



**Golden Horn  
Minimum Residential  
Lot Size  
What We Heard**

**November 2023**



# Introduction

On October 12, 2022, a petition was presented in the legislative assembly by the Golden Horn local advisory council, requesting a reduction of the minimum lot size in Golden Horn from three hectares to two hectares.

In April 2022, we asked residents to provide feedback on this potential change through a mailed questionnaire. This report summarizes the results of the questionnaire and provides further detail on the Golden Horn Development Area.

If you have any questions or concerns about the report, please feel free to reach out to Tomoko Hagio, Land and Resource Planner at the Land Planning Branch. Email [tomoko.hagio@yukon.ca](mailto:tomoko.hagio@yukon.ca) or phone 867-334-5425.

# Background

The Golden Horn Development Area currently contains 116 privately-owned residential lots. Early development of the area created lots, many of which are less than one hectare, on the south side of the Alaska highway. Subsequent development in the 1980s designed six hectare lots in a subdivision on the north side of the highway. As demand for land has increased, many development areas within commuting distance of Whitehorse reduced their minimum lot sizes to either two or three hectares. Golden Horn's minimum lot size was reduced to three hectares in 2011. Lot size ranges are shown on the attached maps.

# Engagement

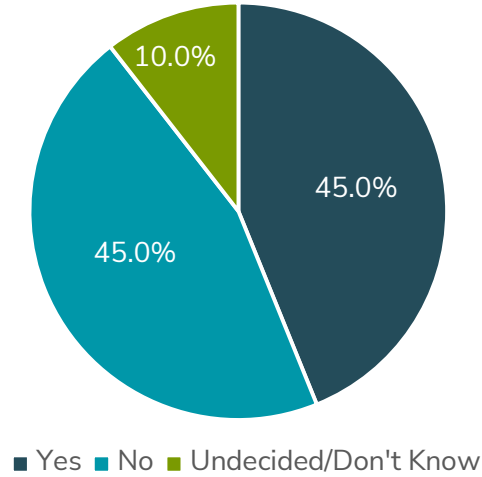
In spring 2023, the Government of Yukon asked Golden Horn residents to complete a questionnaire on whether they support changing the minimum lot size from three hectares (7.4 acres) to two hectares (5 acres). Three additional questions were asked of residents, about related zoning regulations. The questionnaire was mailed to 158 Golden Horn property owners in late April 2023 and received responses until June 4, 2023. We received a total of 60 responses.

The Land Planning Branch held an open house in the community on May 16, 2023, to provide an overview of the issue, answer questions and encourage feedback through the questionnaire.

## What we heard

**The nature of the questionnaire distribution permitted respondents to select more than one option per question or to skip questions. As a result, total responses for question 3 is higher than the total number of respondents.**

**Question 1: Do you support reducing the minimum lot size in the Rural Residential (RR-1 and RR-2) zones from three hectares to two hectares?**



There were 27 (45.0%) who responded yes, while 27 (45.0%) respondents said no to a decrease in minimum lot size to two hectares.

Of the six (10.0%) respondents who said undecided/don't know, two responses supported a smaller lot minimum (one- or 1.5-hectare minimum lot).

The questionnaire also included an opportunity for general input, with the following submissions received:

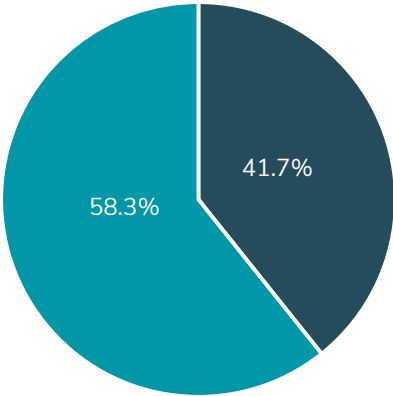
- No to any change.
- Ground water is a problem here. My well went dry.
- It is unwise to increase the density any further.
- Privacy is important – the more space between homes the better.
- Concerns about off-leash pets if population increases.
- Can the school handle additional students?
- A question on the validity and intent of the zoning committee.

