



SUBJECT: City of Burlington Housing Strategy – former school site reuse analysis

TO: Community Planning, Regulation & Mobility Cttee.

FROM: Community Planning Department

Report Number: PL-53-22

Wards Affected: All

File Numbers: 502-02-73

Date to Committee: July 5, 2022

Date to Council: July 12, 2022

Recommendation:

Direct the City Manager and the Executive Director of Legal Services and Corporation Counsel to consider and integrate Appendix A to community planning department report PL-53-22 titled “Supplemental Technical Memo: Acquisition and Re-use of Surplus School Sites” dated June 2022, prepared by Dillon Consulting and SHS Consulting and report back in Q2 2023 with a Strategic Land Policy that includes a municipal policy directive on surplus school sites which will inform the multi-year community investment plan.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to present the findings of the Supplemental Technical Memo – Acquisition and Re-Use of Surplus School Sites prepared by Dillon Consulting and SHS Consulting (Appendix A).

Vision to Focus Alignment:

- Increase economic prosperity and community responsive city growth
- Building more citizen engagement, community health and culture

Background and Discussion:

On October 6, 2021, at Corporate Services, Strategy, Risk and Accountability Committee staff report CM-22-21 titled “Burlington Lands Partnership update 1” was considered. In addition to the recommendations of the report, staff received the following Staff Direction:

Direct the City Manager to report back by Q1 2022 with a proposed strategic lands strategy for the acquisition and community use of current and potential surplus school sites that includes the following elements:

- a current practise review of former school site uses in other municipalities, including opportunities for attainable housing;
- a complete review of existing federal and provincial housing support programs, in coordination with the work underway via the housing strategy;
- opportunities for housing, parkland and community uses on these sites, in partnership with other agencies, non-profit organizations and levels of government, including Halton Region, and coordinated with the work of the Burlington Lands Partnership;
- budgetary implications for known and potential sites that may come available;
- a community engagement strategy on potential uses for these sites; and
- communication to the four school boards (English public and catholic, French public and catholic) that the city has an interest in considering any school sites that may become available, and requests regular communication from all boards about their long-term plans. (SD-29-21)

In February 2022, Council considered Corporate Strategy report [CS-04-22 Streamline Development Approval Fund](#). The Streamline Development Approval Fund initiative saw Ontario’s 39 largest municipalities each receive an allocation from the province to help modernize, streamline, and accelerate processes for managing and approving housing applications. The City identified the first phase of the former school site reuse analysis as one of its proposed eligible projects in that it is a study to support new housing opportunities in the City. This report also clarified that this work would be scoped to satisfy several components of the Staff Direction.

Given the ongoing work of the City’s Housing Strategy an opportunity was identified to address the staff direction in part through a slight broadening of the scope of the Housing Strategy.

Staff note that municipalities are required to complete projects funded through the Streamlining Development Applications Fund by February 28, 2023. In addition, municipalities are required to provide a final report (posted publicly) in March 2023. This required report back may offer an opportunity to share any progress on building on the information collected through this first phase of work to support the development of a Strategic Land Policy including a municipal policy directive on surplus school sites.

Strategy/process

The Technical Memo was researched and prepared by Dillon and SHS Consulting which represents the first phase of work is divided into 6 sections:

Section 1 – Context

Section 2 – Policy and Legislative Context

Section 3 - Current Practice Review – including a summary of key findings

Section 4 – Provincial and Federal Funding Programs

Section 5 - Engagement Considerations

Section 6 – Next Steps

The key findings as a result of the current practice review are summarized in section 3.3:

- Partnerships with developers are critical for delivering on affordable housing:
 - Some municipalities are willing to take on the development risk in advance of having partners lined up;
 - Public/private partnerships can help to leverage “big moves”; and,
 - Financial incentives may be needed to achieve below-market housing solutions.
- Municipalities do not always need to purchase the site to get a positive outcome;
- Thoughtful urban design can help to address compatibility concerns and there may be opportunities for heritage preservation;
- Due to the timelines required under the Education Act to list properties, it is important for municipalities to have a vision for how they intend to approach opportunities before they emerge:
 - Ongoing dialogue with the school boards is recommended;
 - A municipal policy directive can establish priorities for surplus school site acquisition;
 - A long-term strategy can also provide a forward-looking analysis of opportunities and inform long term planning;

Project Connections:

Housing Strategy

The City’s [Housing Strategy](#) establishes a road map and acts as a guiding document for the City to use in order to take action and work towards meeting the housing needs of the community and moving the city closer to the Vision for housing in Burlington. It provides a set of city-wide housing objectives (the Themes) supported by 12 Actions and an implementation and monitoring plan. It sets priorities, identifies quick wins, and provides pathways forward that are responsive to change.

