



Memorandum

Planning and Development Department

To: Mayor Mitchell & Members of Council

CC: R. Petrie, CAO
C. Harris, Clerk
K. Nix, Commissioner of Corporate Services

From: Robert B. Short, Commissioner of Planning

Date: February 5, 2016

File #: N/A

Subject: **Memo Report to Mayor Mitchell & Members of Council
February 16 – Planning & Development Committee
508 Colborne Street West – Whitby
Short Term Lease for Refugee Housing**

RECOMMENDATION:

“Authorize the Administration to make 508 Colborne Street West available to the Hebron Christian Reformed Church of Whitby to provide the opportunity for the future sponsorship of a refugee family for a period of one year; for a nominal sum and with the sponsor being responsible for the cost of utilities and the provision of appliances.”

BACKGROUND:

Recent reports indicate that the refugee families arriving in Canada, as a result of the crisis in Syria, are larger than anticipated.

508 Colborne Street West is owned by the Town. It was purchased several decades ago to protect the long term road needs within the downtown area. The retention of the property, to assist in meeting and providing for road improvements and emerging public parking needs with the intensification of lands on the Dundas Street corridor, continues to be considered of merit. The dwelling is presently vacant, without appliances, dated, but able to provide accommodation for a family.

The Durham Region was contacted to help identify possible private sponsors for refugee housing in Whitby. Only one group was identified as being associated that being the Hebron Christian Reformed Church of Whitby. Discussions have been pursued on an exploratory basis with Mr. John Fayer of the church's Refugee Program Committee. They have one active sponsorship application in process and are looking to advance one or more new applications.

Interest in having the dwelling available to the Hebron Christian Reformed Church to support their refugee program has been indicated. With the adoption of the recommendation, discussions will have to continue to finalize any arrangements to the satisfaction of the Town and the Church. Mr. Fayer was advised that the recommendation that being placed before Council for consideration was one year and that the details of the arrangement would be finalized in a manner satisfactory to both parties; the church and the Town.

DISCUSSION:

The subject property is located within one block of Dundas Street, has access to transit and is within walking distance of schools, shopping, library, theatre, and personal and financial services.

Approval, in principle, to provide for the opportunity to develop the lease arrangements is being requested at this time so that the residence is available so support a sponsorship application and to assure the arrangements have been finalized in advance of occupancy. The exact timing of an arriving family is dependent on approvals of the application, processing procedures and travel dates

Supporting refugees into the community is not new to the Hebron Christian Reform Church as it has sponsored refugees in the past and continues to support refugees that arrived prior to this crisis.

FINANCIAL:

An affordable housing solution is a major consideration for the sponsors. In this case, it is suggested that the contribution for rent be equivalent to the monthly maintenance plus a nominal amount and that the sponsor provide for the associated utility costs and insurance, grass cutting, etc.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION:

The subject property, 508 Colborne Street, has the potential to assist in the sponsorship of a refugee family upon their approval and arrival to Whitby. The Hebron Christian Reformed Church of Whitby and its Refugee Committee has past experience in supporting refugees settling in Canada. Staff's communications with the Region indicated that there was only one active sponsor in Whitby, the Hebron Christian Reformed Church of Whitby. Providing the opportunity to provide a one year lease to support the church in making their applications merits Council's consideration. Staff is recommending that 508 Colborne Street West be made available to the Hebron Christian Reformed Church of Whitby for one year at a nominal cost.

Sincerely,

Robert B. Short, MCIP, RPP
Commissioner of Planning

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