**Question 2: If the minimum residential lot size was reduced to two hectares, do you think that regulations regarding additional dwelling units should be modified?**

All residential lots in Golden Horn may build one additional dwelling unit as a guest cabin. The regulation states that guest cabins are for short-term usage only and cannot be rented out long-term. Typically, zoning for residential lots in comparable areas of the Yukon allow one or more additional dwelling units to be built, with no restrictions on long-term tenancy. These units go by many names, but the two basic types are:

- living suites (located within or attached to the principal residence), and
- guest cabins (self-contained buildings located separate from the principal residence).

**Question 2a: Short-term tenancy restrictions**

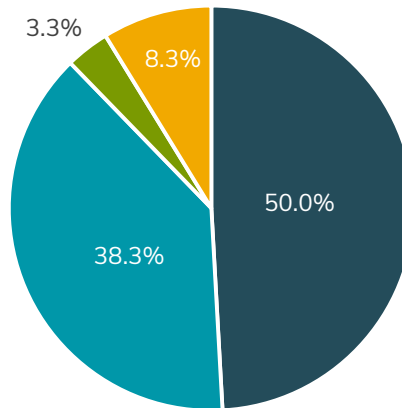


■ Keep restrictions   ■ Allow long-term



Thirty-five (58.3%) respondents support changing the regulation to allow long-term usage of additional dwelling units, while 25 (41.7%) respondents want the restrictions to remain unchanged. Some raised concerns that there are “guest cabins” that are occupied full time despite the regulation restricting this use.

### Question 2b: Types of additional dwelling units



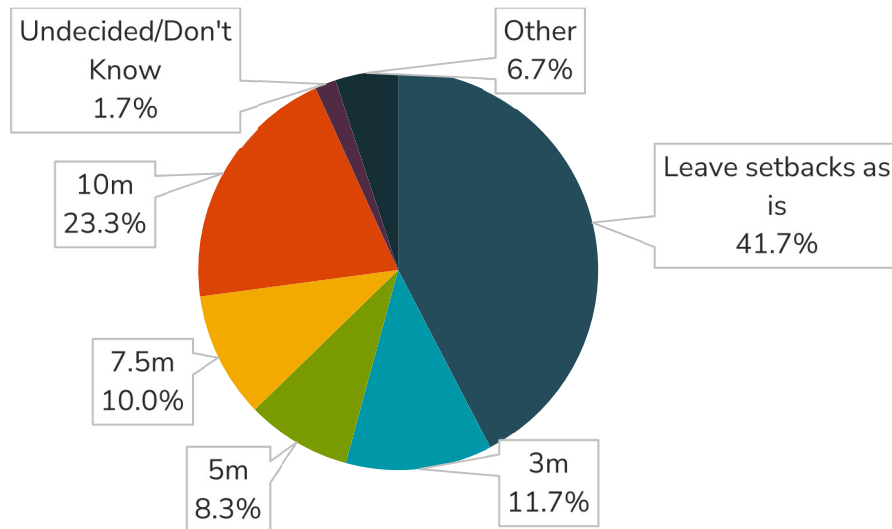
■ Leave regulations as is ■ One cabin or one living suite ■ Undecided/Don't Know ■ Other

Thirty (50.0%) respondents do not want to change the regulation. Twenty three (38.3%) support allowing living suites as an alternative to guest cabins and two (3.3%) answered undecided/don't know. Five (8.3%) respondents selected “other”, and gave additional ideas:

- Let the landowner decide.
- Also allow additional dwelling units on two/three hectare lots.
- Allow two guest cabins on five hectares.
- Allow for seasonal self-contained cabin (for example a tiny home) for recreational use.

**Question 3: If the minimum residential lot size was reduced to two hectares, should minimum setback distance be changed? If yes, what setback distance should be used for both Rural Residential (RR-1 and RR-2) zones?**

In Golden Horn residential zones, buildings can be located no closer than three metres (approximately 10 feet) from property lines for RR-1 lots, and 10 metres (33 feet) for RR-2 lots. When considering an appropriate setback distance, it is important to weigh factors such as privacy as well as development potential (e.g., building envelope, buildable area). Setback distances for residential zones in other comparable areas range from five to 15 metres.



Twenty five (41.7%) respondents said to leave setback distance as is.

Thirty two (53.3%) respondents support changing setback distances for both zones with the following breakdown:

- Seven (11.7%) support a three metre setback distance.
- Five (8.3%) support a five metre setback distance.
- Six (10.0%) support 7.5 metre setback distance.
- Fourteen (23.3%) support a 10 metre setback distance.



