

File #:3235-02-11-11

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

TO: Planning Committee
FROM: Administration
DATE: December 5, 2011
RE: Potential Housing and Transportation Linkages – Porter Creek D

ISSUE

Decision on whether or not to move forward with planning and design for a housing development and transportation linkages in the Porter Creek D/Middle McIntyre Creek area.

REFERENCE

- *Municipal Act (2002)*
- AEM Wildlife Areas Report (2000)
- Land Development Protocol (2006)
- Official Community Plan (2010)
- EDI Wildlife Corridor Assessment (2011)
- Appendix A

HISTORY

The Middle McIntyre Creek/Porter Creek D area is generally bounded by the Alaska Highway, existing Porter Creek, Mountainview Drive, and Yukon College. The area is approximately 439 hectares in size. Of those 439 hectares, approximately 80 hectares is proposed for housing development, 93 hectares is designated as Institutional/Yukon College, and 0.3 hectares is developable First Nations Land. The remaining 265 hectares are part of the larger McIntyre Creek Park (3,620 ha overall).

Development of transportation linkages in the “Porter Creek D” area was first contemplated in a citywide traffic study completed in 1993, which recommended a collector road that would connect Pine Street to the Alaska Highway. In 1994, the Official Community Plan identified this area for an Area Development Scheme. Porter Creek D was later rezoned as FD-Future Development in 1997 and redesignated as Residential – Urban in the 2002 OCP. In 2004, the Yukon Government Department of Community Services commissioned a study to examine the feasibility of residential development in this area. That study showed that approximately 200 to 400 single family lots could be accommodated. All of the land proposed for development is owned by the Yukon Government.

In 2005, as part of Zoning Bylaw changes to reflect the 2002 OCP, the City of Whitehorse commenced public consultation on the newly renamed Porter Creek “D” area. Considerable opposition was raised against the proposed development.

Complaints were directed to the City and to Yukon Government and in December 2005, a decision was made to put the Porter Creek “D” discussion on hold.

Due to the multiple government decision points, the City and Yukon Government signed the Land Development Protocol in 2006. This document set out responsibilities for land development within municipal boundaries. Under the Protocol, the City is responsible for public consultation, planning and engineering pre-design, and a submission to YESAB. The Yukon Government is responsible for detailed engineering design, construction, surveying, and lot sales.

In 2007, the Yukon Government, after public consultation on future land use in the area, produced a map showing the different proposed land uses in the Porter Creek “D” area. Land uses included Environmental Protection, Potential Residential Development, Potential Commercial Development, and College Endowment Lands. As part of the 2010 Official Community Plan consultation process, the Porter Creek “D” area was refined to reflect the land uses proposed by the Yukon Government. However, the final OCP designations took public and stakeholder input into consideration and therefore does not match the 2007 map on the south side of McIntyre Creek. The potential Porter Creek D development area was amended to remove any environmentally sensitive areas and to provide an adequate setback between the proposed residential area and McIntyre Creek. The institutional land designation south of the Creek was increased at the request of the College.

As part of the OCP review process, the public wanted clarity on potential infill areas, as well as Porter Creek D. A policy was included to ensure that these areas were made a priority and that the City would examine the feasibility of development as soon as time and resources permitted.

Under the Land Development Protocol, the City and Yukon Government signed a Contribution Agreement in late 2010 to complete the background work necessary to move forward for a decision on Porter Creek D. This Agreement would also cover the Preliminary Planning and Engineering contract should the project receive approval to move ahead from Council.

The decision to award the planning and engineering contract to HB Lanarc was deferred until Council could consider all of the different views and information, including the Wildlife Corridor Assessment by EDI before awarding the contract.

As there were concerns from the public that this area was an important wildlife corridor, the City also hired Environmental Dynamics to complete a Wildlife Corridor Assessment for the Middle McIntyre Creek area in early April 2011.

As part of the consultation process for this project, the City formed a Working Group that was tasked with collecting values related to the area as well as sharing information

between levels of government, stakeholder groups and the City. This Group originally consisted of the following members:

- Friends of McIntyre Creek
- Yukon Conservation Society
- Porter Creek Community Association
- Yukon Real Estate Association
- Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition
- Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce
- Yukon College
- Kwanlin Dun First Nation
- Ta'an Kwach'an Council

The City and Yukon Government were not officially members of the Working Group but were tasked with chairing the meetings and providing information when necessary. The Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition left the group in June 2011 and was replaced by the Takhini North Community Association. The Ta'an Kwach'an Council changed their role to observers in June 2011 and the Friends of McIntyre Creek, Yukon Conservation Society, Porter Creek Community Association, and Takhini North Community Association all resigned from the Group in October 2011.

The City held an Open House on November 3, 2011 to present all of the values or interests collected on Porter Creek D to date, including comments from the Working Group, the 2005 process and the 2009/10 OCP review. The EDI study was also on display, as well as relevant background information. The purpose of the meeting was to collect any values, issues, or views that had not already been heard. Comments were accepted until November 24, 2011.

