

Property Information

Location Description	A portion of Lot 1, Block 21A, Plan 480; A portion of Lot 2, Block 21A Plan 650; Lot 3, Block 21A, Plan 4902; Lot 3, Block 67A, Plan 486; and Lot 4, Block 67A, Plan 4898
City of Yellowknife Community Plan	Section 4.1.2 Downtown – Central Residential Section 5.1.1 Climate Change Section 5.1.2. Municipal Infrastructure Section 5.2 Transportation Section 5.4 Subdivision and Land Development Sequencing
City of Yellowknife Zoning By-law	Section 3. Roles and Responsibilities Section 5.2. By-law Amendments Section 11.1. DT - Downtown
Civic Address	Not yet assigned
Access	49 Avenue
Municipal Services	Piped water and sewer

Recommendation:

The Development Officer recommends a site-specific Zoning By-law amendment application for permitting the proposed development of a new Hotel at above location, be presented to Council for consideration.

Proposal:

The applicant, Nunastar NWT Ltd., submitted a Development Application to develop a new Hotel complex at the above-referenced location. The proposed development is a new 5-storey building that consists of 150 guest rooms along with office spaces, meeting rooms, lounge, and dining area, located adjacent to the existing Explorer Hotel.

Background:

The Planning and Development Department received and reviewed the Zoning By-law Amendment application, which was deemed complete on April 2, 2026. The purpose of the proposed site-specific Zoning By-law amendment is to develop a new Hotel building as part of the Explore Hotel site. The new hotel will be accessed by the same driveway as the existing Explore Hotel from 49 Avenue.



Figure 1. Location Map

Assessment of the Application:

JUSTIFICATION

The development site is in the Downtown Zone (DT), where specific design regulations apply. Deviations from the design regulations require Zoning By-law amendments, as most of the regulations are beyond the variance authority of both the Development Officer and Council as stated in Section 4.8 of the Zoning By-law. Site-specific amendments will not be applied to other properties in the same zone. Council has approval authority for decisions of all by-law amendments (Section 3.2.1. of the Zoning By-law). The application will be presented to Council for a decision according to the established procedures in the legislation, bylaws, and policies.

LEGISLATION

- Cities, Towns and Villages Act, SNWT 2003, c.22

Sections 73 to 76 and Section 129 of the Act set out the required procedure to approve by-laws. A by-law amendment must have three distinct and separate readings and a statutory public hearing to be effective.

Section 129 Public Hearings, subsection (c) includes: “a zoning bylaw or a bylaw to adopt a community plan or an area development plan under the *Community Planning and Development Act*.”

- Community Planning and Development Act

The Act establishes the framework for the City to regulate development within its boundaries. Section 12 of the Act states that the purpose of a zoning by-law is to regulate and control the use and development of land and buildings in a municipality in a manner that conforms with a community plan. Subsection (4) further states that a zoning bylaw must not conflict with a community plan.

- Community Plan By-law No. 5007

The City adopted Community Plan By-law No. 5007 in July 2020. The Community Plan is the overarching development plan and policy direction of the City. “The purpose of a community plan is to provide a policy framework to guide the physical development of a municipality, having regard to sustainability, the environment, and the economic, social and cultural development of the community” (*Community Planning and Development Act*, Section 3 (1)).

- Zoning By-law No. 5045

The general purpose of a zoning bylaw is to regulate the physical development of a municipality specifying the use and development of land and buildings within the municipal

boundary of the City. The City adopted Zoning By-law No. 5045 in March 2022 and all zoning must conform to the Community Plan policy(ies).

PLANNING ANALYSIS

Community Plan No. 5007, as amended

The objective of the Community Plan By-law (the “Plan”) is to manage land use in an economically, environmentally, and socially sustainable matter. The proposed development complies with the following General Development Goals of the Plan:

- Development of land in a fiscally responsible and sustainable manner;
- Prioritize utilization of existing capacity of municipal infrastructure for land use development before adding new capacity;
- Encourage and facilitate more land use flexibility in core areas of City to support revitalization plans and initiatives:

The City of Yellowknife economy is in transition, moving toward large projects related to infrastructure and security projects, while service and tourism related activities continue to expand. The policies of the Community Plan support the transitioning economy, by allowing and supporting commercial activities in core areas.