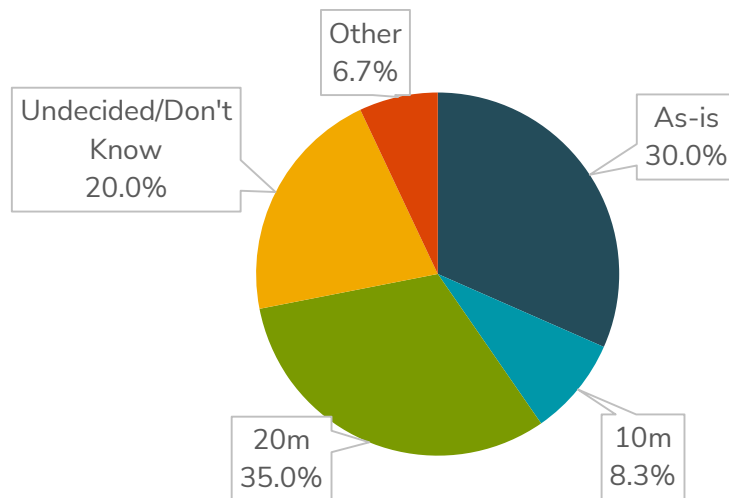
One (1.7%) respondent selected Undecided/Don't Know. Four (6.7%) respondents said "Other", and gave additional ideas:

- As long as there is road access to the lots, I am fine with the minimum requirement.
- One metre setback.
- Twenty metre setbacks.

Note that two respondents gave multiple answers for this question, so the total response for this question is greater than 100%.

**Question 4: If the minimum residential lot size was reduced to 2 hectares, should minimum lot width be...**

Subdivision of existing lots has the potential to produce irregular shaped lots and narrow street frontages. The Golden Horn regulations do not specify a minimum lot width. A 10 to 20 metre minimum lot width is typically applied to new, not serviced development areas, to provide adequate width for driveways (10 metre) and power line easements (20 metre).





Eighteen (30.0%) respondents said to leave minimum lot width as is (no minimum). Five (8.3%) respondents support a 10 metre minimum width. Twenty one (35.0%) respondents support a 20 metre minimum width and 12 (20.0%) respondents selected Undecided/Don't Know.

There were four (6.7%) respondents who selected "Other" and gave additional ideas:

- Three responses said 30 metres.
- The power connection will affect lot width.
- Former RR-2 owners who have subdivided should maintain 10 metre setbacks.