Over 200 people attended the open house and 533 individual pieces of input were received through emails, letters, comment sheets, and sticky notes at the Open House. The comments were delivered to Council verbatim for review. Administration now presents this report to address the issues surrounding this potential project. Although many submissions contained detailed opinions, views, and concerns, there were similar over-arching issues that will be addressed in this report.

The following issues were raised:

- Process
- EDI Wildlife Corridor Assessment
- Wildlife
- Conservation/Parks/Recreation
- Housing
- Transportation
- Education
- First Nations

ANALYSIS

Study Area

Middle McIntyre Creek is the area bounded by existing Porter Creek, Yukon College, Takhini North, the Alaska Highway and Mountainview Drive. The potential Porter Creek D development area, shown in Appendix A, is approximately 80 hectares in size and includes 18% of the Middle McIntyre Creek area (approximately 439 hectares). The transportation connections, shown on Appendix A, are not finalized, but show where potential linkages could be constructed. They would follow already disturbed areas wherever possible. The potential development area, as well as the privately owned area to the southwest, is shown as designated Residential - Urban in the 2010 Official Community Plan (OCP).

While there is no current design or concept for Porter Creek D, the preliminary design completed by Inukshuk in 2005 showed that approximately 400 residential lots could be accommodated in the area. The concept plan, however, is out of date – some sensitive areas were removed from the potential development area through the 2010 OCP process. Additionally, the 2005 plan does not accommodate a connection from Whistle Bend so many lots would need to be reconfigured. It is therefore expected that a new development in Porter Creek D would accommodate approximately 200 to 300 units.

A significant amount of infrastructure already exists in the Porter Creek D area, such as water lines, major electrical transmission lines, utility maintenance roads, and the City pump house. Also, a new trunk water main will be constructed to service Whistle Bend for fire flow requirements. This water main will follow an existing power line easement that is already disturbed.

As part of any new residential development, additional infrastructure is often required. Although there is currently no detailed concept plan, potential infrastructure would likely include water and sewer lines, cable and phone lines, access roads, hydro substation upgrades and sewage lift stations. This infrastructure is integral to residential developments.

The potential Pine Street Extension and the crossing of the creek would have 2 driving lanes (1 each direction, 3.75 m wide each), and 2 shoulders of 2.5 m width to accommodate cyclists and pedestrians. At the intersection with the Highway, the road would have 3 or 4 lanes for vehicles, 2 bike lanes, concrete curbs, and sidewalks accommodating future commercial developments and existing First Nation Lands (design and location would be confirmed with YG and land owners).

Wildlife movement underneath the Extension would be accommodated with a bridge crossing the creek as a “clear span”, 3 times the width of the creek, approximately 21 m wide. The creek and area immediately adjacent to the creek would remain in a natural state or restored after construction if necessary. Fish migration would not be impacted.

East-west trail users in the area could avoid having to cross the new road by using an underpass similar to the one constructed at Hamilton Boulevard extension. Use of leisure trails and the existing pedestrian multi-use bridge would be maintained.

Currently, the water lines that connect to the pump house run underneath McIntyre Creek. If a bridge was constructed as part of the Porter Creek D development, the existing water lines would be decommissioned and incorporated into the bridge structure. This would ensure that disturbance to the creek bed would not be required if the pipes were to fail.

Process

City Press Release – October 27, 2011

Several members of the Working Group – who have since withdrawn from the process – raised issues with the City process regarding Porter Creek D. Specifically, issues were raised concerning the City press release, dated October 27, 2011. Also, several comments were concerned that the City had already hired a consultant for the Porter Creek D process and the decision was already made.

EDI presented the Wildlife Corridor Assessment report at a Council and Senior Management (CASM) meeting on October 27th, 2011. The City decided to have a meeting that was open to the public to ensure transparency in the process. A member of the Yukon Conservation Society and a reporter from the Whitehorse Star were present in the gallery.

The EDI report was effectively released to the media with the presentation to Council. The City issued its full press release knowing a story from the Whitehorse Star was coming. Additionally, the City had told the Working Group that the EDI report would be presented to Council first and that they would receive a final draft as soon as it was completed. The Working Group received the final copy of the report prior to the media or members of the public.

The City press release stated that wildlife would not be negatively impacted, provided mitigation measures are undertaken. This was a general statement that was given additional context throughout the rest of the press release and should not have been used in isolation. Further, the items in the bulleted list from the press release were taken directly from the EDI report.

The statement from the press release is based on an issue of scale. The report states that, at a regional population scale, there should be no “significant adverse impacts” on bear and moose. On a smaller scale, there is the potential for some impact to individual animals. It was expected that the general understanding would be that with any development and clearing of land some habitat would be lost to smaller animals. The report was about wildlife corridors and concluded that the area, in its current condition,

cannot adequately function as a corridor for large animals. It also states that small to medium sized animals could be accommodated within a 250 to 350 metre buffer.

