



RESORT MUNICIPALITY OF WHISTLER

4325 Blackcomb Way **TEL** 604 932 5535
Whistler, BC Canada V8E 0X5 **TF** 1 866 932 5535
whistler.ca **FAX** 604 935 8109

STAFF REPORT TO THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

PRESENTED: September 24, 2024 **REPORT:** W24-002
FROM: Planning - Development **FILE:** 3306-02
SUBJECT: ALTA LAKE AND NITA LAKE HERITAGE BUILDINGS

RECOMMENDATION FROM THE CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

That the recommendation of the General Manager of Climate Action, Planning and Development Services be endorsed.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Committee of the Whole (COTW) recommend to Council that Council direct staff to bring forward for consideration an amendment to the TA17 Zone to remove the requirement to move and repair the existing cabin as shown on the Key Plan for the TA17 Zone, attached as Appendix A to the Report to the COTW No. W24-002 (Gebhart/Hillman cabin), and replace with:

- a) a requirement to provide a replacement amenity in the onsite park that gives recognition to the history and culture of what the Gebhart/Hillman cabin and its use represented; and
- b) a cash contribution to the Recreation Works and Services Reserve to be dedicated to municipal heritage preservation/improvement for the remaining value of the total estimated costs of moving and repairing the existing cabin; and

That the COTW recommend to Council that exterior design elements (and potentially some materials, if feasible) of the Gebhart/Hillman cabin be used as elements for the replacement amenity.

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee of the Whole (COTW) with information on a high-level draft assessment describing the history, status, current assessment and future considerations for buildings at five locations constructed from approximately the 1920s through 1950s in the vicinity of Alta and Nita Lakes that have been passed down from previous generations and are currently owned by the Resort Municipality of Whistler (RMOW) or are scheduled to be transferred to the RMOW. This work was undertaken by staff to inform and prioritize necessary municipal budgeting for lifecycle maintenance of these building assets into the future.

This report also presents a recommendation and seeks feedback from the COTW regarding options for the future of the existing Gebhart/Hillman cabin, located at 5298 Alta Lake Road. Under the existing TA17 zoning and existing development agreement, the Gebhart/Hillman cabin is to be moved from its current location to the new park, also located at 5298 Alta Lake Road, and repaired so it is weather-proofed, structurally sound and the main floor of the cabin may be safely used and occupied (at least

seasonally). A decision on the future of the existing Gebhart/Hillman cabin is time sensitive, as it must be moved from its current location to the new park before January 2025 to facilitate site preparation work for the employee residential, market residential and tourist accommodation development at 5298 Alta Lake Road.

DISCUSSION

Background

In the summer of 2024, staff from multiple municipal departments undertook a high-level draft assessment of older buildings at five locations in the vicinity of Alta and Nita Lakes in Whistler.

This work was a recommendation (Recommendation 19: Create an inventory and identify capacity of public facilities used for cultural purposes, accompanied by a program for lifecycle maintenance) of [Whistler's Cultural Plan](#), a strategic level document received by Council on September 3, 2013 ([Administrative Report No. 13-080](#)). The high-level draft assessment was undertaken as a starting point to inform and prioritize municipal budgets and the Five-Year Financial Plan respecting the lifecycle maintenance of these building assets into the future. This work was initiated in the absence of a Heritage Strategy and Plan for Whistler, which has been identified as required work for the municipality by both Whistler's Cultural Plan (Recommendation 23) and in Whistler's Official Community Plan (OCP) (Policy 9.2.4.1).

Analysis

Buildings at four locations were considered in the high-level draft assessment and a working draft is attached as Appendix B. Of those buildings the Gebhart/Hillman cabin is at a more critical decision point and thus is the focus of this report.

The Gebhart/Hillman cabin is located on an active development site at 5298 Alta Lake Road. Per the applicable TA17 Zoning (Appendix A) for 5298 Alta Lake Road, the development is to provide a public neighbourhood park, Valley Trail connectivity and mix of employee residential, market residential and tourist accommodation townhouse development.