# Next steps

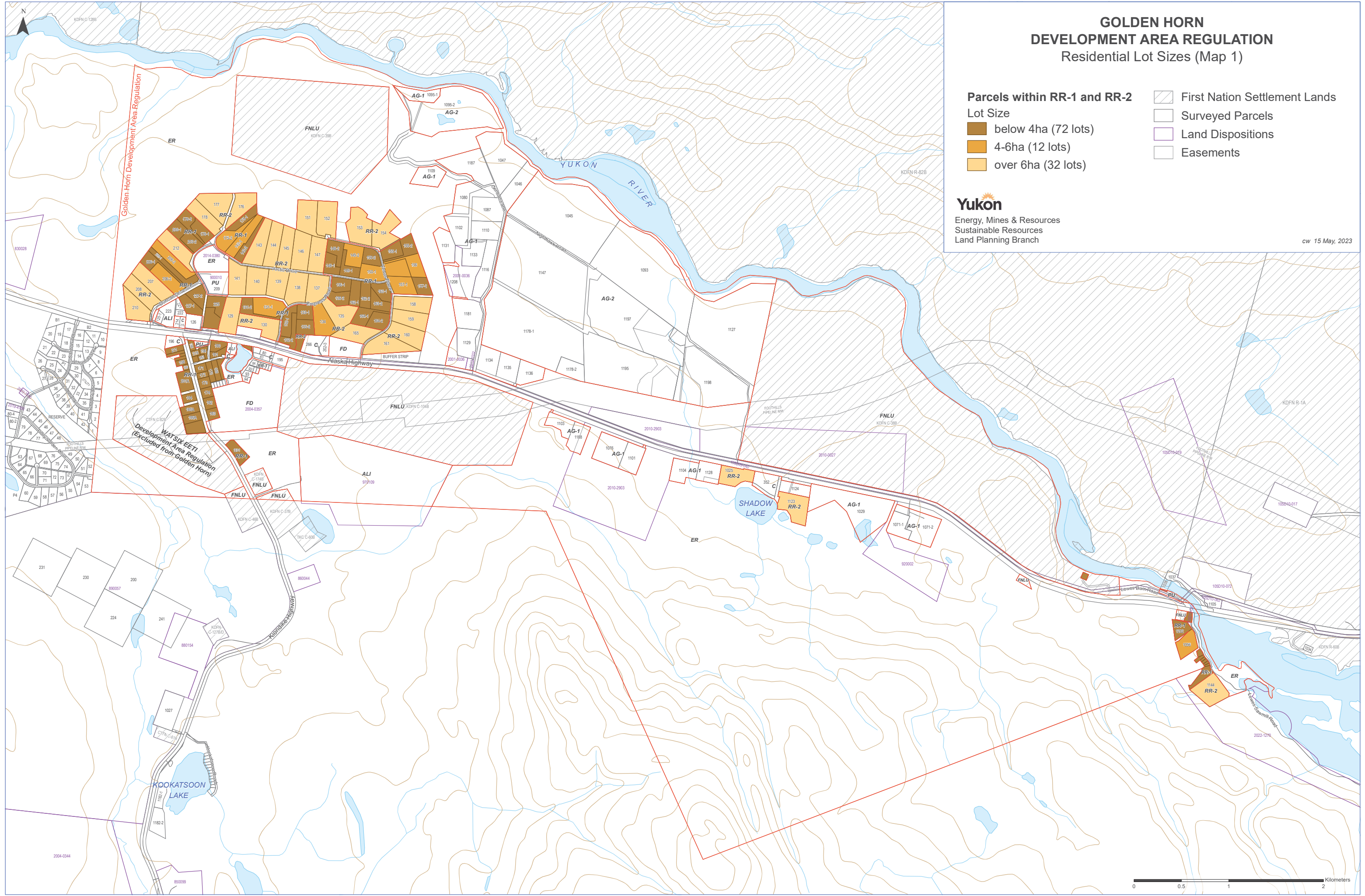
The input received in this engagement will inform the decision of whether or not to proceed with amendments to the Golden Horn Development Area Regulation. If we decide to proceed, a formal zoning amendment process will begin in accordance with the Golden Horn Development Area Regulation. There will be an opportunity for public input as laid out in Sections 23-25. There will also be a technical analysis of the proposed amendment (e.g., servicing, environmental impacts), as well as consultation with affected First Nations.