The City was attempting to paraphrase the essence of the report. While the specific phrase regarding wildlife impacts may be confusing if read on its own, no “spin” was intended, as the remainder of the press release accurately quotes the report by EDI.

The City has already decided on Porter Creek D

There were comments from the public that the City has already hired a consultant to complete the planning work for Porter Creek D and that a decision to move forward has already been made. Comments also suggested that the City does not listen to the public despite many people speaking out against development.

Earlier this year, the City released a Request for Proposal for planning and engineering services for both Whistle Bend and Porter Creek D. The City felt that having the same consultant available to work on both projects was beneficial as there is some shared infrastructure and issues that would be better worked out cohesively.

However, the Request for Proposal released by the City explicitly stated that Council had not yet decided to move forward with the Porter Creek D project and that that portion of the project could potentially be cancelled following the current consultation process.

HB Lanarc won the competition and was awarded the contract for planning and engineering for Whistle Bend phases 3-5. If Council decides to move forward with Porter Creek D on December 12th, HB Lanarc would also be awarded that contract. If Council decides not to move forward that portion of the Request for Proposal award becomes void.

While there have been many submissions that opposed development in the Porter Creek D area, as well as any transportation linkages, there has also been support for the potential development. The Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce, the Yukon Real Estate Association, and the Homebuilders Association have supported development in this area. Many individuals have also offered support for development of Porter Creek D.

The decision on whether to move forward with Porter Creek D should not be treated as a vote of which side – pro or con – is loudest, but an analysis of the options, issues and mitigations relating to the development.

City is rushing PCD

There was concern that the City is rushing the process for Porter Creek D when all of the information is not available to make a decision. Consultation on this area has been ongoing for many years. As discussed in the history section of the report, consultation occurred on a pre-feasibility study by Inukshuk in 2005, in 2007 the Yukon Government

conducted consultation on land-uses, in 2009 the City received comments on Porter Creek D as part of the Whistle Bend YESAB process, and in 2010 the City consulted on Porter Creek D during the OCP review.

Policy 10.7.4 of the OCP states that providing clarity on Porter Creek D is a priority and that the City shall examine the feasibility of development as soon as time and resources permit. This OCP policy resulted from a request by the public. In an effort to provide clarity, as per the OCP, the City has moved forward with pre-planning for Porter Creek D to collect values and issues regarding the potential development. This stage of the process will result in Council making a decision on whether to move forward with development and transportation linkages or not.

The City also needs a decision on transportation linkages through Porter Creek D to complete the YESAB submission for Whistle Bend. The 2009 Transportation Impact Study completed by AECOM recommends both the Pine Street Extension and Whistle Bend Connector as mitigations for increased traffic caused by Whistle Bend. If Council decides not to move forward with Porter Creek D, the Impact Study would need to be updated to look at alternatives for traffic mitigation. Mitigation could include 4 lanes on existing roads in Porter Creek, such as 12th Avenue and Wann Road, or signalization at intersections on the Alaska Highway. These mitigation options would have significant traffic impacts on existing homeowners as well as roads with school zones.

Other routes were examined as part the preliminary planning for Whistle Bend, such as a road connection north of the existing Taylor Industrial Subdivision. This route was found to be not feasible by the engineering consultants. As no suitable alternatives to the Pine Street Extension and Whistle Bend Connector were found feasible, the existing transportation network would need to accommodate the increase in traffic as stated above.

EDI Wildlife Corridor Assessment

The terms of reference for the EDI report are flawed

There was a concern that the City did not allow the Working Group the opportunity to assist in the development of the Terms of Reference for EDI as promised. The City hired EDI on April 7th, 2011 and the first Working Group meeting was held on May 6th, 2011. The City did not promise that the Working Group would be able to participate in creating the Terms of Reference for the EDI report, as the company had already been hired when the Working Group was formed.

However, the City did have EDI present their work plan and preliminary results to the Working Group on several occasions where members of the group were able to ask questions and offer additional information. It is also important to note that EDI helped form the Terms of Reference based on the City's main objective of determining if the area was in fact a corridor, and if so what would be an appropriate width should development proceed.

Although the Working Group was not included in the creation of the Terms of Reference for the EDI report, they still had input into the EDI work plan. The Yukon Conservation Society recommended that EDI speak to local conservation officers and incorporate the results of their workshop. EDI met these requests as part of their final report.

The scope of the EDI Report is too limited

EDI was hired to conduct an assessment of the Middle McIntyre Creek area as a wildlife corridor. During early discussions with EDI, it was determined that this area was definitely habitat for small and medium sized animals as well as birds. Therefore, the focus of the study was narrowed to larger animals, such as bears and moose, which would potentially use the area as a corridor. The objectives for the report were:

- Determine corridor widths for the Middle McIntyre Creek area that are suitable for wildlife
- Determine use of the area as a wildlife corridor
- Identify mitigation options for wildlife use in an urban greenbelt

In addition, a report by Applied Ecosystems Management (AEM) in 2000 addresses the issue of sensitive habitat and the use of the area by small and medium sized animals, as well as birds and fish. EDI reviewed the AEM study as part of their work.