Section 4.1.2. Downtown – Central Residential

The proposed development is within the Downtown – Central Residential Land Use Designation area. The Plan describes the area as intermixed with low-rise residential development, high-intensity apartments and buildings that have seen adaptive re-use. The intent of this land use designation is to provide a transition area between high density city core and other areas. In the proposed Community Plan update 2026, these lands are being included in the Downtown-City Core as they are suitable for transition to higher intensity and multi-use development through infill, like what is being proposed. Connectivity and active forms of transportation, including walking and biking trails should be integrated to connect redevelopment to surrounding areas.

Policies of the existing Community Plan which support the proposed development include:

4.1.2 Downtown – Central Residential			
Planning and Development Objectives:		Policies:	
3.	To intensify land use through higher density development, starting in the areas that area adjacent to the city core and moving outwards. High density	3-a.	Zoning will be revised to allow for higher density re-development closer to the City Core stepping down to medium density zoning further from the City Core.

	development adjacent to the city core stepping down to medium density.		
5.	To encourage a variety of housing options.	5-a.	Alternative dwelling types that support higher density may occur in the area, but development must have enough space to accommodate living area, parking setbacks and outdoor amenity space.

In the proposed 2026 Community Plan, the proposed development aligns with the policies of the Downtown – City Core designation. A change in the Community Plan designation will not negatively impact on the proposal or the site-specific zoning as it conforms to both existing and proposed policies.

Section 5.1.1 Climate Change

Infill developments expected to support the Climate Change objectives of the Community Plan, and the new Climate Action Plan 2026 - 2036, as it efficiently utilizes existing servicing infrastructure without putting financial burden on the City. The development site is connected to the existing roads, water and wastewater systems. Extension on site to the new development is serviceable without significant capital investment. The proposal meets the following climate change objectives and policy:

5.1.1 Climate Change			
Climate Change Mitigation Objectives:		Policies:	
3.	To better utilize existing municipal infrastructure.	3-a.	The City will prioritize development in the existing built footprint of the City before developing new greenfield areas.

The wind comfort and snow drifting study indicates that increased wind speeds are expected in the space between the existing Explorer and the new building due to the wind channeling between the two buildings. The resultant conditions are predicted to be suitable for active use of the sidewalk, walkway, and parking lots. Snow and snowdrift accumulations on certain areas or around the site are expected due to the new building configuration. While impact is not expected to be significant, the recommendations include regular maintenance and snow clearance.

Energy efficiency of the new building is reviewed according to the National Building Codes and the City's energy requirements at the building permit application stage. Higher energy

efficiency standard is expected to contribute to the community GHG emission goals as described in the Climate Action Plan 2026-2036.

Section 5.1.2. Municipal Infrastructure

Piped water and wastewater services are a significant capital cost to the city. To keep costs low for users, higher utilization of the existing systems is required and supported. Infill development supports higher and better utilization of existing infrastructure. No expansion of the piped water infrastructure will be required for this proposal. The development is in alignment with the key planning and development Objective and Policy:

5.3 Municipal Infrastructure			
Planning and Development Objectives:		Policies:	
3.	To concentrate commercial and residential development in areas serviced by piped water and sewer services.	3-a.	Commercial and residential development will be prioritized in areas with piped water and sewer services.

Section 5.2 Transportation

For visitors from outside town, multi-modal transportation is a necessity within the city. The proposed development would provide multi-modal and convenient access to the downtown core; including other areas of the City through public transit, trails and the road network. Municipal road access on 49 Avenue will be maintained to the site through the design proposed.

An increase of traffic volume is predicted as the result of the new development. One of the recommendations by the Traffic Impact Study includes signalization of the intersection of 48th Street and 49th Avenue. Details such as installation cost sharing or timing of installation will be established through a Development Agreement at the Development Permit stage, which is subsequent to the Zoning Amendment By-law process.