# GOLDEN HORN DEVELOPMENT AREA REGULATION Residential Lot Sizes (Map 1)

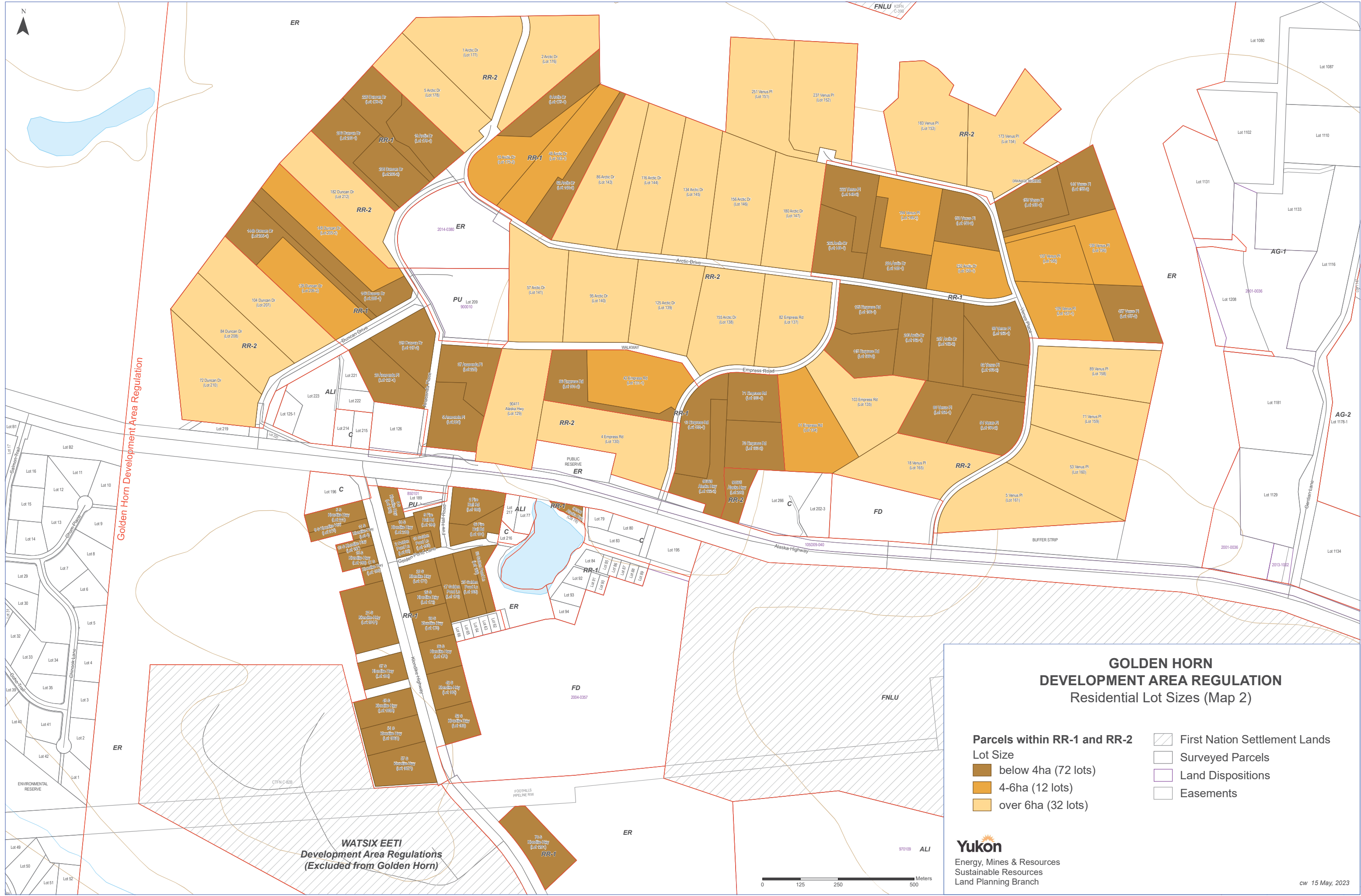
- |                                     |                               |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <b>Parcels within RR-1 and RR-2</b> | First Nation Settlement Lands |
| <b>Lot Size</b>                     | Surveyed Parcels              |
| below 4ha (72 lots)                 | Land Dispositions             |
| 4-6ha (12 lots)                     | Easements                     |
| over 6ha (32 lots)                  |                               |

**Yukon**  
Energy, Mines & Resources  
Sustainable Resources  
Land Planning Branch

cw 15 May, 2023







**GOLDEN HORN  
DEVELOPMENT AREA REGULATION**  
Residential Lot Sizes (Map 2)

- Parcels within RR-1 and RR-2**
- Lot Size
    - below 4ha (72 lots)
    - 4-6ha (12 lots)
    - over 6ha (32 lots)
  - First Nation Settlement Lands
  - Surveyed Parcels
  - Land Dispositions
  - Easements

**WATSIX EETI**  
Development Area Regulations  
(Excluded from Golden Horn)

**Yukon**  
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Sustainable Resources  
Land Planning Branch

# Golden Horn Development Area

## Residential Property Owner Questionnaire

Sent to residents by Yukon government Land Planning Branch April 28, 2023. Responses due June 4, 2023

Questionnaire #: 1

### Rural Residential Zoning Information

Prior to answering the questions, please review the current zoning. A summary is provided here. More details can be found in the Golden Horn Development Area Regulation.

There are 131 lots zoned either Rural Residential 1 (RR-1) or Rural Residential 2 (RR-2) in Golden Horn. These two zones are very similar. A previous zoning amendment removed some of the differences between them. Both zones allow:

- A residential dwelling unit as the only principal land use (the development that must be established first before accessory uses are built).
- Accessory uses in addition to the principal use. These are:
  - One guest cabin
  - On lots larger than 5 hectares, a second dwelling unit
  - A home based business
  - Bed and breakfast lodging
  - Minor agricultural pursuits

Buildings can be located no closer than 3 metres (approximately 10 feet) from property lines for RR-1 lots, and 10 metres (33 feet) for RR-2 lots. This is called the setback.

