



# Committee Report

<b>To:</b>	Chair McQueen and Members of the Affordable Housing Task Force
<b>Committee Date:</b>	June 24, 2022
<b>Subject / Report No:</b>	Public Lands for Affordable Housing Project, Update / Addendum to PDR-AF-09-22
<b>Title:</b>	Public Lands for Affordable Housing Project – Status Update
<b>Prepared by:</b>	Liz Buckton, MCIP, RPP, Senior Policy Planner
<b>Reviewed by:</b>	Randy Scherzer, Anne Marie Shaw, and Scott Taylor
<b>Lower Tier(s) Affected:</b>	All local municipalities
<b>Status:</b>	

## Recommendation

1. That Addendum to Report PDR-AF-09-22 regarding a status update on use of surplus public lands for affordable housing be received; and
2. That regular updates continue to be provided back to the Affordable Housing Task Force.

## Executive Summary

Further to Report PDR-AF-09-22 (March 17, 2022) which set out a summary of the overall 'Surplus Lands for Affordable Housing Project', including project concept and scope, preliminary project workplan, key tasks, and deliverables, this report is provided as an update to the Task Force and outlines project progress to-date.

This report also provides brief discussion around potential future phases of the project, which could include the completion of site screening and pre-development review by County Staff for a series of pilot properties across the County. Preliminary budgets would be established to bring the lands into a state suitable for offering by competitive Request for Proposal (RFP) and seed/study funding opportunities would be explored for high-potential sites, to assist with early site assessment and pre-development costs.

## Background and Discussion

The four main project components, as described in detail within PDR-AF-09-22, are:

- Project Hosting
- Communications: Call to Action & Public Education
- Roundtable: Liaison & Support, and
- Better Practices & Process Mapping.

These elements have been distributed across four workflows, as follows.

## 1. Internal Communications

This workflow focuses on ongoing reporting and dialogue with the Task Force regarding the project.

### **Status:**

This report is the first project update provided. Additional reporting will occur as project milestones/deliverables are completed, or where an interim update or discussion is warranted to keep the Task Force apprised of project progress.

## 2. Project Hosting & Messaging

This workflow includes:

- data gathering & landscape review activities
- preparation of specific housing targets
- development of key messages, educational materials, resources
- website & GIS tool refinement
- hosting/publication of materials online

### **Status:**

Data gathering is underway.

The Planning Data Analysis Coordinator has begun an update to summarize statistics and demographic information for the County's Affordable Housing waitlist. This work will provide staff and the Task Force with an updated understanding of the characteristics shared by households on the waitlist and will assist in quantifying accumulated affordable housing needs across the County.

Further, the [County's 2015 Housing Data Report](#) has been reviewed in detail to identify the underpinning methodology to guide updates of affordability thresholds for owner and renter households (\$) upon release of 2021 Census Data for household incomes, expected in mid-July 2022. A special data order request has been compiled and submitted to Statistics Canada for the data tables necessary to calculate these updated thresholds. Special data orders will be addressed by Statistics Canada staff, following the general data release.

Following receipt of the custom data order from Statistics Canada, affordability thresholds based upon household income and real-estate market statistics will be updated. An Excel template will be prepared such that interim-year updates can be calculated, using annual inflation data. These thresholds will be evaluated, together with wait list statistics and growth management figures, to guide the creation of a specific affordable housing creation target for the County.

Interim 'snapshot' assessments have been completed of current rents, by unit type, for local rental listings available via online platforms such as Kijiji and Facebook Marketplace. March and May figures have been collected, with additional data collection planned for the end of July 2022. This information will provide additional local context around unit pricing and availability and will be shared alongside the updated affordability thresholds, once calculated.

Early conversations have been pursued with County Communications Staff regarding the update and/or expansion of the 'Housing for All' website, and the roll out of key project messaging and materials. Websites of a number of other County and Regional governments in Ontario have been reviewed to explore the different ways in which such information is being shared. Of note is the Affordable Housing 101 portal released by Bruce County in May 2022, available online at: <https://www.brucecounty.on.ca/affordable-housing-101>

Work with Communications staff will continue in the coming months, to confirm the approach and specific messaging for the project, and to detail related updates to the County website. The Bruce County example noted above is similar to what Planning staff have in mind for the website, with affordability targets, tools and community context provided for the County overall, and by individual member municipality.

Refinement of the geographic information systems (GIS) Affordable Housing Screener tool is ongoing, based upon early feedback from local municipal staff provided through our first roundtable meetings.

### 3. Better Practices & Process Mapping

This workflow includes:

- Community Improvement Plan (CIP) status/incentive review
- Granting Agency discussions, program eligibility and site criteria research
- Preparation of process-mapping and identification of key path dependencies for affordable housing creation on surplus public lands
- Ongoing discussions with Legal Staff to ensure compliance under legislation

#### **Status:**

A review of the Community Improvement Plan status for each of the member municipalities has been compiled. The majority (7/9) of the lower-tier municipalities within Grey County now have CIP programs in-place, while the other 2 municipalities are planning CIPs. One of the key functional benefits to municipalities with an approved CIP, is that within the CIP Project Area, they are able to provide financial incentives to landowners and may dispose of lands for CIP-related purposes, at or below market-rate, without contravention of the bonusing prohibitions of the *Municipal Act*, which would otherwise apply. A subsequent deep-dive review of these plans is also intended, to identify specific incentives that may be useful or appropriate to support affordable unit creation. Information about CIP programs and housing-specific incentives is expected to form part of the 'community tools and context' to be included within the updated website and other project messaging/communications.