Additionally, the TA17 Zoning obligates the developer to relocate the Gebhart/Hillman cabin elsewhere on the property as well as upgrade its foundation and exterior building envelope so it is weather-proofed, structurally sound and the main floor of the cabin may be safely used and occupied. This must be completed prior to handing over to the RMOW for long term ownership, use and maintenance. The existing development agreement registered on the property title identified that if the restoration cannot be achieved within the original scope ("restored so that the RMOW will not need to invest in immediate building maintenance and improvements. It is not the intention to bring the building up to the current Building Code") and the projected cost estimates to restore the cabin unreasonably exceeds \$250,000, then the General Manager of Climate Action, Planning and Development Services and the developer will agree to review covenant requirements to ensure the minimum requirements of the TA17 Zone are met related to this community amenity. Because of the removal of the asbestos, the interior of the Gebhart/Hillman cabin is currently bare stud wall without insulation. Dialogue has not occurred respecting the finishing of the interior, but staff estimates this to be upwards of \$65,000 above the initial projected cost estimate.

The Gebhart/Hillman cabin is one of the oldest remaining structures in the Whistler valley. The cabin was constructed by Alf Gebhardt in the mid 1940's for his family to reside in, and later was known as the original Toad Hall, but not the Toad Hall of the infamous poster. The Gebhart/Hillman cabin is unique in that it has connections to the logging industry, skiing, second-home ownership, employee

housing challenges and Whistler's counterculture of the 1960s and '70s. It is one of only a few buildings that bridges the valley's transition from a summer-focused community to a ski area. In 1993, the building was included in the draft inventory of significant heritage sites in Whistler in the RMOW Heritage Plan (Interim Draft Report) that was developed by the RMOW and community volunteers, but there is no record of this plan being received by Council.

Despite the decision and subsequent planned investment to relocate and weatherproof the Gebhart/Hillman cabin, the future indoor public use of the building is significantly limited by its interior condition (bare stud walls, no insulation, no water service, limited electrical service), structural snow load restrictions (unoccupiable in winter months) and access and parking challenges (no public road access or parking, access via Valley Trail only). As currently planned, the building would primarily serve as a heritage shell like the heritage cabins at Rainbow Park.

These limitations caused staff to reassess the viability and business case of retaining the Gebhart/Hillman cabin, which then prompted a deeper consideration for other older buildings also under municipal ownership and located near Alta and Nita Lakes. A high-level draft assessment of these buildings was prepared by staff from relevant departments and is included as Appendix B. The draft assessment identifies that while some investments have been made over the years, major maintenance has been deferred for all buildings to the point where some large cost items are now due, and that significant reinvestment is required to continue to maintain these buildings in their current condition to protect the asset. Through further conversations with staff, it is noted that the municipality lacks a clear long-term plan for the protection and programming of these buildings, a plan that ideally would blend appropriate public use, values around arts, culture and heritage, as well as overall resort benefit within an acceptable financial model.

Given these considerations, due to the demonstrated need for major reinvestment in older buildings, the better accessibility, functionality, location and desirability of other buildings, the limitations of the Gebhart/Hillman cabin (access, parking, winter occupancy, interior condition, use desirability), and the annual maintenance costs for an anticipated little used structure, staff recommend that the Gebhart/Hillman cabin not be retained and that an alternative solution be pursued. Three options are presented below for COTW's feedback.

OPTIONS

Staff seeks feedback from the COTW regarding three identified options respecting the Gebhart/Hillman cabin. Note that Option 1 is the stated staff recommendation:

1. Demolish the Gebhart/Hillman cabin and provide a replacement amenity in the onsite park that gives recognition to the history and culture of what the Gebhart/Hillman cabin and its use represented. This should be paired with a cash contribution to the Recreation Works and Services Reserve dedicated to municipal heritage preservation/ improvement, equivalent to the developer's estimated costs of moving and repairing the Gebhart/Hillman cabin less designing and building the replacement amenity. Provision of an appropriately sized picnic shelter has been discussed with the developer. Staff recommend that exterior design elements of the Gebhart/Hillman cabin be used as design elements on the picnic shelter. This option retains some cultural history elements on a structure that complements the new park, provides usable weather protected amenity value to immediately adjacent residents and members of the public, while contributing to the capital costs of municipal heritage preservation/improvement.

