

TO:	CHAIR AND MEMBERS CORPORATE SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING ON DECEMBER 10, 2013
FROM:	SANDRA DATARS BERE MANAGING DIRECTOR, HOUSING, SOCIAL SERVICES AND DEARNESS HOME
SUBJECT:	SHERWOOD FOREST PUBLIC SCHOOL - STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION PROCESS

RECOMMENDATION

That, on the recommendation of the Managing Director, Housing, Social Services and Dearness Home, the following report regarding consultation processes undertaken to consider concepts for the possible redevelopment of the Sherwood Forest Public School property **BE RECEIVED** for information.

PREVIOUS REPORTS PERTINENT TO THIS MATTER
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- Corporate Services Committee Report – February 5, 2013 – Local Improvement Charges – Potential Uses
- Corporate Services Committee Report – July 23, 2013 – Local Improvement Charges
- Corporate Services Committee Report – August 20, 2013 – Sherwood Forest Public School

BACKGROUND

Municipal Council, at its session on October 2, 2013, resolved as follows:

That the Civic Administration BE DIRECTED to explore the concept of redevelopment of the Sherwood Forest Public School property, through collaboration with other interested parties such as, but not limited to, neighbourhood and private sector partners, for parkland and housing purposes; it being noted that any decision by the municipality in this regard would have to be prior to the expiration of the 90-day prescribed deadline for the School Board to offer the property to the local municipality (C-1/25/CSC)(AS AMENDED)

This report provides an overview of the property in question, the processes undertaken to consult with community and private sector stakeholders and feedback from these consultation activities. A report related to possible concepts for site redevelopment and other information is provided in a confidential report being considered by Council.

Overview of the Sherwood Forest Public School Site

The subject site is 2.22 hectares (5.508 acres) in size, gently sloped from west to east, and is improved with a 16,500 sq. ft. school structure, a separately housed gymnasium, surface parking and playing fields. Low-rise, single detached dwellings about the site to the north, south, east and west.

The subject site, and surrounding lands, have been designated Low Density Residential in the City's Official Plan. Primary permitted uses in the Low Density Residential designation would include single detached, semi-detached, and duplex dwellings. Multiple attached dwellings, such as row houses or cluster houses may also be permitted subject to the policies of the Plan. Secondary uses that are considered integral to, and compatible with, residential neighbourhoods, may also be permitted in the Low Density Residential designation.

The site is zoned for Neighbourhood Facility (NF) uses in the Z.-1 Zoning By-law providing for the development of churches, elementary schools and day care centres.

The northern half of the site has been identified as having archaeological potential. The site is accessed via a local street and is fully serviced with municipal works. The site also enjoys frontage on Wychwood Park - a secondary collector road that carries in excess of 1,000 vehicle trips per day. The site is not directly serviced by London Transit.

An Archaeological Master Plan has identified the northern half of the site as having potential. Play structures previously onsite have been removed by the Thames Valley District School Board (TVDSB).

The TVDSB declared the property as surplus and has circulated its availability for purchase to public bodies, including the City of London. Public bodies have until December 22, 2013 to make an offer to purchase at Fair Market Value. Fair Market Value is based on the Principle of the Highest and Best Use of the property including the highest return or value for money. The Fair Market Value will be determined through the appraisal of the property.

Municipal Need for the Property

As outlined in previous reports to Council, Civic Administration has undertaken reviews as to the potential acquisition of the Sherwood Forest Public School (SFPS) on the basis of whether there is a municipal need for community parkland / open space for the adjacent neighbourhood and whether there is a need for amenities in the neighbourhood based on the City of London's Strengthening Neighbourhoods Strategy and Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

Administration's review has indicated there is no demonstrated need for this property, for either parkland or other community / neighbourhood amenities. With respect to parkland, an analysis of the Parkland and Open Space was conducted and the Orchard Park-Sherwood Forest community (bounded by Gainsborough, Wonderland, Sarnia Roads and the Medway Creek/Ramsey Road/Brescia Lane) meets the established standards for parkland. This neighbourhood is served by 4 neighbourhood parks within its boundary, 1 district park immediately across the road from it and is flanked extensively by Medway Valley Heritage Forest.

While a shortage of community gym space has been identified, the gym space at the Sherwood Forest Public School is an older style and undersized for current typical gym purposes. It could be used as multi-purpose space but there is no lack of multi-purpose space in the area, given the proximity to Medway Community Centre, library, schools and other nearby facilities. Additionally, other limitations of this site, including limited parking, its location well within the neighbourhood with access only from local streets and limited proximity to existing public transit stops makes an alternate use challenging.

This site is not deemed appropriate or a high priority to provide potential space for a Senior Satellite. The City would seek a more accessible location and prefer to work with existing partners in neighbourhoods to offer the sort of programming desired. It is noted that there are no future plans to develop standalone "seniors only" community centers given the results obtained through several community engagement exercises about recreation centers, which indicated that older adults prefer to attend multi-generational facilities. The Senior's Community Association currently operates a Senior's Neighbourhood Advisory Council (SNAC) out of Medway Community Centre.

Determination of Concepts for Possible Redevelopment

In response to Council's direction, Civic Administration implemented a process which included consultation with both community and private sector stakeholders, with input being used to consider possible concepts for redevelopment of the site. A team of civic staff from Housing, Legal, Parks and Recreation, Planning and Realty Services was created to facilitate this process. An external planning consultant, Mr. Michael Hannay of MBTW, Watchorn, was contracted to support the consultation process and the development of concepts for possible site renewal.

A presentation of the concepts has been provided in confidential report to the Corporate Services Committee on December 10, 2013.