Section 5.4 Subdivision and Land Development Sequencing

The disposal of land by the city and the consolidation of parcels by the proponent will result in the total area to be developed. The proposed lot configuration, consolidation and redevelopment conforms with the following objective and policy:

5.4 Subdivision and Land Development Sequencing			
Planning and Development Objectives:		Policies:	
1.	To utilize existing infrastructure for land development.	1-a.	Vacant lots, both City owned and private, within the built area of the

		City will be prioritized before greenfield development.
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Zoning By-law No. 5045, as amended

The objective of the Zoning By-law (the “By-law”) is to regulate and control the Use and Development of land in the City. The development site is in the DT – Downtown zone. This zone defines the downtown area and recognizes it as a unique area within the City. Principal uses within the zone include office, commercial and entertainment, while providing for medium and higher intensity residential uses. The proposed Hotel is a Permitted Use within the Zone and is compatible with the surrounding land uses. The rationale for the site-specific zoning is because the hotel cannot meet multiple zoning requirements and the changes requested exceed the variance authority of Section 4.8 of the By-law. These requested changes are directly a result of the land, topography, location and the desire of the applicant to develop near the existing hotel.



Section 11.1.3 Design Regulations (in Downtown Zone)

The By-law regulates building designs downtown through Section 11.1.3 which sets out design regulations providing property owners and developers with guidelines on façade design, accessibility, sun penetration, wind protection and other urban design features. The objective of the design regulations is to strive for visually interesting and appealing buildings and a pedestrian oriented street environment. While all developments within the DT Zone are subject to design regulations as stated in Section 11.1.3, some developments face undue

challenges in terms of topography, road pattern, or established underground service infrastructure. This proposed development site is one of the few exceptional cases.

Topography of the Development Site

The proposed development to be built on undeveloped parcels, largely uneven rocks and higher elevation than the adjacent development along 49 Avenue. While blasting the rock and lowering the elevation to the same level of the abutting street is an option, the applicant has designed the hotel to incorporate the existing natural topography into the architectural design of the building. By doing so, the applicant would be able to satisfy some of the design regulations, in particular, section 11.1.3 c), which states:

c) Building Orientation and Articulation

- i. Buildings shall be sited to address adjacent public street and are to be oriented to be directly accessible from public sidewalk; and
- iii. The main entrance of a building shall be sited on the street side to promote pedestrian access. The main entrance of the building shall also provide a sense of enclosure and be designed to give maximum protection from wind and snow for comfortable and safe pedestrian access.

The applicant design proposes the main entrance to the hotel to be accessed from a new parking area connected to the existing driveway. While this is an alternative design of the building, it maintains connectivity within the site, without compromising the intent of the downtown design regulations, addresses the topography and variable ground levels and ultimately improves pedestrian linkage and experience. The proposed landscaping along the pedestrian walkway would serve as amenity space that extends the public sidewalk environment and improves continuity of pedestrian movement regulated by section 11.1.3 a) vi. and vii.

The proposed development setbacks 0.9 metres from the front lot line and 1.5 metres from the adjacent residential zone, which does not meet the screening requirements set out in section 7.5.2: General Development Regulations Applicable to all Zones, which states:

Section 7.5.2.Screening in Non-Residential Zones:

- a) Developments abutting a road or a laneway, or adjacent to a residential zone shall provide a landscape screen 2 m wide; and
- b) Screening with a minimum Height 2 m is to be installed where commercial development will abut residential development.

The front portion of the building is setback less than the requirement, the deck projects from the building façade and the waste collection space on the ground level. The waste collection space will be required to be screened through development permit process, so the visual

impact is expected to be minimized. The distance between the new building and the existing adjacent residential building is approximately 16.0 metres. Additionally, the residential building is a 4-storey multi-family residential building on higher elevation. The siting and form of the two buildings and topographic pattern of the site would seem to complement each other for the requirement of buffering landscape set out in the By-law and reduce both visual and site impacts.

Parking Space

Section 11.1.3. Design Regulations

f) Parking regulations

- iv. Surface parking areas shall have a 1m setback on all non-building sides that is landscaped.

