

## Report to Corporate Services Committee

**To:** Chair and Members  
Corporate Services Committee  
**From:** Gregg Barrett  
Director, City Planning and City Planner  
**Subject:** Lorne Avenue Public School Redevelopment Summary  
**Meeting on:** August 10, 2020

## Recommendation

That, on the recommendation of the Director, City Planning and City Planner, the report dated August 10, 2020 entitled “Lorne Avenue Public School Redevelopment Summary” **BE RECEIVED.**

## Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to summarize the City of London and the Old East Village community’s efforts to redevelop the former Lorne Avenue Public School property after the school’s closure by the Thames Valley District School Board. The subject property is proposed to be redeveloped into a new park and in-fill housing compatible with the neighbourhood and the Old East Village Heritage Conservation District Guidelines.

## Previous Reports Pertinent to this Matter

Corporate Services Committee – Lorne Ave Public School Update – March 24, 2015

Corporate Services Committee – Lorne Ave Public School Update – June 20, 2017

Corporate Services Committee – Lorne Ave Public School Request for Proposals Update and Next Steps – February 21, 2017

Planning and Environment Committee – Request for Demolition of Heritage Designated Property at 723 Lorne Avenue (Lorne Avenue Public School) By City – August 28, 2017

Planning and Environment Committee – Zoning Application – September 24, 2018

Corporate Services Committee – Declare Surplus Portion of City Owned Property at 723 Lorne Avenue – April 2, 2019

## Background

### 1.0 School Closure

The former Lorne Avenue Public School occupied the site at 723 Lorne Avenue since 1875, with the original building being replaced by a new building constructed in 1969-1970.

In July 2014, the Thames Valley District School Board (TVDSB) notified the City of London that the Lorne Avenue Public School had been declared surplus to the Board’s needs and would be offered for sale to public bodies.

A portion of this site was previously declared surplus by the TVDSB.

### 2.0 Purchase of School Property

The City of London, as a public body, was eligible to submit an offer to purchase the property at fair market value from the TVDSB.

The City of London had until September 29, 2014 to act in the context of contemplating and/or putting forth an Offer of Purchase.

On October 15, 2014, the City of London entered into an Agreement of Purchase and Sale with the TVDSB to acquire the Lorne Avenue Public School property for \$550,000, subject to several conditions. The source of financing the purchase of the site was the Land Acquisition Reserve Fund.

The City of London took possession of the property from the TVDSB on October 28, 2016.

### **3.0 RFP / Unsolicited Proposals for Re-use of the Building**

In March 2015, the Municipal Council endorsed a two scenario process with respect to the redevelopment of the site including engagement with the local community and seeking private sector interest and opportunities in retaining the school building. This process was to seek a purchaser for the existing school building and build a park behind the building (Scenario "A"). If an eligible purchaser could not be found, the school building would be demolished, the park built at the corner of Lorne Avenue and English Street, and the remainder of the site would be available for residential in-fill (Scenario "B").

The Request for Proposals (RFP) entitled "Adaptive Re-use Opportunity: Lorne Avenue Public School Building" was released in February 2016 for six weeks. The RFP did not result in an eligible submission for review by the Evaluation Committee.

In February 2017, the Civic Administration recommended to the Municipal Council to move forward with the demolition of the school building. The Municipal Council directed the Civic Administration to report back with a plan for demolition, to re-engage the local community, and in the event that the Civic Administration felt there would be a viable opportunity for retention of the building that comes forward prior to its demolition, to bring that opportunity forward to the Municipal Council for consideration.

The February 2017 Corporate Services Committee report and the resulting media attention around the proposed demolition of the building resulted in additional interested parties approaching the Civic Administration seeking further information on acquiring the building.

In response to this interest and to be able to fairly and transparently review unsolicited proposals to determine if a viable opportunity for retaining the building existed, the Civic Administration developed the *Guidelines for Evaluating Unsolicited Proposals for the Lorne Avenue Public School Building*.

Interested parties were given eight weeks to submit a proposal. However, no proposals were deemed viable and the Civic Administration continued to move forward with preparing the building and site for demolition.

### **4.0 Building Demolition**

An RFP to retain a consultant to demolish the former school building was issued and closed in May 2017.

Prior to the demolition of the school building, Stage 1 and 2 archaeological assessments were undertaken.

As the property is located in the Old East Village Heritage Conservation District and is designated under Part V of the *Ontario Heritage Act*, a formal demolition process, including consultation with the LACH, a public participation meeting before the Planning and Environment Committee was held in August 2017, with a final decision being made by the Municipal Council.