The timeframe for the EDI study – April to September – was set by the City, as a decision is needed on potential development and road connections in Middle McIntyre Creek. This decision is required for the YESAB submission for phases 3 – 5 of Whistle Bend as mitigations for traffic impacts need to be determined. However, EDI has stated that the results of their study would not change based on a longer timeframe.

It is their opinion that, while moose and bear may move through this area, it is already significantly compromised due to adjacent development and human use. Therefore, it is not suitable as a corridor for large animals and EDI recommends that it should not be managed as such. Additionally, potential dangers caused by interactions between animals and humans has caused Conservation Officers to actively manage and remove large species, such as bears, from this area.

EDI Report does not address cumulative impacts

The work plan provided by EDI did not include a cumulative impacts assessment, nor were they asked to complete this work by the City. If Council chooses to move forward with this project, a submission to YESAB would be required and the cumulative impacts would be assessed at that time. Any potential design would look at mitigations to cumulative impacts and other values that have been addressed through this process.

However, the City has looked at bigger picture cumulative impacts regarding development as part of the 2010 OCP. By grouping land uses and designating sensitive areas, the City has tried to curb outward growth and therefore limit fragmentation of significant wildlife areas. The OCP also looks at ways to protect

sensitive areas within the city, including setbacks, avoidance, and mitigation. It is important to remember that cities are primarily designed to accommodate people. We are fortunate to have wildlife in close proximity to our residential developments as citizens of Whitehorse value the coexistence of humans and wildlife. However, coexistence is inappropriate if it endangers animals or humans.

Wildlife

There have been concerns that the McIntyre Creek area is the last remaining wildlife corridor in the City. Additionally, comments have stated that there are many species that would be impacted by development in this area. The Significant Wildlife Areas report completed by Applied Ecosystems Management (AEM) refers to the McIntyre Creek corridor as the largest contiguous Significant Wildlife Area in the City.

Habitat

AEM conducted a city-wide study which identified 17 Significant Wildlife Areas across Whitehorse. The study was conducted through ecosystem mapping, and did not use a corridor based approach. Individual vegetation clusters were analyzed to determine environmental sensitivity and wildlife values. The area identified as McIntyre Creek runs from the toe slopes of Mount McIntyre down to the Yukon River, and is recognized for its mature riparian forest and wetland habitat characteristics. The most significant forested area in this riparian corridor occurs between Yukon College and the creek.

The report states that there is a variety of habitat types, including wetlands, mature lowland forests, and sparsely vegetated slopes. Additionally a number of bird, mammal, and aquatic species have been identified in the area by both AEM report and a report completed by the Friends of McIntyre Creek and Yukon Conservation Society.

Appendix B shows the environmentally sensitive and high value habitat areas as specified by the AEM report. This mapping was taken into consideration during the 2010 OCP process and as such the Residential – Urban designation avoids all identified sensitive areas. The City does not argue that some habitat would be impacted by the potential development in Porter Creek D. However, the highest quality habitat and most environmentally sensitive areas would remain intact.

Wildlife Corridor

The City hired Environmental Dynamics (EDI) in April 2011 to undertake a Wildlife Corridor Assessment of the Middle McIntyre Creek area. During initial discussions with EDI it was determined that the study would focus on larger animals, such as moose and bear, that would potentially use this area as a corridor. It should be noted that the City does not argue that this area is quality habitat and potentially a movement corridor for smaller and mid-sized animals as well as birds.

Over their study period, April through September 2011, EDI used a series of motion sensing cameras to try to document wildlife using Middle McIntyre Creek. Cameras

were moved approximately every ten days and tried to capture all habitat types throughout the area. Overall, the study resulted in approximately 30,000 hours of camera time and 1,000 photos. EDI also recorded any sign of large animals using the area, such as scat, tracks, or browsing evidence.

The majority of photo evidence, over 90%, was human use of the area. Of the remaining 10%, the majority of the photos showed coyotes, squirrels, and birds, while some of the photos were unidentifiable. Several observations of black bears were captured, as well as one moose photo, and several other species. EDI also saw older sign, potentially one or two years old, of bear and moose in the area.

The EDI report determined that development of Porter Creek D would not cause adverse effects to regional wildlife populations as the Middle McIntyre Creek area does not support individual populations. Additionally, larger species require a much larger home range than is available in the Middle McIntyre Creek area. Bears can require up to 180 square kilometres while moose require up to 60 square kilometres. Middle McIntyre is 4.39 square kilometres.

Additionally, given the amount of development and human activity in the Middle McIntyre, the report suggests that managing the area as a movement corridor for large animals, such as bear and moose, should not be considered because of the potential for adverse interaction with humans.