In addition to the review of local CIP documents, a number of networking and learning conversations have been undertaken over the past three months with granting agency representatives and various others working locally on the issues of affordable housing and homelessness. A review of applicable County policy and strategic documents, such as the

Housing and Homelessness Plan, has been undertaken to further glean established directions, targets and better-practices that have already been identified locally. Further, a detailed review of Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) and Green Municipal Fund (GMF) grant programs, eligibility criteria and supporting information needs has been completed.

These various pieces of information and shared wisdom have been compiled into a preliminary 'Site-Screening/Better Practices' document and an ordered 'Process Mapping' document.

The site-screening document is intended to provide a guiding framework for identification of lands suitable for affordable housing creation, with specific consideration to grant/loan eligibility requirements that relate back to project siting and community characteristics/amenity.

The process mapping document attempts to order the various (typical) steps from initial site screening, through pre-development site investigations, surplus designation, competitive RFP offering, grant application, award and agreements, to building permit issuance. These documents are presently in 'early draft' condition and are expected to be shared with the Task Force at the next project update.

A key observation relating to this ongoing work, is that the screening and development processes are both detailed and complicated, particularly with respect to the coordination and stacking of financial incentives, as will be necessary to achieve economic feasibility for new units to be offered below market-rate. While the site-screening and process mapping documents attempt to capture and integrate key siting considerations together with grant eligibility criteria, they have been compiled based on a 'typical' or simplified site and process. Using a typical process likely excludes some of the related nuance and does not provide a sound basis for project budgeting, given the variability of sites and contexts where such projects may be pursued.

Accordingly, staff hope to further refine these draft documents based on real-world examples and it is proposed that several County and/or municipally owned sites, having base potential for affordable housing creation, be selected as 'pilot' properties for screening and pre-development review.

For these pilot sites, staff will complete an assessment report based on the siting and project characteristics identified in the screening document and will further identify the site-specific process, with reference to the typified process mapping, to bring the lands to a state where they could in-principle be offered for affordable housing development via a competitive RFP process.

This further work will allow for study and investigation needs to be identified for each site and will facilitate creation of a pre-development project budget and review of directly applicable grant opportunities. It will also further inform staff's understanding of the broader budgeting and resourcing requirements that may be involved with the administration of a land bank and affordable housing 'pipeline', as have been contemplated by the Task Force.

## 4. Municipal Liaison

This workflow includes initial outreach and scheduling of project roundtables, firstly with member municipalities. Following completion of project deliverables such as the better-practices and process mapping resources, additional outreach will occur and will be expanded to include other stakeholders and potential partners such as local non-profit housing providers.

### **Status:**

The first project roundtables have now been completed. Local municipal planning staff were engaged around the project and invited to attend one of two scheduled sessions in May 2022, together with County staff. Each session began with an affordable-housing brainstorming exercise, with County and local staff working together to populate a list of potential interventions that could be undertaken to positively impact affordable housing supply. These lists were evaluated as a group and sorted by 'spheres of influence', clearly illustrating the fact that there is no single 'silver bullet' solution to affordable housing supply, but rather a range of potential interventions that may be pursued by the County and lower-tier municipalities, both directly and by way of influence and/or advocacy regarding those actions that fall outside of local scope or control.

There was general support for the project expressed by municipal participants, and affordable housing supply was identified as a top-of-mind consideration for all attendees. Local readiness and capacity for direct involvement or partnership in the screening, preparation and offering of surplus lands for housing creation, varies widely from community to community.

County staff understand that it will be important to consider how we best structure the land bank/surplus lands offering process to respect (and/or supplement) staff capacity at the member-municipal level. Engaging around prospective sites together on a collaborative basis may be a suitable approach. Further, it appears there may be an opportunity to support the project by compiling better practices and/or examples of Municipal Sale & Lease of Land procedures to inform future updates at the local level. Municipal approaches relating to identification of surplus lands and their formal designation as such are varied. The roundtable groups expressed that there may be some benefit to a more standardized approach, which could include reference to 'housing-first' policies within proposed Official Plan Amendment #11, and perhaps the notification/circulation of proposed surplus lands to related stakeholders, including the County.

## Legal and Legislated Requirements

There are no additional legal or legislative requirements beyond those sited in PDR-AF-09-22.

## Financial and Resource Implications

Initially this project was to be carried out using existing staff resources, supported by an associated contract staff position (January – August 2022) which was funded from the Social Services Relief Fund. Recently the contract staff person (Liz Buckton) was promoted to a full-time permanent Senior Policy Planner position. Ongoing staff/time allocation for this project will be maintained within the Senior Policy Planner role, as part of the strategic and special projects component of that position.

Additional staffing or financial resources may be needed as the County progresses with this project. Any additional staffing or financial resource requests not already within the approved 2022 budget, will come back to this Task Force and County Council, or will be included in the draft 2023 budget for consideration by Council.

## Relevant Consultation

- ☒ Internal (list): Planning, Housing, Legal, Communications
- ☒ External (list): Lower-tier Municipal Planning Staff; various service providers and granting representatives including United Way of Bruce Grey, M'Wikwedong Indigenous Friendship Centre, CHMC Client Solutions and CMHC Innovation/Partnership Staff.

## Appendices and Attachments

[PDR-AF-09-22 Public Lands for Housing Project – Intro and Workplan](#)