The Housing Strategy was presented to the [Community Planning Regulation and Mobility Committee](#) on June 7, 2022 and approved by City Council on June 21, 2022. The approval of the Housing Strategy marks the end of the first phase of the Housing Strategy project, and the beginning of the implementation phase (phase 2) of the project.

The Supplemental Technical Memo supports a better understanding and a set of information related to three of the Actions identified in the Housing Strategy:

Action 1 – Clearly define the City’s role and responsibility in supporting a diversity of housing options that are attainable at all income levels

The discussion and findings of the technical memo highlight distinct roles in the housing system and reinforce the key principle of the Housing Strategy to not duplicate the role of other organizations in the system but rather to identify opportunities to partner with others to achieve better outcomes.

Action 2 – Act as a connector and partner in the housing system by identifying opportunities to connect people and providers to resources and information related to meeting housing objectives.

The discussion and findings of the technical memo share diverse partnership models and opportunities that could act as models for building relationships with other levels of government, non-profit organizations, and others.

Action 10 – Identify underused properties, including government owned and non-government owned sites that could be used for housing.

The discussion and findings of the technical memo share successful examples of re-use of underused properties to provide new opportunities for housing.

Burlington Lands Partnership

On October 6, 2020, through the consideration of report CM-29-20: Advancing a Municipal Development Corporation, Council endorsed the establishment, in principle, a new corporate structure for the Burlington Lands Partnership (BLP). On February 3, 2021, through the consideration of report CM-01-21: Implementation of Burlington lands partnership, Council endorsed the terms of reference for the BLP. The mandate of the BLP is to achieve community benefits and returns by maximizing opportunities of economic growth, developing and implementing city building projects, and creating opportunities for the development of attainable housing. To this end, the BLP will support the City’s ability to deliver on the Housing Strategy and the creation of attainable housing strategic land partnerships and other opportunities.

The early work of the Burlington Lands Partnership team has included developing relationships with school boards and with other potential partners including non-profit organizations involved in the delivery of housing. Work will continue to build

relationships among the community partners interested in delivering positive housing outcomes within the City of Burlington.

Options Considered

N/A

Financial Matters:

There was an increase in the Housing Strategy's scope of work as a result of Staff Direction SD-29-21. The cost of this scope change was \$27,500 and was funded by the Province of Ontario's Streamline Development Approval Fund (SDFA) Initiative, as identified in Staff Report [CS-04-22: Streamline Development Approval Fund](#).

Total Financial Impact

N/A

Source of Funding

The Province of Ontario's Streamline Development Approval Fund (SDAF) Initiative.

Other Resource Impacts

N/A

Climate Implications

On April 23, 2019, Burlington's City Council unanimously passed a motion to declare a climate emergency. Broadly, the City's Housing Strategy provides innovative solutions to address local housing issues while making better use of existing infrastructure and services through the provision of additional residential units and directing new housing options in locations for intensification, such as Major Transit Station Areas with more diverse options for alternative modes of transportation, to support the provision of a wider range of housing options and minimize impacts on the environment. Specifically, considering the reuse of existing school sites within existing neighbourhoods is a way to support the retention of the social fabric while increasing options for attainable housing and other *public service facilities / community infrastructure*.

Engagement Matters:

The report and appendix are primarily an information gathering exercise. Early discussions with staff at the school boards, the Region of Halton and other relationship building as noted in the Burlington Lands Partnership section have occurred outside of this work. In addition to the overall direction from the Housing Strategy related to supporting broader city-wide dialogue about the importance of attainable and affordable housing, Section 5.0 of the technical memo provides discussion and breaks down engagement opportunities by stages in the process that can be considered. Future discussions will support the second phase of work related to the above noted Staff Direction (SD-29-21).

Conclusion:

The findings from the Supplemental Technical Memo: Acquisition and Re-use of Surplus School Sites (Appendix A) provides insights into how other municipalities and agencies have brought new life to underutilized lands through investments, partnerships, and collaboration. The work completes the first phase of work which highlights opportunities and constraints related to the successful re-use of surplus school sites in Ontario. The findings will inform the second phase of work which will include the development of a proposed strategic land policy and decision-making framework to support transparency and investment in our community.

Respectfully submitted,

Alison Enns, MCIP, RPP

Manager of Policy and Community

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Appendices:

A. Supplemental Technical Memo – Acquisition and Re-Use of Surplus School Sites

Notifications:

Andrew Balahura, Director, Housing Services, Region of Halton

Curt Benson, Director, Planning Services and Chief Planning Official, Region of Halton

Report Approval:

All reports are reviewed and/or approved by Department Director, the Chief Financial Officer and the Executive Director of Legal Services & Corporation Counsel.