However, the report does suggest that a corridor between 250 to 350 metres be retained to as habitat and to allow movement of existing smaller/mid-sized wildlife. This corridor should be roughly centered on McIntyre Creek. Also, the report recommends a 250 metre corridor that connects the Stinky Lake area to McIntyre Creek. This corridor would protect sensitive habitat and allow movement corridors for smaller and mid-sized mammals, fish, and birds. The OCP already accommodates these potential buffers as they reflect the setbacks listed in the AEM report written in 2000.

Several residents had concern regarding the west end of the Middle McIntyre Creek area, where a privately owned parcel encroaches into the proposed buffer area. The City has contacted the land owner to discuss the future land use of this parcel.

In regards to a creek crossing, the report suggests a passage structure, in the form of a span bridge or oversized, open bottom culvert, to maintain movement of animals using the Creek. Finally, trail management should be undertaken to reduce the potential of human-animal interactions. If this project moves forward, the City would propose a span bridge as would allow for additional retention of riparian area and wildlife movement in comparison to a culvert.

Conservation/Parks/Recreation

Why doesn't the City have its own "Stanley Park"?

Comments received suggested that the City should protect this area as a park, similar to Stanley Park in Vancouver, or Central Park in New York City. The OCP currently shows over 13,000 hectares of park designated lands within the City. The 13,000 hectares (ha) is comprised of 5 city parks, including Chadburn Lake Park (8,050 ha), McIntyre Creek Park (3,620 ha), Paddy's Pond/Ice Lake Park (190 ha), McLean Lake Park (195 ha), and Wolf Creek Park (1,100 ha). All of these parks remain in a predominantly natural state, but include amenities such as day use picnic areas, skiing and walking trails, rock climbing areas, and boat launches. These parks are in addition to other maintained municipal parks and active recreation areas, such as Rotary or Shipyards Parks.

In comparison, Vancouver's Stanley Park is 404 hectares, and contains with restaurants, a marina, an aquarium, manicured parks, playgrounds, botanical gardens, and biking and hiking trails. The Stanley Park Causeway and Lions Gate Bridge, which are major access routes to West and North Vancouver, also run through Stanley Park. Traffic volume on the Lions Gate Bridge is approximately 60,000 – 70,000 vehicles per day.

Central Park in New York City is 341 hectares and includes ice skating rinks, a zoo, a botanical garden, a wildlife sanctuary, an amphitheater, and numerous walking trails. Numerous roadways cross through Central Park. It should also be noted that these two parks are surrounded by some of the densest urban development in North America. Based on this information, these two parks are not comparable or relevant in a Whitehorse context.

The Green Space Network Plan (Map 1 of the OCP) shows over 66% of the City as protected area (31% shown as park designation). The City of Vancouver has approximately 1,300 ha of park space, or 11% of the total area. The City of Ottawa was mentioned as an example of having strong protection of green space and was a model for the Green Space Network Plan in the OCP. Ottawa has approximately 8 hectares of park space per 1000 residents, while the City of Whitehorse has 526 hectares of OCP designated park space per 1000 residents, not including other city parks such as Shipyards or Rotary Park. The Hidden Lake area, which is approximately 50 hectares in size, is also available green space in which Porter Creek residents can access natural and recreation areas.

Wilderness City and other cities trying to restore wetland areas

There were comments from the public that Whitehorse is a "Wilderness City" and that natural areas should be retained within the city boundaries. Comments also stated that other municipalities are trying to protect and restore natural and wetland areas. As discussed previously, OCP parks encompass over 13,000 hectares of mainly

undisturbed area. Also, Map 1 protects approximately 66% of the city as green space. Furthermore, OCP policy 5.1.3 states that the City shall promote a city-wide compact development pattern to ensure that large wilderness spaces outside urban areas are preserved as long as possible.

The OCP discusses protection of sensitive areas throughout Objective 1: Protect Green Space. Policy 1.1.1 states that protection of environmentally sensitive areas, such as wildlife corridors and important water bodies are a priority and that every effort will be made to preserve these areas through limiting disturbance and promoting and compact footprint.

During the OCP review, Ducks Unlimited requested that the City adopt more strict policy regarding the protection and restoration of wetlands within the municipality. Council adopted policies within the OCP as per the recommendations from Ducks Unlimited. Policy 1.3.5 discusses the importance of wetlands to maintaining diversity and water quality, and the overall health of green spaces. The OCP states that where development may impact wetlands, mitigation should be undertaken through avoidance, minimizing impacts, or compensating for loss by restoring other wetlands within the City.

The proposed Porter Creek D residential area will not impact the wetland areas of McIntyre Creek and will be setback a minimum of 100 metres from the Creek. The potential creek crossing is proposed as a span bridge that would cross the Creek at a narrow point, leaving natural embankments and riparian areas for wildlife usage. It is important that any bridge spanning the Creek would not cross through wetlands, but between separate wetland areas.