The development as proposed will not be able to meet this regulation due to fire safety codes requirements, which ensures appropriate emergency vehicle access and turning radius. The proposed parking and circulation designs have been reviewed by the Fire Division for emergency access purposes. Since the area is abutting natural landscape where there are no structures, relaxation to the guideline is compatible.

Building Massing, Materials, Orientation and Orientation

The proposal is unable to meet the following design regulations in section 11.1.3, which state:

b) Massing

- ii. For all other buildings with greater than four storeys abutting the street, where possible, the step back shall be 6 m for the portion of the building fronting the street, and 3 m for the portion along the side.

c) Building Orientation and Articulation

- iv. To promote high degree of design and increase the quality of pedestrian realm, articulation of buildings is required. This may be achieved in a variety of ways, including changes in both materials and material treatments.
- v. All buildings will be designed in such as a way to have a base, middle and top

d) Facades and Materials

- i. Colour schemes shall be complementary to existing context and adjacent development. A minimum of two colours excluding roof colour visible from the street, are required for each building.

- iii. A minimum of two major exterior materials, excluding fenestration shall be used on each elevation. These materials must be complementary to achieve a unified building image.
- iv. Brick, stone, or other appropriate quality material shall be used for the base of the building. Metal shall only be used as a complementary finish.

According to the submission, the proposed development is designed with an intent of boldly expressing a Nordic or Northern-inspired aesthetic, with a sophisticated wood-inspired cladding that evokes warmth and authenticity, highlighted by architectural lighting. The building façade along 49th Avenue utilizes two building materials with depth and earth tone color supported strong detailing. Street level experience along 49th Street is to be enhanced by a large-scale art-mural installation at the building's basement level. The Hotel's façade uses a warm wood-inspired finish that lends itself to blending into the surrounding wooded area behind the proposed development towards Niven Lake. The architectural brown accents tie to the accent colours from the adjacent Explorer Hotel, allowing both buildings to tell their own story but also balancing one another.

While any design guidelines need to be prescriptive to provide clear guidance to developers, there also needs some flexibility in application of these guidelines by carefully considering unintended consequences and location specific contexts such as natural environment impacts or technical and financial feasibilities or design trends, especially when assessing large developments that have significant impacts in the community. The Development Officer considers the architectural design to align with intent of the design regulations and supports the proposed colour scheme of the facades. They blend into the surrounding wooded area and the building design creates visual appeal to not only to immediate surrounding neighbourhoods, but also to visitors and guests and most importantly the residents of Yellowknife.

Loading Area and Trash Collection

The plan for the loading area is not able to meet the following design regulations in section 11.1.3 of By-law, as the result of the building orientation and functional design point of view.

f) Parking regulations

- ii. Surface parking lots, loading and trash collection areas are not permitted in the front yard or flanking street side of the principal buildings.

The City required the applicant to conduct a Traffic Impact Study to ensure that the proposed design will not compromise safety of pedestrians and vehicle users. According to the study submitted by the applicant, the proposed loading area in the front yard of the development site is considered to have low conflict with the existing traffic on 49 Avenue with the condition that trucks should access the site through 49 Avenue and 47 Street. Public Works and

Engineering Department recommends that flaggers should be used every time a truck is backing into the loading dock. This recommendation will be taken into consideration in development permit application review process and may form conditions of the permit.

Consultation with City Departments:

The Lands and Building Services Division is working with the applicant land transfer and code compliance matters. The land application for disposal is underway parallel to this application. There are no outstanding items that impact the review of this zoning by-law amendment application or the subsequent development permit application. Detailed comments and considerations are available in Appendix A.

The Public Works and Engineering Department has identified no concerns about this application overall. They provided notes on grading, loading dock and potential contribution to traffic light installation at 48 Street and 49 Avenue. All notes will be addressed through the development permit and conditions of the permit. Detailed comments and considerations are available in Appendix A.

The Protective Services Department outlined specific fire access comments related to the site. The applicant has been informed, and all comments will be addressed in the development permit and conditions. Detailed comments and considerations are available in Appendix A.