Both zones have a minimum lot size of 3 hectares. Many existing lots are smaller than 2 hectares, while 38 lots are between 4 and 8 hectares in size. If the minimum lot size was reduced to 2 hectares, many of these larger lots would be able to be subdivided to create additional lots.

### Questions

1) Do you support reducing the minimum lot size in the Rural Residential (RR-1 and RR-2) Zones from 3 hectares to 2 hectares?

Yes

No

Undecided/Don't know

***The following questions cover additional details that may be considered if the minimum lot size is reduced. Regardless of your views on lot size, please also answer the following questions.***

2) As noted above, all residential lots are allowed to build one additional dwelling unit as a guest cabin. The regulation states that guest cabins are for short-term usage only, and not to be rented out long-term. Typically, zoning for residential lots in comparable other areas of the Yukon allows one or more additional dwelling units to be built, with no restrictions on long-term tenancy. These units go by many names, but the two basic types of secondary units are:

- living suites (located within or attached to the principal residence), and
- guest cabins (self-contained buildings located separate from the principal residence).

If the minimum residential lot size was reduced to 2 hectares, do you think that regulations regarding additional dwelling units should be modified?

2a) Short-term tenancy restrictions:

- Keep temporary use restrictions                       Allow secondary units to be used long-term

2b) Types of additional dwelling units:

- Leave regulations as-is (1 guest cabin allowed, plus 1 extra residence on 5ha+ lots allowed)  
 Allow one guest cabin OR one living suite on lots smaller than 5 hectares  
 Undecided/Don't know                       Other \_\_\_\_\_

3) As noted above, current setbacks are 3 metres for RR-1 zone lots, and 10 metres for RR-2. Setbacks limit the area where development can occur. When lot subdivision occurs, it may be desirable to ensure that setbacks are large enough to ensure a minimum amount of privacy for all properties, while also considering that with smaller lot sizes, large setbacks can restrict potential building sites. Setbacks used for residential zones in other comparable areas range from 5 to 15 metres.

If the minimum residential lot size was reduced to 2 hectares, should setbacks be changed?

- Leave setbacks as-is

Make setbacks in RR-1 and RR-2 the same:

- 3 metres     5 metres     7.5 metres     10 metres     \_\_\_\_\_ metres  
 Undecided/Don't know                       Other \_\_\_\_\_

4) Subdivision of existing lots has the potential to produce irregular shaped lots and narrow street frontages. The Golden Horn regulations do not specify a minimum lot width. A 10 to 20 metre minimum lot width is typically applied to new unserviced development areas, to provide adequate width for (10 metre) driveways and (20 metre) powerline easements.

If the minimum residential lot size was reduced to 2 hectares, should minimum lot width be...

- As-is (no minimum)     10 metres     20 metres  
 Undecided/Don't know                       Other \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have any additional comments to provide? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Thank you for your time. Please return to Land Planning Branch by June 4, 2023.**

Questions? Contact us:                      [mike.ellis@yukon.ca](mailto:mike.ellis@yukon.ca)                      867-456-3853

# Golden Horn DAR amendment FAQ

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## Reducing Minimum Lot Size in Rural Residential zones

Q. Can I subdivide my lot if the minimum lot size for Rural Residential (RR) zones is reduced to 2 hectares?

It depends on your lot size. The table below summarizes the impact:

Rural Residential Zone	Number of lots	Subdivision potential	
		Current	Proposed amendment
Smaller than 4 ha	72	No	No
4 ha or larger, smaller than 6 ha	12	No	<b>Yes (1 new parcel/lot)</b>
6 ha or larger	32	Yes (1 new lot/parcel)	<b>Yes (up to 2 new parcels/lot)</b>

Q. How many new RR lots could be created?

There are 12 RR lots that are between 4 hectares and 6 hectares and, 32 lots are 6 hectares or larger. 72 lots are smaller than 4 hectares and will not be affected by the proposed change. (see table above)

## Guest Cabins and additional Dwellings on RR lots

Q. Can I keep my Guest Cabin if the amendment is approved to allow the use of Guest Cabins for permanent residential purposes on RR lots?

Yes. You can keep using the Guest Cabin for temporary overnight accommodation for visitors or the travelling public.

If your lot meets the minimum lot size<sup>1</sup>, existing Guest Cabins can be used as a permanent residence. You will need to apply for a Development Permit (\$25 application fee).