Recreation and Trails

There were many comments stating that this is an important recreational area, and any development would impact trail usage. Human use accounted for over 90% of the camera images captured by EDI, confirming that the Middle McIntyre Creek area is a significant recreational area. Policy 18.2.2 of the OCP states that every effort shall be made to maintain or enhance current recreational trails and that any new development will take into account trail continuity and access to recreational areas. This policy also states that in some cases existing trails may need to be relocated as part of new development, but that relocation would be the responsibility of the developer.

EDI also concluded that recreational use should be managed to reduce the impact on existing wildlife and habitat. This would be accomplished through the improvement of major trails and decommissioning of minor trails to consolidate use. This strategy was implemented on the millennium trail in Riverdale and has shown great success.

ATV Usage

There were several comments requesting the restriction of ATV use in this area as they impact both habitat and wildlife. The City is currently developing an ATV bylaw that will

look at restricting ATV use in sensitive areas throughout the City. Additionally, OCP section 18.5 – Motorized Recreation discusses the need for separate multi-use trails and motorized recreation, as well as the use of “out and away” trails to get ATVs into the hinterland and away from non-motorized recreation areas.

It is believed that ATV users who do damage to the area do so because no one is around. With more people living in the area damage from ATVs may be reduced.

Housing

There were comments that the City growth estimates are not scientifically based and that other areas should be developed instead of Porter Creek D. Specifically, there was a sentiment that Whistle Bend would make development in Porter Creek D unnecessary.

One of the City’s greatest challenges is to find suitable land for developing new, diverse, and attainable housing options. Suitable land is limited by the city’s natural features such as steep slopes, rocky terrain, and water courses. The OCP’s long term growth plan (20 years) estimates low (1.5%), medium (2.0%), and high (3.5%) growth rates. These growth rates are based on historical trends which predate the mining boom.

The Official Community Plan (OCP) estimates that approximately 4500 housing units will be required over the next 20 years. This estimate is based on a medium growth rate of 2.0%. In conjunction with this growth estimate, Map 5 of the OCP shows a variety of development areas within the Urban Containment Boundary (UCB), including Whistle Bend, Porter Creek D, and potential infill locations, that will help meet this growth projection.

However, the City has experienced an average of 2.6% growth over the past 5 years, meaning that 6000 units, or 300 units per year, will be required over the next 20 years, if this growth rate is maintained. It is not possible to accommodate all of these 6000 units through the development of Whistle Bend (3500 units planned), infill, or Porter Creek D. If this growth continues or increases, the City will need to look at growth outside the UCB, such as Long Lake or McLean Lake. The provision of KDFN land or private development may also help reduce the need to move to Long Lake or McLean Lake within the next 20 years.

The OCP policy 5.1.2 also states that the City shall work to ensure a two year supply of developable land in appropriate locations and for a range of suitable uses. To achieve the two year supply, planning must be completed well in advance, as it typically takes at least 3 years to complete construction and lot sales.

When planning for municipal growth, it is prudent to develop where there is already infrastructure – water, sewer, power, roads – and services – garbage trucks, graders, buses – nearby. Extending infrastructure and services is not only a significant capital expense to install new pipes and roads and purchase new equipment, but a large

maintenance cost for the tax base (snow clearing, garbage/compost pick-up, park maintenance).

There were further comments that the City should be looking at other ways to meet the housing demand, including densification in downtown or increased rental opportunities such as suites and apartments. In response to the housing shortage, the City has developed the *Whitehorse Growth Strategy*, which is a comprehensive and evolving response for dealing with this important issue. The *Strategy* incorporates new and ongoing projects that work together to generate new housing opportunities. It is also important to ensure that a range of housing types are provided in locations across the city, reflecting the diversity of our population.

The following projects make up the *Whitehorse Growth Strategy*:

1. Secondary Suites
2. Infill
3. Development Incentives
4. Steven's Quarry
5. Downtown South Master Planning
6. Whistle Bend
7. Porter Creek D
8. Zoning Bylaw Changes to allow for more Short-term: Accommodation, supportive Housing, and Relaxed Storey Restriction

In addition, a number of new higher density developments (Stan McCowan/Ingram) have been completed since 2006. The City is also working on strategies to increase density in Downtown, which is evident in the number of multiple family developments completed in recent years.

Not satisfying the housing and land demand can result in significant socio-economic impacts, as demonstrated by unprecedented real estate prices in Whitehorse. According to member surveys completed by the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce and the Yukon Government election, housing is the number one issue in all sectors of the economy for Yukoners.

Kwanlin Dun First Nation land development will help meet demand

Comments received suggest that Kwanlin Dun First Nation (KDNF) lands could provide housing to the market and therefore Porter Creek D would not be needed for housing. In discussions with KDFN and the PCD Working Group, the City agreed that KDFN should bring any available land to the market as soon as possible. As soon as KDFN can provide the yield and timing of their potential developments, they could be added to the land supply forecast.