Mobilization and demolition of the former Lorne Avenue Public School site began in January 2018 and was certified complete in September 2018.

## Community Consultation and Vision for the Site

### 5.0 Community Consultation

The local community's involvement in the Lorne Avenue Public School has been ongoing and extensive. The Old East Village Community Association has been a key partner in the acquisition, rezoning, and creating a new vision for the site from the very beginning.

On April 23, 2015, the City of London and the Old East Village Community Association co-hosted a Community Information Meeting in the Lorne Avenue Public School gymnasium to discuss the City's purchase of the property to create a neighbourhood park, to share the RFP process for finding a purchaser for the building, and to learn about the community's vision for the site and parkland.

On June 27, 2017, the City of London hosted a Community Information Meeting and Workshop to assist with guiding the City-initiated change in zoning of the former school property. The local community's comments were considered by the Civic Administration in preparing a draft Zoning By-law Amendment to permit the reuse and redevelopment of a portion of the property for a park and a potential range of new land uses that would be complementary to the neighbourhood.

A third Community Information Meeting was held on May 23, 2018 where the Civic Administration presented the learnings to date from previous community consultations and presented the proposed development concepts and draft Zoning By-law Amendment to the community for feedback.

### 6.0 Zoning By-law Application and Park Dedication

The staff report and accompanying proposed By-law to rezone the subject property to a Residential R1 Special Provision Zone and Open Space Zone was introduced at a September 2018 Planning and Environment Committee meeting and subsequently enacted by the Municipal Council. The approved zoning was to implement the "Preferred Development Concept" illustrated below, including a park in the northeast corner occupying approximately 45% of the site, a new public road bisecting the site extending Queens Place to Lorne Avenue, and single detached homes on the western and southeastern portion of the site.

