable housing, noting that getting title requires an occupancy permit (which involves having water and sewer) and that this would cost much more than \$20k. Allowing smaller homes in country residential makes country residential subdivisions less elitist. It was noted that small homes also need to meet building code requirements, and that this should be the most important measure.
- Concerns were raised that having small minimum house size may make these properties attractive as vacation homes for Whitehorse. It was argued, to the contrary, that the larger minimum house sizes may mean these lots are only

affordable to the wealthy in the Whitehorse market. Attracting the Whitehorse market for a second home would not be a problem if homes are rented and address the rental market shortage, but this would be a problem if homes are used for vacation rentals.

- Would it be ok to allow a suite in the principle dwelling plus a garden suite? It was noted that septic would need to be able to support 3 dwellings, and that first having a conversation with Environmental Health about the capacity for septic on these lots would be a good idea. Noting: dwellings may not be the best indicator of use of a septic system (3 small dwellings with 2 in each may be less use than one large house with a family of 8). Also septic system approval is not required prior to the approval of a development permit. There is also the option of having a holding tank instead of a field, so septic fields may not be a limiting factor to allowing 3 dwellings.
- Many in Willow acres are finding it to be cheaper/preferable to fill up a water tank than to drill a well.

#### RM - Mobile Home Residential Zone

- Recognition of the importance of mobile homes as an affordable housing option was nearly unanimous (benefit for first time homeowners, seniors, across the board).
- Concerns were raised about the zoning on Otter Crescent, noting it was zoned as RM and at some point this zoning was changed to R1, which means that replacing a current mobile home with a new mobile home is not permitted.
- Concerns were raised that if RM and R1 zones are combined, that eventually mobile homes will be replaced and eventually disappear, contributing to gentrification. On the contrary, combining RM and R1 zones mean you are able to start with a mobile home and eventually replace with a stick-built home.
- Concerns were raised that there are no residential mobile lots in the Willow Acres Infill project plan, noting there are currently no mobile home lots available in Haines Junction.
- Concerns were raised about clumping mobile homes into one location – that this leads to ghettoization and social stratification.
- Concerns were raised about dispersing mobile homes throughout residential areas, that they would have an impact on property values (particularly if an old mobile home was brought in). [Note this could be addressed by only permitting mobile homes over a certain age or requiring older homes to be up to code and have recent siding].
- There was strong support in the room to add mobile home zoning to the Willow Acres Infill project plan

#### Land lottery process

- Concern was raised that developers may buy up all the lots in the land lottery. It was noted that to date, this has not been the case. In addition, Haines Junction has

never had all of its lots taken up in a lottery. There has always been lots left over to go on the market following a lottery.

- Suggestions for how to make the lottery more accessible for locals were provided including: require that applications be dropped off, in person, at the Village office (as has been done in Dawson), require applicants to be a resident in order to purchase property (as has been done in Yakutat), to restrict the first lottery to local residents, followed by a lottery that is opened up to non-residents

#### Other comments

- The goal of making housing more affordable should be more important than protecting the investment of people who have money.
- Contractors asked the Village to talk to YG about ways in which subdivision contracts could be made more competitive for local contractors.
- The Village could take land development away from YG and put it in the hands of private developers, as is the case elsewhere in Canada.
- Area 3 power is planned to be aboveground because it is much cheaper. It was noted that compared to the cost of building a house, the extra additional cost to put power below ground is insignificant. In addition, it is cheaper to maintain underground lines as you don't have to deal with weather events blowing trees on to lines or blowing down power poles etc. [Note: it may still be an option to put power belowground, noting Council was concerned with keeping lot costs as low as possible]

#### **Written submissions:**

- The package of handouts included policy direction regarding housing affordability, social housing and home-based-business from page 22 from the Official Community Plan. Use of the word “may”, as in “may support”, “may provide”, “may collaborate”, “may encourage”, “may explore” is pervasive within the OCP, and on this page, making the direction provided on OCP with regards to housing policy, vague. The word “may” can mean you are permitted to do something, or it can mean that you might be permitted to do something pending the outcome of a future decision. It is recommended that this language be clarified so the OCP is clearer on the direction it is providing.
- I would like to see some of the new lots [in the Willow Acres Area 1 Infill] allow mobile homes. Currently, there are no lots available in Haines junction for mobile homes. It would be nice to see some mobile homes within a residential subdivision.
- I think it is great that the goal is to decrease hurdles and increase options for people building in Haines Junction. I think suites and garden suites are great. The small 256 sq. ft. (or no) building size increases options. Smaller setbacks would be needed

so that existing homeowners could take advantage of the suite/garden suite/second dwelling changes.

- No wood polers in single service lots. The smoke stays low and moves to other single service lots. Approve wood boilers for country residential only. I would like to see some mobile home dedicated zoning in the new subdivision.