KDFN is working towards the adoption of a Lands Act and along with the Yukon Government is developing a Land Registry. These mechanisms are a required for

KDFN to provide land to the market. The City cannot delay progress on other projects as the timing to complete the Lands Act and Registry is unknown.

Education

Comments received from the public stated this area's importance for educational purposes, both for Yukon College and K-12 students. According to a submission from an instructor at Yukon College, the Experiential Science program uses the area extensively. Field studies regarding forestry, habitat, aquatics, and species are completed in the Middle McIntyre Creek area. Comments have also stated the importance of "outdoor classrooms" for children's mental and physical health.

The City does not dispute the importance of nature, or the Middle McIntyre Creek area, as an educational opportunity for college or grade school students, as well as preschool children. As part of the 2010 OCP process, Yukon College requested an increase in the area designated as public service, which Council approved. Additionally, the City has continued to meet with Yukon College regarding their interests in this area.

The City is not proposing development in the McIntyre Creek wetland or Stinky Lake areas, so it is not expected that educational opportunities will be significantly impacted as the most valuable areas for education would be protected. In fact, the OCP Park and Green Space designation applied to the wetland and Stinky Lake areas, as well as the Hidden Lake area in Porter Creek, should offer long term protection for these educational resources. Also, the 2000 AEM report states that the area between the Creek and Yukon College is the most significant habitat in the Middle McIntyre Creek area. No development is proposed between the College and McIntyre Creek.

Transportation

Road connection to Alaska Highway is not needed

Several comments suggested that the Pine Street Extension to the Alaska Highway, which would include a crossing over McIntyre Creek, is not needed and that upgrades to other roads could accommodate traffic from Whistle Bend. There was some support for a connection from the Alaska Highway to Yukon College, provided it did not cross the Creek.

The concept for the Pine Street Connector was first shown in a citywide traffic study completed in 1993. IMC Consulting Group identified a collector road running from Pine Street to the Alaska Highway. A road connection to Ortona Avenue in Takhini North was also contemplated in this study. When the study was updated in 2002, the connection to Ortona Avenue was changed to be an active transportation link.

In 2009, AECOM completed a citywide Traffic Impact Analysis that looked at overall system improvements required to accommodate traffic from Whistle Bend. The study recommended that the Pine Street Extension, including a connection across McIntyre Creek to the Highway, be constructed when the city's population reached 25,000. At a

population of 30,000 the study recommends a connection from Whistle Bend, construction of four lanes on Mountainview Drive, and other lane and intersection upgrades. The study considers these improvements to be necessary regardless of whether or not development occurs in Porter Creek D.

The expansion to four lanes on Mountainview Drive and other upgrades to transportation infrastructure are not a replacement for the Pine Street Extension, but are required as well. If Council chooses not to move forward on the Pine Street Extension, the Transportation Study will need to be re-examined for other alternatives, such as converting Wann Road or 12th Avenue to four lanes. The purpose of the Pine Street Extension is to help split traffic into different routes to take the pressure off of intersections in Marwell, by allowing some traffic to use 2 Mile Hill instead. Active transportation linkages would also be improved in conjunction with the Pine Street Extension.

During the 2006 Charrette, other alternatives were explored and not supported, such as an access route north of Taylor Subdivision. When looked at in more detail it was determined that it would impact significant wildlife and heritage areas, the contours were too steep to develop a road, and it would not assist in mitigating traffic issues.

The Pine Street Extension and Whistle Bend Connector are mitigations to decrease the impact on the existing system due to citywide growth, including Whistle Bend. The alternative would mean that the existing network would need to be upgraded handle the traffic impact for future growth. These upgrades would likely cause adverse impacts for other residents and landowners within the City.

OCP Policy 5.1.8 states that public utility corridors, such as roads, electricity, water and sewer lines or other public infrastructure, are permitted in any land use designation, subject to any environmental regulations and bylaws. Any crossing of McIntyre Creek would be subject to review by YESAB and approval by the Department of Fish and Oceans to ensure that all relevant environmental standards would be met.

Construction of the Pine Street Extension could potentially improve transit providing more loop options. There would also be improvements to the alternative transportation network as bike lanes and multi-use trails would be developed in conjunction with roads.

The connection would also improve development potential for Yukon College and the First Nations parcels located across from the Kopper King.

Improve Transit instead of building more roads

Several residents were concerned that by developing more roads it would lead to more people deciding to drive instead of using alternate transportation. They were concerned that this was not a sustainable approach and that other alternatives should be investigated.

In early 2011, Council approved increases in the budget for Transit in an effort to improve service. The Transit schedule was revamped to use a loop system, which provides more consistent arrival times for buses and potentially less transfers for passengers. Early reviews of the new system show an increase in ridership. The City is also working towards a city-wide active transportation network. Bike lanes and multi-use trails are being established to encourage commuters to use active transportation instead of driving.

