

To: Warden and Members of County Council

From: Chief Administrative Officer

Declaration of Surplus Lands - 175 Springbank Avenue North, Woodstock

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That County Council hereby declares lands described as Lots 363 – 366, 515 – 517, Plan 827, and Lot 366, Plan 827, and municipally known as 175 Springbank Avenue North, Woodstock, as surplus to the needs of the County of Oxford, and that staff be authorized to proceed with disposal in accordance with the Disposal of Land Policy 6.15 and Housing First Policy 9.7;
2. And further, that By-law No. 6449-2022, being a by-law to declare the above mentioned lands as surplus to the needs of the County of Oxford, be raised;
3. And further, that Council authorize staff to release a Request for Proposals (RFP) to solicit prospective proponents for the development of an affordable housing project at 175 Springbank Avenue North, Woodstock.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- On March 9, 2022, County Council passed a resolution allocating up to \$1.2 million to support a future affordable housing project at 175 Springbank Avenue North, Woodstock. The lands were purchased by the County in January, 2022, subject to the condition that the lands be developed for such purposes.
- To facilitate a future affordable housing project, staff are requesting Council's approval to declare the lands surplus in accordance with the Disposal of Land Policy 6.15 and Housing First Policy 9.7.
- Staff are also seeking Council approval to issue a Request for Proposal to solicit prospective proponents to develop the proposed affordable housing project.

Implementation Points

Following Councils' approval of the attached by-law, Staff will initiate the RFP process in accordance with the Housing First Policy, to solicit prospective proponents for the development of an affordable housing project on the property.

Furthermore, staff will undertake a review of the County's Land Disposal Policy and Housing First Policy with a view to streamlining the process to make County-owned real property readily available for developers in order to meet the community's immediate need for affordable housing. Staff anticipate that recommended improvements to the process as set out in these Policies will be presented to Council in September.

Financial Impact







On March 9, 2022, following consideration of Report No. CAO 2022-03, Council passed a resolution authorizing the allocation of up to \$1.2 million from the Affordable Housing Reserve to support a future affordable housing project on the property.

The proposed surplus land declaration will support the intended affordable housing project on the property, and the details contained in this report will have no further impact on the current year's budget.

Communications

In accordance with the Land Disposal Policy, a public notice was published in the Oxford Review and Norfolk-Tillsonburg News, posted on the County's website, and provided to the City of Woodstock. A public meeting is scheduled for the July 13, 2022 County Council meeting to consider adoption of a by-law to declare the subject lands as surplus.

Strategic Plan (2020-2022)

					
WORKS WELL TOGETHER	WELL CONNECTED	SHAPES THE FUTURE	INFORMS & ENGAGES	PERFORMS & DELIVERS	POSITIVE IMPACT
1.i. 1.ii.		3.iii.			

DISCUSSION

Background

The subject property is located on the northwest corner of Springbank Avenue North and Braeside Street (as shown on Attachment 1) and comprises approximately 0.6 ha (1.5 ac). The site is currently occupied by an existing church and two parking areas.

On April 14, 2021, County Council passed a resolution authorizing the acquisition of 175 Springbank Avenue North, in the City of Woodstock, in an amount up to \$1.4 million in support of a future multi-residential affordable housing project. Furthermore, on March 9, 2022, Council passed a resolution to allocate up to \$1.2 million from the Affordable Housing Reserve to support the proposed project.

For Council's information, the property was purchased from Bethany Lutheran Church with a condition that it be developed for affordable housing purposes. In order to authorize a potential land disposal in support of a future housing project, the lands must be declared surplus in accordance with the County's Land Disposal Policy, as currently written. Similar to previous housing projects, staff propose to release an RFP to solicit prospective proponents interested in developing an affordable housing project on the site.

An Expression of Interest (EOI) was issued in March 2022, to provide an opportunity to review intended affordable housing proposals and provide feedback in light of a future RFP. In response to the EOI, two submissions were received from Indwell and BECC Construction.

Comments

A public meeting is scheduled for the July 13, 2022 County Council meeting to consider adoption of a by-law to declare the lands surplus, and to authorize disposal of the property in support of a future affordable housing project.

A future housing project will intensify the site and create much needed affordable housing units for the seniors community. To facilitate the proposed project and the intended use of the property, the site must be declared surplus to the needs of the County. Following this, an RFP will be issued to solicit prospective proponents who are interested in developing an affordable housing project on the site. Staff will report back to Council once proposals have been received in response to the RFP.

Land Disposal Policy & Housing First Policy

In accordance with the *Municipal Act, 2001*, Council has adopted a Disposal of Land Policy for the purpose of establishing provisions to govern the sale of County real property, and to establish circumstances to which the County will provide public notice. This is to ensure a transparent and accountable process, and to ensure investments are made in the best interests of the County. While the *Municipal Act, 2001*, indicates that Council shall adopt a land disposal policy, it does not indicate the specific provisions that should be included in relation to such disposal.

In accordance with the County's Land Disposal Policy, prior the disposal of any real property for the purpose of affordable housing, Council shall declare the lands surplus by by-law and provide notice to the public. Once the former is complete, the land can be transferred in accordance with the Housing First Policy, which requires a competitive proposal call to non-profit and private sector developers.

While this process is important to ensure a transparent public process in the disposal of most County owned land, it is not always ideal with respect to affordable housing projects. In circumstances where the County has purchased lands specifically for affordable housing

purposes and a condition of the sale has been included to ensure such, there is less of a need to follow the land disposal process. In this case, the lands cannot be used for purposes other than affordable housing, and the land disposal process can create additional delays in terms of initiating an RFP. Furthermore, the Land Disposal Policy indicates that County owned lands are to be considered for housing purposes before any other use. If the lands are appropriate for residential development, they can be made available by way of a competitive proposal call to non-profit and private sector developers for the development of affordable housing. As such, given the requirement to offer such lands through a competitive public process, there is less of a need to also follow the prescribed public notice requirements under our existing land disposal process.

Considering the above, while transparency and accountability to the public is necessary, staff note that there is a competing and urgent need to address housing affordability in our community. In line with the directives of Federal and Provincial governments, it is important to review local policies to determine if there are any opportunities to streamline the development of varying housing options. In this respect, staff are undertaking a review of the County's Land Disposal Policy and Housing First Policy to determine potential efficiencies with respect to such.

Conclusions

The need to develop affordable housing is identified as a goal in the Oxford County Strategic Plan, County Official Plan, Future Oxford Community Sustainability Plan, County's 10 Year Shelter Plan and the Zero Poverty Action Plan.

This proposal seeks to leverage existing County owned lands to address the increasing shortage of affordable rental housing.

SIGNATURES

Report Author:

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Approved for submission:

Michael Duben, B.A., LL.B.
Chief Administrative Officer

ATTACHMENT

Attachment 1 – Location Map – July 13, 2022