

Town of Whitby

Staff Report

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Report Title: Affordable Housing Initiative – Hickory Street South and Dunlop Street East

Report to: Committee of the Whole

Date of meeting: February 27, 2023

Report Number: PDP 08-23

Department(s) Responsible:

Planning and Development Department
(Planning Services)
Office of the Chief Administrative Officer

Submitted by:

John Taylor, Senior Manager Zoning & Regulation

Acknowledged by M. Gaskell, Chief Administrative Officer

For additional information, contact:

John Taylor, Senior Manager Zoning & Regulation x.2908

1. Recommendation:

1. That Council direct staff to list the municipally owned property located at the northeast corner of Hickory Street and Dunlop Street East and a portion of the municipally owned property located on the south side of Dunlop Street East, as identified on Attachment #1 to Report No. PDP 08-23, on the Region of Durham's surplus land website for the potential creation of affordable housing; and,
2. That staff report back to Council on the interest received for affordable housing opportunities on the subject properties.

2. Highlights:

- The Town of Whitby Official Plan (OP) includes policies that support the provision of affordable housing within the municipality. Policy 7.7.2 of the OP states that "the Municipality shall encourage, in cooperation with other levels of government, the development of affordable ownership and rental housing, including the development of not-for-profit housing by cooperative, municipal, and private non-profit housing corporations".

- Through the Town-Owned Land Strategy, two municipally owned properties within downtown Whitby have been identified as potential candidate sites for the development of affordable housing.
- The Region of Durham (Region) has a surplus land website that directs potential non-profit developers to engage with local municipalities and the Region to provide affordable housing opportunities. The non-profit developers are directed to contact the local municipality and the Region to determine if an acceptable agreement between the parties can be negotiated. The municipality is under no obligation to accept any of the proposals received.

3. Background:

At Home in Durham is the Durham Region's Housing Plan. The plan lays out the Region's vision for housing and homelessness in Durham. It is an extension of the commitment to affordable housing set out in the Durham Region Strategic Plan and the Regional Official Plan. The Durham Region Strategic Plan recommended the establishment of an Affordable and Seniors' Housing Task Force to recommend actions to address affordable rental and seniors' housing across Durham Region. The Task Force was made up of various Council representatives from across the Region. In October of 2017, the Task Force recommended a number of actions to assist in increasing the supply of affordable housing across the Region. One of the recommendations was to develop a surplus land inventory in the Region that would promote the construction, effective management, and maintenance of affordable housing in Durham Region.

In addition, and in support of the Region's goals to address housing affordability, Policy 7.7.2 of the Town of Whitby Official Plan states that "the Municipality shall encourage, in cooperation with other levels of government, the development of affordable ownership and rental housing, including the development of not-for-profit housing by cooperative, municipal, and private non-profit housing corporations".

4. Discussion:

Two vacant, Town owned properties within downtown Whitby have been identified as potential affordable housing sites through the Town Owned Land Strategy. The parcels are located at the northeast intersection of Hickory Street South and Dunlop Street East and a portion of the lands on the south side of Dunlop Street East as identified on Attachments #1 and #2. Each property has been reviewed by the Town in the past for possible residential and/or affordable housing uses, including the necessary steps to make the sites development ready. The following is a brief overview of the two parcels.

1. Northeast corner of Hickory Street South and Dunlop Street East

In March of 2000, a recommendation was approved by Council to seek a minor variance application on the subject property to facilitate the future development of the site for a townhouse development. Town staff determined that the site could accommodate between 14 to 17 townhouse units depending on whether a street townhouse or condominium townhouse development was proposed. The intent at the time was to advance the site to a shovel ready stage and then sell the property to the highest bidder to promote residential development in the downtown, while at the same time raising funds for the Town.

A number of variances were approved on the site in 2000 to facilitate a future townhouse development on the property. Although the variances were approved, there was little interest in the site until 2016.

