



PLANNING SERVICES REPORT BYLAW 12-21 – UH TO CGATE DISTRICT

PROPOSAL

To amend the Land Use Bylaw to redesignate Block 1, Plan 011 0204 from Urban Holdings (UH) District to Gateway Commercial (CGATE) District.

PLANNING SERVICES RECOMMENDATION

Planning Services is in SUPPORT of Bylaw 12-21 for the following reasons:

- It aligns with the recently adopted Municipal Development Plan (MDP) in terms of encouraging increased non-residential development within close proximity to residential neighbourhoods within the Town of Okotoks
- It generally aligns with the Northeast Okotoks Area Structure Plan in terms of fostering a unique and more vibrant identity for this area with increased commercial businesses to be supported by neighboring residential development.
- The Redesignation supports Council's priority strategic objectives of encouraging economic growth within the Town of Okotoks.

REPORT

Application Summary

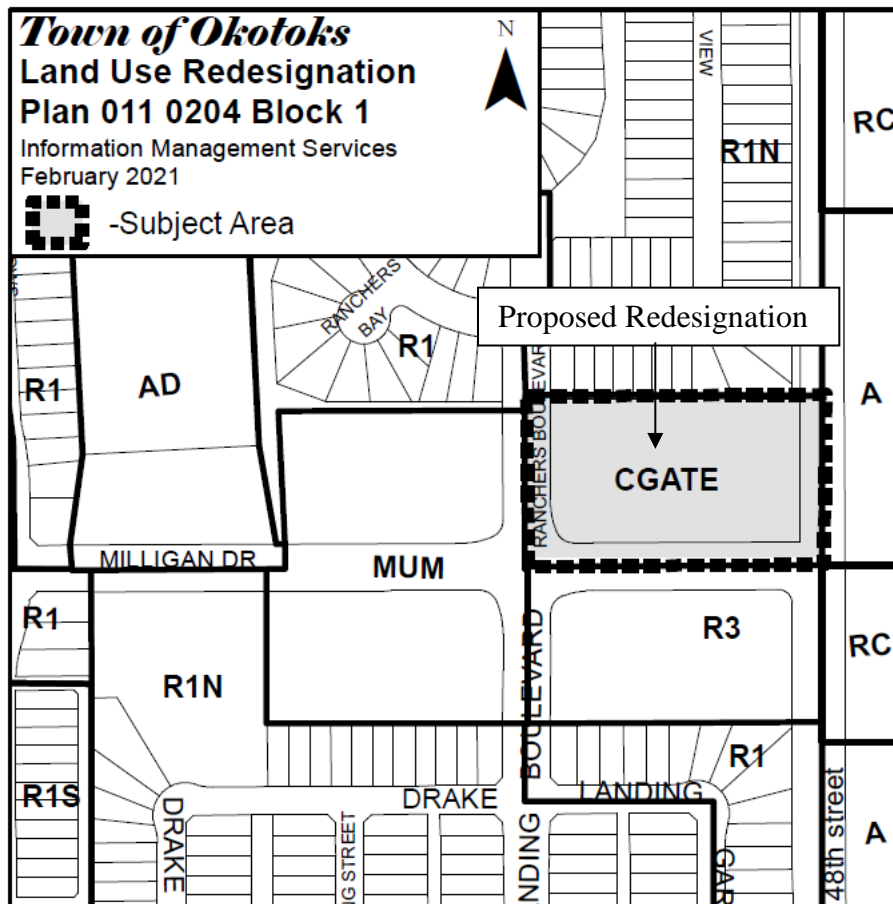
The proposed redesignation of the subject lands to Gateway Commercial (CGATE) District is to facilitate a comprehensively planned commercial development. The existing MUM zoning requires that at least 20% of the gross floor area of the lesser use (commercial or residential) be developed on the site to ensure a mixed-use component. This proposed Redesignation will remove that requirement, allowing the developer to build only commercial on the property. Although a concept plan has not been submitted yet, that is a requirement prior to development permit approvals on the subject site. Based on the CGATE designation and Applicant intentions, it is understood that there will be a variety of neighbourhood-scale commercial uses proposed on the site to complement the neighbouring residential areas and provide amenities within walking distances of these communities.

Detailed site design considerations will be reviewed by Administration and the Municipal Planning Commission (MPC) through the concept plan and the subsequent development permit to ensure a high-quality, pedestrian-oriented development that fits in with the overall neighbourhood and higher-level policy goals of the ASP and MDP.

Site Context

The proposed redesignation would apply to Block 1, Plan 011 0204 (no assigned address yet) which is currently designated as Urban Holdings (UH) District as shown on the sketch below. The subject lands are currently vacant. To the West, there is an

empty MUM designated site. To the South, there is an R3 site that is currently going through the approvals process for higher-density residential development that would further assist the viability of this commercial site.



Background/History

The parcel that is the subject of Redesignation is remnant from previous subdivisions for the Okotoks Air Ranch / Rancher's Rise development. In the Outline Plan approved in 2013, the site was identified to be a future MUM-designated site. Despite many years on the market, the challenges of vertical mixed-use or horizontal within the parcel have posed a challenge for builders looking to develop the site. This is due to its location on the periphery of Town, challenges with cost implications of underground parking and other site upgrades that may be necessary to make the site feasible with a mix of residential and commercial development.