2. Demolish the Gebhart/Hillman cabin and add a cash contribution to either Recreation Works and Services Reserve for municipal heritage preservation/improvement or the Employee Housing Reserve (EHR). This option does not retain any cultural history elements yet contributes to other initiatives.
3. Move the Gebhart/Hillman cabin and restore as required. The decision to relocate and restore the Gebhart/Hillman cabin was first considered in the fall of 2019 under the applicant initiated rezoning application RZ001157 for 5298 Alta Lake Road. Since that time staff has been analyzing the feasibility of future programming and management of this asset once it is received. Appendix B identifies significant constraints to this option including, but not limited to:
 - RMOW costs for internal finishing,
 - the building is not snow-load rated so cannot be occupied in the winter,
 - no water or heat service to building,
 - no vehicle access or parking.

If the Gebhart/Hillman cabin is moved, it will likely be fenced and covered until such time as it is repaired by the developer so that it is weather proofed and structurally sound and the main floor of the cabin may be safely used and occupied as required by the TA17 Zone and development covenant; and even then, the future indoor public use of the building is significantly limited by its interior condition (bare stud walls, no insulation, no water service, limited electrical service), structural snow load restrictions (unoccupiable in winter months) and access and parking challenges (no public road access or parking, access via Valley Trail only).

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

Relevant Council Authority/Previous Decisions

Previous Council decisions related to the Gebhart/Hillman cabin, as well as Whistler's Cultural Plan, are listed below:

[December 19, 2023: Administrative Report No. 23-128](#), RZ001182 – Zoning Amendment Bylaw (5298 Alta Lake Road) No. 2423, 2023 Report

[September 12, 2023: Administrative Report No. 23-094](#), RZ001157 – 5298 Alta Lake Road Employee, Market and Tourist Accommodation Housing Zoning Adoption Report

[June 21, 2022: Administrative Report No. 22-095](#), RZ001157 – Public Hearing Summary and Third Reading Consideration for “Official Community Plan Amendment Bylaw (5298 Alta Lake Road) No. 2289, 2020” and “Zoning Amendment Bylaw (5298 Alta Lake Road) No. 2283, 2020”

[March 8, 2022: Administrative Report No. 22-033](#), RZ001157 - “Official Community Plan Amendment Bylaw (5298 Alta Lake Road) No. 2289, 2020” and “Zoning Amendment Bylaw (5298 Alta Lake Road) No. 2283, 2020” – Rescind Third Reading Report

[June 15, 2021: Administrative Report No. 21-066](#), RZ001157 – Public Hearing Summary and Third Reading Consideration for “Official Community Plan Amendment Bylaw (5298 Alta Lake Road) No. 2289, 2020” and “Zoning Amendment Bylaw (5298 Alta Lake Road) No. 2283, 2020”

[February 02, 2021: Administrative Report No. 21-012](#), RZ001157 – 5298 Alta Lake Road Zoning Amendment for Employee Housing

[December 01, 2020: Administrative Report No. 20-119](#), RZ001157 – 5298 Alta Lake Road Rezoning/OCP Amendment for Employee/Market Housing

[June 23, 2020: Administrative Report No. 20-057](#), RZ001157 – 5298 Alta Lake Road Rezoning - Employee/Market Housing

[February 18, 2020: Administrative Report No. 20-019](#), RZ001157 – 5298 Alta Lake Road Rezoning - Employee/Market Housing

[September 17, 2019: Administrative Report No. 19-118](#), RZ001157 – 5298 Alta Lake Road Rezoning – Market/ Employee Housing

[September 3, 2013: Administrative Report No. 13-080](#), Whistler Community Cultural Plan Final Report

2023-2026 Strategic Plan

The 2023-2026 Strategic Plan outlines the high-level direction of the RMOW to help shape community progress during this term of Council. The Strategic Plan contains four priority areas with various associated initiatives that support them. This section identifies how this report links to the Strategic Plan.