In 2016, Council approved the release of the subject lands for development. As part of that direction, a condition was included to investigate the site for contamination before bringing it to market. Subsequently, a consultant was retained to undertake a Phase 1 environmental assessment of the subject property. The Phase 1 environmental study recommended that a Phase 2 study be undertaken based on the history of the site. The property had a previous CNR rail spur associated with it. A Phase 2 environmental report was not undertaken at that point in time considering the anticipated cost of the study and potential clean up costs.

In 2022, interest in the site for affordable housing was resurrected and a Phase 2 environmental report was commissioned for the property. The recently completed Phase 2 environmental study determined that the site was clean and appropriate for residential uses.

The subject property is designated Medium Density Residential in the existing and proposed Downtown Secondary Plan and is zoned H-R4-DT (Holding – Residential Type 4 – Downtown Zone) in By-law #2585. The R4-DT zone permits several housing forms including but not limited to block townhouses, street townhouses, fourplex dwellings and apartment dwellings up to a maximum of 3 storeys. The H-Holding symbol will be required to be removed in advance of any development on the site. The holding symbol is in place as water and sanitary services are currently not available on Hickory Street between Dunlop Street East and Colborne Street East. An engineering solution will be required to be investigated as part of the due diligence process in developing the property.

2. South side of Dunlop Street East

In 2016, Habitat for Humanity – Durham approached the Town expressing interest in initiating an affordable home ownership program in Whitby. A portion of the Town owned lands on Dunlop Street East in downtown Whitby was subsequently recommended to be considered for an infill affordable housing project.

The site is part of a larger holding owned by the Town of Whitby. The Ash Creek diversion runs north/south along the eastern portion of the property and is not proposed to be included in the proposed site.

The lands under consideration are designated Medium Density Residential in the existing and proposed Downtown Secondary Plan and are zoned H-R4-DT (Holding – Residential Type 4 – Downtown Zone) in By-law #2585. Street townhouses are permitted by the zoning by-law and the property could accommodate up to four (4) street townhouse units. Lifting of the H-Holding provision would be required in advance of developing the site.

The Town was working with Habitat for Humanity and their consultants to develop the site for four residential townhouse dwelling units as recent as 2020. A draft 40R Plan was prepared by Habitat's consultant but was not registered pending approval of the required planning applications. Habitat for Humanity Durham was active on this proposal until the Durham Chapter amalgamated with the Toronto Chapter in or around 2020. The Toronto Chapter contacted the Town about these lands in 2020 but has had no further contact since.

Region of Durham Surplus Land Web Site

The Region of Durham's surplus land web site is designed to identify potential affordable housing sites in the Region and to direct potential providers of affordable housing to the local municipality to enquire on identified sites. The Town is under no obligation to accept any proposals that are received on the properties. Financial considerations required planning processes and appropriateness of the submissions will be determined through the review of the site specific proposals and a subsequent report to Council on the nature of the interest.

To help to facilitate interest in affordable housing in the Town and greater Regional area, it is recommended that staff be directed to list the municipally owned property located at the northeast corner of Hickory Street and Dunlop Street East and a portion of the municipally owned property located on the south side of Dunlop Street East, as identified on Attachment #1, on the Region of Durham's surplus land website for the potential creation of affordable housing.

5. Financial Considerations:

Matters of financial consideration would be brought back to Council for their consideration following more detailed discussions and prior to advancing the project(s) for approval.

6. Communication and Public Engagement:

Public consultation would be provided at the time that the Town declares the lands surplus and as part of any land severance, zoning, or minor variance application.

7. Input from Departments/Sources:

Input from other departments and agencies would be received through the development process and through the formal two stage pre-consultation process.

8. Strategic Priorities:

This recommendation supports the Downtown Whitby Action Plan which provides objectives and action items to support downtown initiatives.

9. Attachments:

Attachment 1 – Location Sketch

Attachment 2 – Aerial Context Map