If your lot is smaller than the minimum lot size<sup>1</sup>, you can continue to use it for temporary overnight accommodations.

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<sup>1</sup> may be reduced from 3 hectares to 2 hectares, if the amended is approved



## Q. How do I convert my Guest Cabin to a Dwelling if the amendment is approved to allow the use of Guest Cabins for permanent residential purposes on RR lots?

If your lot meets the minimum lot size<sup>1</sup>, and if you want to use the Guest Cabin for permanent residential purposes, you will need to apply for a Development Permit (\$25 application fee) to change the use to a Dwelling.

## Q. Is there anything else I have to do to use the Guest Cabin as a Dwelling?

Your building has to meet the National Building Code – whether it is built and used as a Guest Cabin or a Dwelling. When you apply for a Development Permit, we will help you make sure your building is built to code.

## Q. Can I build a new Guest Cabin if the amendment is approved to allow the use of Guest Cabins for residential purposes on RR lots?

Yes. In RR zones, if your lot meets the minimum lot size<sup>1</sup> you can build a Dwelling and use it for temporary overnight accommodation (Guest Cabin).

If your RR lot is smaller than the minimum lot size<sup>1</sup>, a Guest Cabin is only allowed to be used for temporary overnight accommodations.

In Rural Agricultural 1 zone, one Guest Cabin is permitted as an Accessory Use.

## Q. Can I build a second Dwelling on my RR lot?

If your lot meets the minimum lot<sup>1</sup>, two Dwellings would be allowed:

- An existing Guest Cabin would be considered as a second Dwelling; or
- If there is no existing Guest Cabin, a new Dwelling can be built.

For lots larger than 5 hectares, a second Dwelling is currently permitted. If you have a Guest Cabin, it could be used as a Dwelling (total of three Dwellings). If there is no Guest Cabin, you can build a third Dwelling.

## Q. Is there enough groundwater in the area to support an increase of wells if there are more Dwellings built in the area? Will my well dry up?

It is difficult to say with certainty about the groundwater/aquifers without a thorough study and testing. Minimum lot size around Whitehorse have been reduced elsewhere before and we are not aware of any issues to the existing well users of these areas.

## Changes to the Minimum Setback in RR-1

**Q. My house is built within 10 metres from the property line in Rural Residential 1 zone. Can I still apply for subdivision if the setback is increased from 3 metres to 10 metres?**

Yes, if your lot meets all the other requirements, you can apply for subdivision if you are not creating a new encroachment into the 10 metre setback.

**Q. My house is built within 10 metres from the property line in Rural Residential 1 zone. Can I make improvements to it if the setback is increased from 3 metres to 10 metres?**

Existing buildings within the new 10 metres setbacks will be considered a legal non-conforming building. As long as you are not increasing encroachment into the 10 metre setback, you can add improvements to your existing building. You are required to obtain Development Permit and/or Building Permit, depending on the structure/improvement.

A new building will have to meet the required minimum setback from the property line.

## Other

**Q. Why is a 2 hectare minimum lot size being considered for residential lots?**

Many existing lots are smaller than 2 hectares, while 38 lots are between 4 and 8 hectares in size. If the minimum lot size was reduced to 2 hectares, many of these larger lots would be able to be subdivided to create additional lots.

Zoning for most Yukon communities was created with a 6 hectare minimum lot size, and many communities have sought amendments to reduce the size to 3 hectares (including Golden Horn, in 2011) or to 2 hectares.

**Q. Why are these amendments being proposed?**

A group of Golden Horn residents conducted a door-to-door petition in 2021, asking residents if they wanted the lot size to be changed. The Land Planning Branch does not accept individual rezoning applications to reduce minimum lot size. Changing minimum lot size requires a community-wide discussion.

This survey will help the Yukon government assess the community support for proposed changes.

**Q. Why is allowing Guest Cabins to be used for permanent residential occupancy being considered?**

Typically, zoning for residential lots in other areas of the Yukon allows one or more additional dwelling units to be built, with no restrictions on long-term tenancy.

**Q. Why is a 10 metre setback in the RR-1 zone being considered?**

When lot subdivision occurs, it may be desirable to ensure that setbacks are large enough to ensure a minimum amount of privacy for all properties, while also considering that with smaller lot sizes, large setbacks can restrict potential building sites.