Consultation with Community Stakeholders

Two consultation meetings were held with the Sherwood Forest/Oxford Park Ratepayers

Association and the Sherwood Forest School Site Committee. On October 16, 2013 the City Manager and the Managing Director, Housing Social Services and Dearness Home met with two members of the association on the SFPS site. During this visit, the association members provided an overview of their interests in the site and civic administration staff had an opportunity to gain an understanding of the site, its location within the community, its topography and possible options for alternate future use.

A second meeting was held on November 1, 2013 and involved members of the Association's executive as well as representatives from the school site committee. During both the meeting and in subsequent correspondence to the city (attached), the association and school committee have suggested that there are no other groups in the area who are current users of the SFPS site, and by consulting with the association and the school committee, civic administration has met the requirements of Council's direction in the resolution.

Through consultation, the community stakeholders have recommended and/or seek the following regarding the SPFS site:

- Community stakeholders would prefer that there had been no change of use to the property and that the school would continue to be an operational public elementary school serving their local community
- As this seems no longer possible, use for an alternate educational purpose (private school) was seen to be appropriate, as it would likely retain the current open space. There were concerns that use by a private school might limit access to the parkland and areas surrounding the school building
- While the school building is unique in both its construction and its interior layout, removing or demolishing the building to create other development opportunities was seen to be an acceptable reality
- Retain at least one hectare of land for park use, and that an active park, with play activities targeted to younger children that they can walk to unsupervised, as they had when the school was open
- Retain the current natural landscaping including as many mature non-ash trees as possible, and add places for people to sit and plant new / additional shade trees
- Maintain the topography of the site and maintain as much of the street frontage as is reasonable so that there are "eyes of the park"
- Maintain the connection between neighbourhood connector streets, Finsbury Crescent and Wychwood Park through either a walkway or private road as part of any housing / condominium form of development
- Create housing consistent in form with the community, with high quality design that compliments the neighbourhood. Preferably, this would be unique single family homes appealing to young families. If not possible, an alternate preference would be single level, two bedroom units with individual entrances that would provide housing options for older adults living in the neighbourhood (downsizing). Any new units should be constructed primarily of brick with high quality landscaping and deep backyards, if abutting existing homes (along the northern part of the site).

The association and school committee have requested that prior to the possible implementation of any action with respect to the property, there would be a pre-meeting in the neighbourhood with city representatives and any developers/ builders about the process and concept of any possible redevelopment, prior to a formal application for rezoning. A recommendation from Planning staff to the Planning and Environment Committee, which would an requirements for a public site plan meeting is also recommended.

A copy of the letter from the association is attached as Appendix 1.

Consultation with Private Sector / Development Industry

Civic administration also met with the London Development Institute (LDI) to consult regarding private sector interests and recommendations for the SFPS site. The London Development Institute represents the majority of London's development community and has a mandate to work with City Council and Civic Administration on development and tax-based issues and monitor of the timing of infrastructure projects.

In discussions, the following information was shared:

- LDI and some of its members are familiar with the SFPS site, its current availability for sale by the school board to public sector entities and that there may be possibilities for future residential development.

- The site is located in the “middle” of a residential neighbourhood, and as such, redevelopment options would need to be considered carefully so as not to pursue those that might be viewed to be incompatible with the neighbourhood
- The development industry is aware that community stakeholders are interested in retaining a portion of the site for parkland/ open play space. Notwithstanding, in order to ensure viability in a possible development, it was suggested that the whole site would be needed to create a viable option, from a business perspective.
- Given the site’s current Official Plan designation as low density residential (up to a maximum of 30 units per hectare), options for redevelopment need to be considered in this light. Re-designation to higher density is not seen to be appropriate.
- It is understood that Civic Administration has indicated no need for the parkland although it was expressed that a developer would be in a better position to incorporate a small urban parkette as part of a proposed development for the location, if the City were to undergo the re-zoning of the property from a neighbourhood facility (NF) to a residential zone (R). This would offset the risk and potential costs associated with the public re-zoning process.
- A small cul-de-sac option could be considered as well as creation of the maximum number of sites/ housing options under the low density zoning designation, marketing units to seniors or those downsizing from larger homes within the community
- There may be some interest in possible development of the site from among select members of the development and/ or building industry within the City of London.

CONCLUSION

Consultation processes which involved discussions with community and private sector stakeholders have determined that redevelopment of the Sherwood Forest Public School site could be considered, provided it is within the parameters that stakeholders have identified as acceptable. In summary, this would include:

- Alternate/ private school use of the building with green space being available to be used by the community (consistent with the last several years)
- If school use is not an option, retention of some green space for parkland would be preferred. Stakeholder suggestions included creating a large active park space or a smaller urban park scenario. “Recommendations” might imply that we (the City) are recommending one of these options, when the report is in fact predicated on the fact that we have no identified municipal purpose for the lands
- Redevelopment could be considered but would need to be seen to be compatible with current uses.

Feedback received from stakeholders has been used to inform the creation of redevelopment options for the SFPS site. These options and other issues for Council consideration are presented to council in a separate confidential report. It is important to note that a change of use outside of those contemplated in the Neighbourhood Facility (NF) Zone would require an amendment to the Z.-1 Zoning By-law. Additional applications may also be required should the use of the land for residential purposes, for example, be contemplated. These applications would be subject to the provisions of the Planning Act including, but necessarily limited to, public notice, public consultation, a statutory public meeting and possible appeals to the Ontario Municipal Board.

PREPARED AND RECOMMENDED BY:
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LOCATION MAP