Public Comments:

Notice of Application was posted for a 2-week public comment period to gather input on the proposed Zoning By-law Amendment application. The Notice was posted on April 2nd, 2026, adjacent to 4825 49 Avenue beside the existing driveway and letters were circulated to the neighboring residents and landowners within 100 metres of the subject development site. All application documents that are public record are posted on the website for public access and review. The city received two comments from the public via email regarding traffic and trail connection. Detailed comments and considerations are available in Appendix A.

Following first reading by council a Notice for public hearing, required by section 129 of the *Cities, Towns and Villages Act* will be posted. Council may proceed to a decision, following public input from this meeting.

Next Steps:

GPC may recommend first reading of the zoning by-law amendment and a statutory public hearing would follow. The by-law would become effective after receiving second and third readings by Council. The applicant has applied for a development permit application which may be decided upon by the Development Officer subsequent only to the by-law amendment approval. Minister review is not required for either application decision.

Alternatively, Council has the authority to make any changes to the plan or deny the application as outlined in section 3.2 of the Zoning By-law. Should Council deny this application, it cannot be re-considered within 12 months unless otherwise directed by Council resolution (section 5.2.3 of the Zoning By-law).

Conclusion:

The proposed development conforms with the Community Plan No. 5007, as amended and complies with most regulations in the Zoning By-law No. 5045, as amended. The site specific zoning for compliant exemption to the regulations of section 7.5.2., Section 11.1.3. b) ii., c) i., c) iii., c) iv., c) v., d) i., d) iii., d) iv., f) ii., and f) iv is reviewed and supported by the Development Officer.

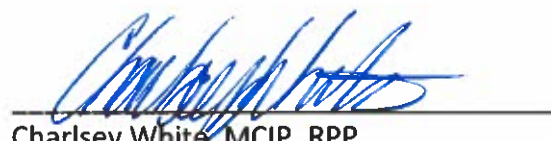
It is recommended that the proposed site-specific Zoning By-law amendment to allow the proposed new Hotel development, be presented for Council's consideration and approval.

Drafted by:


Tatsuyuki Setta RPP, MCIP, AICP
Manager, Planning and Environment

May 4, 2026
Date

Concurrence by:


Charley White, MCIP, RPP
Director, Planning and Development

May 8/26
Date

Appendix:

Appendix A – Comments and Considerations

Appendix A – Comments and Considerations

Correspondent	Comments	Considerations
Internal Consultations		
Protective Services	I have reviewed the application; I do have one comment: 1) For fire department turn around in the parking lot we need a 12m centerline turning radius however I do not see the measurement within the application on page 4. The fire truck reference specifications on page 4 does not capture our apparatus: the length of our apparatus is 11.3m (37"10").	Development Officer has communicated the comments and requirements to the applicant. Fire safety design will be further addressed in the development permit and building permit process.
Public Works and Engineering	Overall development poses no concerns for Public Works and Engineering. Three items to note: 1. Public Works & Engineering is accepting of the overall proposed grading plan. 2. Due to the proposed location of the loading zone, PW&E advises that flaggers should be used every time a truck is backing into the loading dock. 3. As per the recommendations of the draft Traffic Impact Assessment completed by CTS, the City may require the developer provide a contribution to the installation of a traffic light at the intersection of 48 Street at 49 Avenue. The timing for installation of the traffic light will be at the sole discretion of the City.	Planner has communicated the comments and requirements to the applicant. The applicant is required to submit in the development permit process: - a final grading plan will be required at the development permit stage. Please refer to section 4.4.3 c) of the Zoning By-law for grading plan requirements. Both requirements of flagger and contribution towards traffic improvement will be address in the development permit process.
Building Services	Building Services review is complete. There are no items at this stage that would affect Planning's ability to proceed with the Development Permit. However, we are still working with the applicant to determine the correct NBC 2020 Part 3 classification for the structure. The main outstanding issue is whether the building can legitimately be designed under 3.2.2.51 given the proposed rooftop patio (A2 occupancy). Under 3.2.2.51(5), A2 occupancies are only permitted below the third storey, so the feasibility of the rooftop patio remains under review. The design team may need to revise the construction strategy	Development Officer has communicated the comments and requirements to the applicant. Outstanding items will be addressed in the building permit process.