#### Preferred Development Concept:

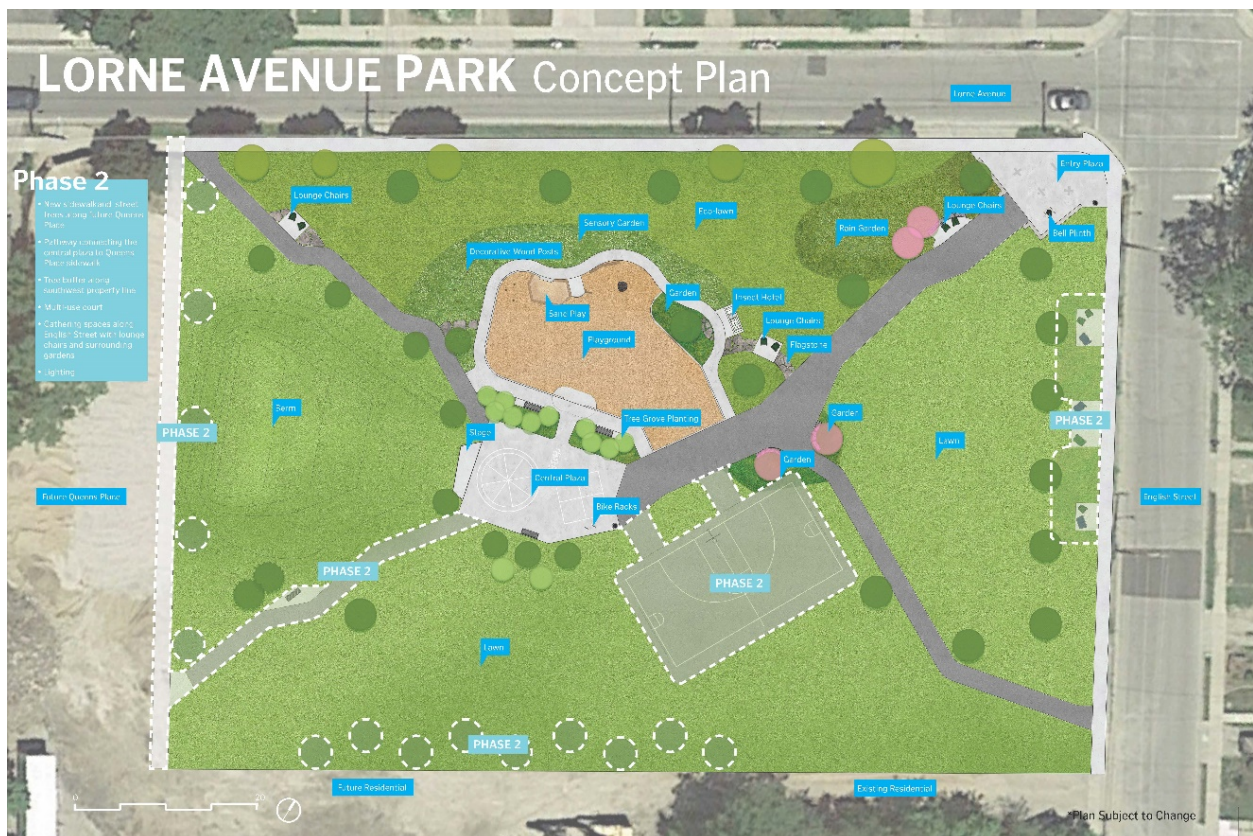


## 7.0 Lorne Avenue Park Design Concept

Concurrently with the Zoning By-law Application, the Parks Planning and Design Team began preparing concepts for Lorne Avenue Park. Upon enactment of the Zoning By-law Amendment which confirmed the size of the park, a Community Information Meeting was held in November 2018 to introduce the park concepts, design ideas, and to host a charrette allowing the local community to provide input into the design of the proposed park and rank ideas for the final design concept.

An additional Community Information Meeting was held in February 2019 to confirm what was heard at the earlier meeting and to introduce the proposed refined concept for Lorne Avenue Park for public comment.

The preparation of construction drawings and the tender to build the proposed park was completed in fall 2019 and winter 2020. The park is now under construction.



## Residential Development Procurement Process

### 8.0 Request for Qualifications / Request for Proposals

In April 2019, the Municipal Council resolved that the portion of the former school site that was zoned for residential uses be declared surplus and disposed of via a RFP process to implement the "Preferred Development Concept". The Municipal Council also resolved that the RFP was to include evaluation criteria for determining the successful proponent to ensure the design of development is consistent with the Design Guidelines of New Buildings in the Old East Heritage Conservation District – Conservation and Design Guidelines.

As a result of this direction, the City of London undertook a two stage procurement process to find a potential developer.

The Request for Qualifications was released in October 2019 to allow the City of London to identify developers that demonstrated interest and capacity to repurpose the subject site for single detached dwellings. Interested applicants were required to demonstrate a capacity to undertake this Project in a timely manner and demonstrate adherence to the "Preferred Development Concept" in a way that established compatibility with the Old East Heritage Conservation District and compliance with the

Zoning By-law permissions that apply to the site. Proponents that successfully qualified were invited to participate in a subsequent RFP.

The RFP was issued to the qualified proponents in late March 2020 and closed at the end of May 2020. The contents of a proponent's submission was evaluated against numerous criteria including: compliance with the existing zoning, development vision and design concept, affordable housing elements, previous project experience, and the potential purchase price for the property.

## **9.0 Eligible RFP Submissions**

Eligible submissions were received by the City of London following the RFP. These submissions have been evaluated and this information, including the financial offers for the purchase of the residential portion of the property will be presented at the Closed Session of the August 10, 2020 Corporate Services Committee meeting.

## **Next Steps**

### **10.0 Lorne Avenue Park Construction and Subdivision Development**

Phase 1 construction of the Lorne Avenue Park, including accessible walkways with benches, an entry plaza at the corner of Lorne Avenue and English Street, a playground made of wood with a sensory garden, a central plaza with a community stage, rain gardens, and an ecolawn has begun.

A second phase of the Park, subject to additional budget being available and English Street Infrastructure work being completed, includes the multi-use court, the porch seating and gardens along English Street, and park lighting.

Additionally, the pathway connecting to the extended Queen's Place and related tree planting will be added once the new residential development is constructed.

Upon the purchase of the land from the City of London, the successful proponent will be required to undertake a Plan of Subdivision approval process to facilitate their development concept, and a new public road will be constructed connecting Lorne Avenue to Queens Place as part of the development.

## **Conclusion**

The City of London purchased the Lorne Avenue Public School property in 2014 and took possession of the site in 2016. The City of London has been working with the community to re-envision the subject site for a park and new residential development. The subject property was rezoned and the procurement process has concluded, including an Offer to Purchase. The Lorne Avenue Park is under construction and the next steps will be a subdivision process to develop the new homes and street connection from Queens Place.

<b>Prepared by:</b>	<b>Graham Bailey, MCIP, RPP Planner II, Urban Regeneration</b>
<b>Submitted by:</b>	<b>Britt O'Hagan, MCIP, RPP Manager, City Building and Design</b>
<b>Recommended by:</b>	<b>Gregg Barrett, AICP Director, City Planning and City Planner</b>
Note: The opinions contained herein are offered by a person or persons qualified to provide expert opinion. Further detail with respect to qualifications can be obtained from City Planning	

July 28, 2020  
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