Overview of Proposed Redesignation

The intent of the proposed redesignation of the subject lands to CGATE District is to facilitate the development of a neighbourhood-scale commercial development. Detailed designs and site considerations will be reviewed in accordance with the Land Use Bylaw at the development permit stage if the Redesignation application is approved.

Policy and Planning Considerations/Analysis

Regional Considerations and Legislation

Okotoks / Foothills County Intermunicipal Development Plan

The proposed development falls within the referral area of the IDP between the Town of Okotoks and Foothills County. As such, this application was circulated to the County in advance of 1st Reading. No comments or concerns were brought forward by the County as of the writing of this report.

Municipal Plans and Policy

Okotoks Municipal Development Plan

Section 2.4.1 of the MDP speaks to creating neighbourhood hubs which are envisioned as areas for gathering, providing services and other daily needs to the community. This development of commercial at this location aligns with these policies in terms of providing increased commercial to the overall neighbourhood hub at the entrances to Air Ranch and the last phase of Drake Landing. It also builds on providing services within walking distance of homes in this area.

Section 3.2.2 speaks to providing transit-ready neighbourhoods. Although the long-term planning for this area pre-dates the MDP, the Redesignation and subsequent development of commercial at this location furthers the possibility of this areas as a transit hub in the medium-to-long term when coupled with the higher density residential and future development east of 48th Street. Policies 3.3 speak to reducing car dependency which this development assists with by providing some limited potential for employment and other commercial activities within walking distance of residential homes.

Section 6.2 of the MDP and the subsequent policies within this section speak to developing lands for commercially-focused uses. This will provide opportunities for businesses to locate to Okotoks, expand from existing home-based operations in close proximity to people's homes and overall provide additional options for commercial spaces within the Town of Okotoks, furthering the non-residential tax base and opportunities for residents.

Overall, the proposal aligns with the overarching goals of the MDP by providing commercial in a central, walkable location that furthers a sense of place and independence for residents in this part of Okotoks.

Northeast Okotoks Area Structure Plan

The proposed Redesignation area falls within the Mixed Use Area section of the NEOASP. This area aims to provide employment opportunities balanced with higher density residential that can support future transit. The policies in this section aim to

encourage a range of uses within the mixed-use area, but they do not specify that a range of uses must be located within each individual parcel identified in the plan area of this section.

Therefore, it is the opinion of administration that this Redesignation does not dilute or weaken the intent of this section, but provides increased commercial opportunities that blends well with adjacent residential development and is in close proximity to future higher density residential development. The commercial also aligns with the goals of being transit-supportive in the future and fostering destinations and walkable services within proximity to communities.

At the development permit stage, future development will be reviewed to align with the architectural guidelines and design considerations outlined for the mixed use area to ensure cohesion with neighbouring developments as well as open space connections for passive and active uses.

Northeast Okotoks Outline Plan

Although the parcel is identified as MUM in the Outline Plan, due to the minimal change in residential density and lack of changes to traffic forecasting and overall area design (no public road changes etc), Administration was of the opinion that an amendment to the Northeast Okotoks Outline Plan would not be required to move forward with this Redesignation. A technical letter of support for the Redesignation from a traffic engineer was required and submitted to the Town noting that traffic volumes would be higher, but still be supported by the existing road infrastructure in the area. Engineering is currently working with the Applicant on some changes on access assumptions to the report that will be required to be finalized prior to a concept plan and detailed development permit application going forward to Municipal Planning Commission. Overall though, the assumptions of the report are generally supported by Administration in terms of the existing network supporting this proposed Redesignation.

Land Use Bylaw

Under section 14D.1.1 the purpose and intent of the Gateway Commercial (CGATE) District is to provide for a broad range of high intensity land uses at the main approaches to the community in a comprehensively planned regional commercial center. Development within this district will create a high quality and aesthetically pleasing environment conducive to both vehicle and pedestrian movement, and encourage very high architectural design and signage standards due to the visibility of the location.

Public Participation and Stakeholder Consultation

A public hearing for Bylaw 12-21 is scheduled for May 10th, 2021. The hearing was advertised in the Okotoks Western Wheel and on the Town's website, and adjacent landowners were notified by mail in accordance with the *Municipal Government Act*.

- Municipal Government Act: <http://www.qp.alberta.ca/documents/acts/m26.pdfs>
- Town of Okotoks Municipal Development Plan: <https://www.okotoks.ca/sites/default/files/2021-01/Municipal%20Development%20Plan.pdf>
- Northeast Okotoks Area Structure Plan: https://www.okotoks.ca/sites/default/files/2020-12/2740_NEOASP_Consolidated_October_2012.pdf
- Town of Okotoks Land Use Bylaw: https://www.okotoks.ca/sites/default/files/pdfs/publications/BY40-98%20Update%2039%20-%20January%202020_0.pdf

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