# Yellowknife council considers vacant property tax to boost housing development



Yellowknife city councillors are considering the introduction of a vacant property tax as a measure to encourage housing development amid the city's ongoing housing challenges. The idea was proposed by Councillor Tom McLennan during a Monday council meeting, where he emphasised that limited availability of land for development is a significant barrier to addressing housing needs in Yellowknife.

“I believe we must now turn some effort to pushing for the vacant land in our community to be utilised,” McLennan said. He explained that the purpose of the proposed tax or fee would be to incentivise owners of vacant land to either develop their properties or sell them to parties who will. While acknowledging existing incentives aimed at promoting development and environmental remediation of certain properties, McLennan highlighted the absence of a “stick” to compel action from landholders.

“Incentives alone do not change the landscape for those holding vacant land,” he noted. “If we are to see development on many of the premium vacant lots we see in town, we need to change the cost structure.”

Councillors present at the meeting expressed general support for exploring the concept further, including how it might integrate with other city initiatives planned before the next municipal election scheduled for 2026. Key considerations for the council include determining whether such a tax should apply city-wide or be limited to vacant lots located within the downtown area.

Councillor Rob Warburton described the conversation as promising but urged caution, saying, “I also want to make sure it turns out to be the thing we want it to do, and doesn’t have impacts in a way that we don’t think about ahead of time.” He pointed out potential risks, such as a depressed market for vacant land that could prompt property owners to sell at lower prices, potentially affecting overall property taxes and assessments.

In another significant decision discussed at the same meeting, the city council deliberated on awarding a $8.1 million contract to NWT Construction Ltd. for building a new landfill cell at Yellowknife’s waste disposal site. The bid, although exceeding the original budget by more than $2.3 million, was the lowest among four submissions received for the project. The city affirmed it could manage the extra expenditure.

The municipality stated that the two existing landfill cells are nearing capacity, necessitating the construction of a new cell within the current year to maintain the city’s solid waste disposal operations. The upgrade aims to ensure continued waste management infrastructure capacity for Yellowknife’s growing needs.

The discussions reflect Yellowknife’s broader efforts to manage urban growth and essential municipal services, balancing infrastructure requirements with policies aimed at fostering housing development in the city. The deliberations and decisions will continue as councillors prepare for future elections and ongoing urban planning.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.yellowknife.ca/en/doing-business/revitalization-incentives.aspx> - The City of Yellowknife offers a Development of Vacant Property Abatement, a five-year declining tax abatement for new residential, commercial, or mixed-use developments on properties within the Downtown Zone that have been vacant for more than five years. This initiative aims to encourage the utilization of vacant land for development.
2. <https://www.yellowknife.ca/en/doing-business/housing-incentives.aspx> - The City of Yellowknife provides various housing incentives, including the Development of Vacant Property Abatement, to promote the development of vacant land within the Downtown Zone. This program offers a five-year declining tax abatement for new residential, commercial, or mixed-use developments on properties that have been vacant for over five years.
3. <https://yellowknifent.new.swagit.com/videos/293638> - In the January 8, 2024, Governance & Priorities Committee meeting, Charlsey White, Director of Planning and Development, discussed the current Development Incentives By-law, highlighting the focus on tax abatements and grant programs aimed at encouraging development, including the Development of Vacant Property Abatement.
4. <https://yellowknifent.new.swagit.com/videos/299530/download_section> - During the March 11, 2024, Governance & Priorities Committee meeting, discussions included the Development of Vacant Property Abatement as part of the city's efforts to incentivize development on vacant land within the Downtown Zone.
5. <https://yellowknifent.new.swagit.com/videos/317646> - In the October 15, 2024, Governance & Priorities Committee meeting, Miss White presented the draft Development Incentives By-law, which includes the Development of Vacant Property Abatement, aiming to encourage the utilization of vacant land for development in the Downtown Zone.
6. <https://cabinradio.ca/114589/news/politics/yellowknife-needs-housing-heres-where-the-city-wants-to-put-it/> - This article discusses the City of Yellowknife's efforts to identify target areas for housing development, emphasizing the importance of utilizing existing infrastructure and minimizing additional costs, aligning with the city's strategy to address housing needs through strategic development.
7. <https://news.google.com/rss/articles/CBMiqgFBVV95cUxPU0VBZDJXdHJ1dDRUU2xJcURHQ181VXVVNUx4OHZvbkwwdVBMWE4xNmtVN2dnQW1ZRTZEY19ZUGdzRlVnaE9XRTR5N2hOZ1JDNDhqWHdRU2QtdDZMclFSd21WRzRpbFVjc0I0Z3RHeU9Jc2VyYy1zeGZ0enppUWItOGFsNldaQkd3Qk9BOEUxWTNxRVRlb2hwSXkzMGFUbGc5NDJUVmt3c2hkdw?oc=5&hl=en-US&gl=US&ceid=US:en> - Please view link - unable to able to access data