	or occupancy arrangement depending on how this is resolved.	
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No.	Comments	Considerations
Public Consultations		
1	I received notice of the application for a Zoning By-law Amendment (file number PLZON-2026-0057) to develop a new 150-unit Hotel, as I understand from the map provided, adjacent to the existing Explorer Hotel. My comment and concern pertains to the safety of pedestrians and motorists in and around this very high traffic intersection. At peak traffic times, this intersection is backed up in all four directions with vehicles, and the number of pedestrians crossing the road at and around this intersection continues to increase. Before, or at least in addition to, considering this zoning by-law amendment to permit hotel development, the city should upgrade or improve the intersection to better manage the flow of both foot and motor traffic. Here are supporting examples of my concerns: 1) International visitors to Yellowknife are often unfamiliar with our local traffic laws. I frequently have to stop for pedestrians crossing the street outside of the crosswalks at the four-way stop intersection. This happens most often at the bottom of the road leading up to the Explorer, where pedestrians continue walking into the street instead of using the crosswalk. This issue and its associated dangers are compounded during peak traffic times. 2) In the afternoon, after work, and especially on Fridays, this intersection is filled with impatient motorists eager to get home. Multiple-lane traffic coming from two directions also limit visibility and cause confusion over the right-of-way. This leads to frustration and distraction, increasing danger for pedestrians, especially those not using the crosswalk properly. Developing a new 150-unit Hotel in this location without addressing these existing issues will dramatically compound the problem. I recognize that visitors to a foreign country must understand and adhere to local laws. However, given the tourism industry's importance to our economy—especially with reduced mining activity in the territory—proactive traffic control measures by our city better preserve the safety of locals and tourists. If you have any questions, please let me know.	The Development Officer has sent an acknowledgement email for this comment and relayed the concern of safe pedestrian cross of hotel patrons to the applicant. The Development Officer also shared with the resident the traffic impact analysis submitted by the applicant, which addresses the traffic concerns and provides potential mitigation. Traffic impact and its mitigation will be addressed in the development permit process.

	----- Follow-up email from the resident: Thank you for getting back to me so quickly. Thanks also for directing me to the traffic analysis document - it is extensive and informative! From what I understand, CTS recommends the City of Yellowknife fully signalize the intersection at 49th St and 49th Ave, which will hopefully improve traffic flow and safety, and alleviate the concerns I expressed in my previous email. I also see that CTS provided a recommended pedestrian circulation plan, but it wasn't clear who is responsible for ensuring or promoting it. As a follow up to my last email, I would also recommend that Nunastar take measures to notify its hotel guests of the importance of using the signalized intersection at 49th & 49th to cross the street. It would be beneficial to require Nunastar to demonstrate its plans for ensuring the safety of its hotel guests and Yellowknifers going forward as a condition for granting the application.	
2	First, apologies that I'm writing beyond your deadline. Your deadline was only two weeks after the date of the letter and I only check my mail every 2 weeks! I hope that my thoughts can still be considered. Here's my thoughts. The developer should be required to create a multi-use trail connection between the parking on the north side of the hotel and the Niven Lake trail. The City's bylaws allow the City to require that developers create connections with active transportation infrastructure, not just roads. This connection would allow hotel users to easily enjoy the Niven Lake Trail and the scenery and wildlife it offers. This would be beneficial for the patrons of the hotel but also for the hotel as I'm sure it would result in better reviews by those patrons who would be impressed by the accessibility of wilderness spaces only a short walk from the hotel. It would be better for their health as well as it would encourage time in nature, physical activity, and connection with other trail users. More of the City would be easily accessible on foot for patrons of the hotel, rather than requiring vehicles or taxis. Without this connection, the Niven Lake trail would be a circuitous distance away and would likely not be visited by hotel patrons. I strongly urge the City to require and facilitate the creation of this connection.	Despite this comment was received after the deadline, the Development Officer has sent an acknowledgement email and relayed the public's request for trail connection to the applicant. Further discussion with applicable City department will proceed in the development permit process.