

DECISION/DIRECTION NOTE

Title: City-Owned Vacant Land for Affordable Housing
Date Prepared: February 18, 2021
Report To: Committee of the Whole
Councillor and Role: Deputy Mayor Sheilagh O'Leary, Housing
Ward: N/A

Decision/Direction Required:

To seek approval from Council to:

1. Publicly identify the parcels of land that have been identified as potential sites for affordable housing developments in advance of planned developments on those sites;
2. Develop a public engagement plan to inform and engage residents, businesses, and other stakeholder groups in the areas surrounding the identified parcels of land; and
3. Seek funding as needed to complete work on these parcels in advance of planned projects (i.e. environmental assessment, geotechnical analysis, etc.)

Discussion – Background and Current Status:

The City of St. John's approved the Affordable Housing Strategy, 2019-2028, in November 2018. The following implementation strategy is stated in the 'Unlocking Resources' section of the City's Affordable Housing Strategy (p. 27):

1.3 Continue to create a list of city-owned vacant land and buildings and evaluate the inventory for potential redevelopment as affordable housing

As per CD#: S2019-01-21/3 Council approved the expropriation of several parcels of land to eliminate any potential claim prior to the commencement of non-profit projects on these sites. Council also directed that these parcels be reserved for non-profit housing initiatives/projects or partnerships. The parcels of land identified were:

245 Forest Road	Ward 2
245 Freshwater Road (at Terra Nova Road)	Ward 4
80-90 Empire Avenue	Ward 4
375 Waterford Bridge Road	Ward 5
28 Eric Street	Ward 2

To date, there has only been public engagement regarding one of these parcels (28 Eric Street) for which a Letter of Intent with Habitat for Humanity has been formalized. This letter outlines the intended gifting of the property to Habitat for Humanity subject to a successful rezoning, development approval, and collaboration with the Eric Street Community Garden.

ST. JOHN'S

The addresses of the other parcels have not been released publicly. There are currently no planned projects for these sites. However, in light of criticisms related to the lack of advanced engagement around the Eric Street Project and with additional funding potentially on the horizon (i.e. there is national advocacy for a relaunch of the Rapid Housing Initiative), early stakeholder engagement may increase support for a development on these sites. It would also allow City staff to identify stakeholder concerns, address these concerns in advance of a proposed development, outline the development process for stakeholders, and offer opportunities for stakeholders to provide input on what they'd like to see in the area. Of note, each of these parcels require rezoning and would require public consultation prior to development.

These sites were reviewed by Parks, PERS and Legal staff to determine their potential for affordable housing developments. However, it is noted that other work such as environmental assessments and geotechnical analysis may be required to determine if the sites are well suited for this purpose. We would like to seek funding to complete some of this work in advance of confirmed projects for the sites.

Key Considerations/Implications:

1. Budget/Financial Implications:

Funding is already allocated for 2021 Affordable Housing objectives. The Housing Division will seek funding sources to complete work on sites as needed.

2. Partners or Other Stakeholders:

The City's Affordable Housing Strategy was built upon public and strategic stakeholder engagement, and the implementation continues to be guided and shaped by multi-stakeholder partnerships and processes. Residents, businesses and other stakeholders in the affected areas will be engaged.

3. Alignment with Strategic Directions/Adopted Plans:

The Affordable Housing Strategy aligns with the Strategic Plan's vision and directions. Affordable Housing implementation actions work in tandem with the Municipal Plan and Development Regulations.

4. Legal or Policy Implications:

No legal implications at this time.

5. Privacy Implications:

None anticipated at this time.

6. Engagement and Communications Considerations:

The City's Marketing and Communications and Organizational Performance and Strategy divisions have been consulted. Should the above recommendations be approved, a communications and engagement strategy would be developed.

7. Human Resource Implications:

None anticipated at this time.

8. Procurement Implications:

None anticipated at this time.

9. Information Technology Implications:

N/A

10. Other Implications:

N/A

Recommendation:

That Council approve the following:

1. Publicly identifying the parcels of land that have been identified as potential sites for affordable housing developments in advance of planned developments on those sites;
2. Developing a public engagement plan to inform and engage residents, businesses, and other stakeholder groups in the areas surrounding the identified parcels of land; and
3. Seeking funding to complete work on these parcels in advance of planned projects (i.e. environmental assessment, geotechnical analysis, etc.)

Prepared by: Krista Gladney, Affordable Housing and Development Facilitator

Approved by: Judy Tobin, Manager Housing

Report Approval Details

Document Title:	City-Owned Vacant Land for Affordable Housing.docx
Attachments:	
Final Approval Date:	Feb 18, 2021

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

Judy Tobin - Feb 18, 2021 - 2:40 PM

Tanya Haywood - Feb 18, 2021 - 3:13 PM