Whistle Bend has been designed with priority on Smart Growth Principles, which emphasize efficient transit and alternative transportation. The Casca Boulevard loop, as well as proposed Keno Way in phases 3-5, allows for bus service within a 5 minute walk for nearly all homes in the neighbourhood. Additionally, the higher population density in Whistle Bend, approximately double that of other neighbourhoods, will provide Transit with more potential riders. Numerous paved trails and pedestrian linkages have been provided to allow for active transportation throughout the neighbourhood. A multi-use trail linkage to Mountainview Drive will also be constructed as part of phases 1 and 2.

Development of the Pine Street Extension and Whistle Bend Connector would also help to provide more transit route options and active transportation linkages. More efficient bus service could translate into further increases in ridership.

Any development of Pine Street Extension or the Whistle Bend Connector would potentially include active transportation linkages to the Alaska Highway, Yukon College, and Takhini North. These potential links would help commuters get Downtown without navigating the steep hills on Range Road and Mountainview Drive or the fast moving traffic on the Alaska Highway.

Providing additional access routes into Porter Creek will also improve response time for emergency vehicles.

Pine Street Extension will cause traffic issues for Porter Creek C residents

There was concern from local residents that the Pine Street Extension would cause traffic issues on both existing Pine Street as well as Grove Street. Residents were concerned over traffic speeds as opposed to traffic volumes.

With long straight roads and low traffic volumes, as is currently found on Pine Street, vehicles tend to travel at a higher speed. Increased traffic in this area may assist in slowing down traffic. Additionally, the City recognizes that traffic calming is an important issue for residents in this area. A potential Pine Street Extension would incorporate traffic calming for existing residents.

First Nations

The Kwanlin Dun First Nation also had concerns with the potential project. Their concerns were similar to that of other residents and included the potential for KDFN to

provide housing to the market, impacts on wildlife and habitat, and increased ATV usage in sensitive areas. Each of these concerns has been addressed in this report.

More specifically, the Kwanlin Dun First Nation has three parcels of settlement land in the middle McIntyre Creek area. C-119 (2 ha), C-118 (1.3 ha) and C-27 (1.4 ha) border the Alaska Highway across from Kopper King. The intended designation given to each of these parcels is commercial/light industrial. Any potential access road linking the Porter Creek neighbourhood with the Alaska Highway would impact the development potential of these three parcels. If an access road to the Alaska Highway is built as part of Porter Creek D, Kwanlin Dun would want to see the road enhance the development options for C-119, C-118 and C-27.

Additionally, there is archaeological evidence in the McIntyre Creek area demonstrating a long history of First Nation use. As McIntyre Creek is within Kwanlin Dun's traditional territory, Kwanlin Dun supports the protection of the archaeological resources in the area. Any development of Porter Creek D must be designed and constructed to both respect and protect the archaeological sites identified in the area. The City has conducted a heritage assessment for a portion of the Middle McIntyre Creek area, and would ensure that the entire area was fully assessed as part of any future planning work.

Next Steps

If Council elects to move forward with Porter Creek D and the associated transportation linkages, a contract would be immediately awarded to HB Lanarc to begin the preliminary planning and engineering pre-design work for this project. Their work would include a comprehensive and inclusive consultation process on subdivision design, mitigation of issues, and stakeholder concerns. The HB Lanarc proposal uses Crowdbrite as a public engagement tool. This tool was successful in engaging the public during consultation for Whistle Bend phases 3-5.

HB Lanarc would also design the Pine Street Extension and Whistle Bend Connector in preparation for the Whistle Bend phases 3 – 5 YESAB submission. It is expected that this work would be completed in late January. All of HB Lanarc's work, including consultation, preliminary planning, engineering pre-design and submission to YESAB, would be completed by the end of 2012. The Yukon Government would complete detailed engineering design in early 2013. If it is determined that construction should move forward on Porter Creek D, the Yukon Government could potentially have lots available to the market by 2016. However, timing for the construction of Porter Creek D would depend on city growth and build out of Whistle Bend and if phasing is proposed.

If Council decides not to move forward with Porter Creek D and the associated transportation linkages, a firm would be hired to update the Traffic Impact Analysis in preparation for the Whistle Bend YESAB submission.

Failure to make a decision at this time would likely result in a delay of lot availability in Whistle Bend phases 3-5 as the YESAB submission could not be completed on schedule. It is possible that delaying this decision could impact lot supply for an extended period, further increasing housing prices.

It is important to note that there are many more steps for approval and public input including zoning, subdivision, YESAB, and Department of Fish and Oceans. It is important to receive approval from Council on this development prior to awarding a contract of significant value to HB Lanarc.

ADMINISTRATIVE RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council award the contract for Porter Creek “D” Preliminary Planning and Engineering Pre-Design work to HB Lanarc in the amount of \$419,617, in order to complete the required YESAB application for Whistle Bend Phases 3-5.