Strategic Priorities

Housing

Expedite the delivery of and longer-term planning for employee housing

Climate Action

Mobilize municipal resources toward the implementation of the Big Moves Climate Action Plan

Community Engagement

Strive to connect locals to each other and to the RMOW

Smart Tourism

Preserve and protect Whistler's unique culture, natural assets and infrastructure

Not Applicable

Aligns with core municipal work that falls outside the strategic priorities but improves, maintains, updates and/or protects existing and essential community infrastructure or programs

Community Vision and Official Community Plan

The OCP is the RMOW's most important guiding document that sets the community vision and long-term community direction. This section identifies how this report applies to the OCP.

The recommendations of this report are consistent with several of the goals, objectives and policies of several chapters of the OCP.

Chapter 4 of the OCP focuses on Growth Management and policy 4.1.6.4 identifies that all proposed developments and changes in land use must be evaluated to the satisfaction of the municipality to assess impacts on many items. The two listed items listed under Policy 4.1.6.4 that are most relevant to the options presented for the Gebhart/Hillman cabin include: x) archaeological, heritage and culture resources and xiii) municipal finance.

Chapter six of the OCP focuses on Economic Viability and the following goal and policy are considered the most relevant to the options presented for the Gebhart/Hillman cabin:

6.1. Goal: Provide effective and appropriate municipal infrastructure (including facilities and amenities) that minimizes taxpayer costs and consider allocating the value of infrastructure replacement to future users.

6.4.1.3. Policy: Emphasize resourcefulness across the municipality while delivering cost-effective and affordable service excellence.

Chapter nine of the OCP focuses on Learning, Culture and Recreation and the following policies are considered the most relevant to the options presented for the Gebhart/Hillman cabin:

9.2.4.2. Policy: Maintain an inventory of Whistler's heritage assets and ensure all identified heritage assets are considered in the review of new development proposals.

9.5.11 Policy: Maintain Whistler's high quality overall recreation and leisure infrastructure.

9.5.3.2. Policy: Maintain a variety of affordable recreation and leisure opportunities.

9.5.4.1. Policy: Continue to develop and maintain natural environment and cultural history interpretive information that educates and connects the public to our landscape, while advancing natural area and cultural tourism objectives.

BUDGET CONSIDERATIONS

The recommendation of this report will provide a replacement amenity in the onsite park and a cash contribution to the Recreation Works and Services Reserve targeted for municipal heritage preservation/ improvement, equivalent to the developer's estimated costs of moving and repairing the Gebhart/Hillman cabin, less building the replacement amenity in the park.

From an RMOW asset management perspective, lifecycle maintenance of a new replacement amenity will be less than that of retaining and restoring the Gebhart/Hillman cabin.

LÍLWAT NATION & SQUAMISH NATION CONSIDERATIONS

The RMOW is committed to working with the Líl'wat People, known in their language as L'il'wat7úl and the Squamish People, known in their language as the Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw to: create an enduring relationship; establish collaborative processes for planning on unceded territories, as currently managed by the provincial government; achieve mutual objectives; and enable participation in Whistler's resort economy.

There are no specific considerations to include in this report.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Level of community engagement commitment for this project:

Inform Consult Involve Collaborate Empower

With respect to the recommended zoning amendment, Section 464(2) of the *Local Government Act* specifies that a public hearing is not required to be held where an OCP is in effect for the area that is the subject of a zoning amendment bylaw.

Section 43 of the RMOW “Land Use Procedures and Fees Bylaw No. 2205, 2022” delegates the authority to waive a public hearing pursuant to Section 464(2) notes above, to the General Manager of Climate Action, Planning and Development Services.

REFERENCES

Appendix A – TA17 Zone
Appendix B – RMOW Alta Lake and Nita Lake Heritage Buildings Draft Assessment

SUMMARY

This report serves two purposes. First, to provide the COTW with a high-level draft assessment describing the history, status, current assessment and future considerations for older buildings at four locations in the vicinity of Alta and Nita Lakes in Whistler that are currently owned by the RMOW or are scheduled to be transferred to the RMOW as an amenity. Second, to seek recommendations from the COTW regarding the future of the Gebhart/Hillman cabin.

SIGN-OFFS

Written by:

Melissa Laidlaw,
Director of Planning

Martin Pardoe,
Manager of Resort Parks Planning

Reviewed by:

Dale Mikkelsen,
General Manager of Climate Action, Planning
and Development Services

Virginia Cullen,
Chief Administrative Officer