

THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF GEORGINA

REPORT NO. SI-2024-0021

**FOR THE CONSIDERATION OF
COUNCIL**

November 20, 2024

SUBJECT: Existing Civic Centre as an Option to Provide Affordable Housing

1. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1. That Council receive Report No. SI-2024-0021 prepared by the Capital Projects Division, Strategic Initiatives Department dated November 20, 2024 respecting the potential use of the existing Civic Centre as an option for affordable housing; and,**
- 2. That Council approve that the Building Faster Fund of \$1.52M be utilized in another manner that is more cost effective and impactful to address affordable housing, and that the existing Civic Centre be demolished as previously approved by Council and required in the existing contract between the Town of Georgina and Maystar General Contractors Inc.**

2. PURPOSE:

To investigate the potential alternate use of the existing Civic Centre to help address the affordable housing issue in Georgina, as well as provide a preliminary assessment of whether or not the existing Civic Centre should be included in an Expression of Interest (EOI).

3. BACKGROUND:

At the Council meeting held on September 11th, 2024, a Georgina resident referenced Item 11.1.b of Report SI-2024-0015 entitled 'Building Faster Fund Investment Plan' and suggested that the existing Civic Centre building should be renovated as a solution to affordable housing, to help deliver on housing growth and affordable housing goals. Council voted to receive this verbal submission. It was also agreed at the Sept 11th, 2024 Council meeting that staff would investigate the option of including this possible solution within the upcoming Expression of Interest (EOI) for the Building Faster Fund.

The verbal submission suggested that the existing Civic Centre is a perfectly good building for which the grant funding of \$1.52M plus the cost savings derived from not demolishing the existing Civic Centre plus any financial interest that York Region may have as well as that from interested third parties, could be used to renovate the existing Civic Centre to provide affordable housing.

The following ANALYSIS section outlines many, but certainly not all, of the aspects that need to be assessed, reviewed, contemplated and abided by, when assessing the viability of renovating the existing Civic Centre to accommodate affordable housing.

4. ANALYSIS:

The section below summarizes many of the issues and findings within the following categories: 1) Policy and Regulations; 2) Building Condition, Design & Construction; 3) Other General Considerations; and, 4) Assessment by The Regional Municipality of York.

Policy and Regulations

This subsection of the report (Policy and Regulations) has been prepared by Denis Beaulieu, Director of Development Services.

Section 3(5) of the *Planning Act* requires that Council decisions in respect of the exercise of any authority that affects a planning matter be consistent with the Provincial Planning Statement and conform with or not conflict with Provincial Plans. Furthermore, Section 24(1) of the *Planning Act* stipulates that no public work shall be undertaken that does not conform with the Official Plan. Public work is defined as “*any improvement of a structural nature or other undertaking that is within the jurisdiction of the council of a municipality or a local board.*”

Below is an overview of relevant policies and provisions in the Greenbelt Plan, the Town’s Official Plan and Zoning Bylaw 500.

Greenbelt Plan

In broad terms, the intent of the Greenbelt Plan is to direct urban uses to Settlement Areas while protecting the rural, agricultural, recreation and natural heritage functions of the Protected Countryside. Below are excerpts of some relevant policies:

- The Civic Centre is located within Rural Lands of the Protected Countryside.
- Section 3.1.4.1 provides that rural lands support and provide the primary locations for a range of recreational, tourism, institutional (including cemetery) and resource-based commercial/industrial uses. They also contain many historic highway commercial, non-farm residential and other uses which, in more recent times, would be generally directed to settlement areas but which are recognized as existing uses by this Plan and allowed to continue and expand.
- Section 3.1.4.5 prohibits new multiple lots or units for residential development (e.g. estate residential subdivisions and adult lifestyle or retirement communities).
- Section 3.1.4.9 provides that where *public service facilities* exist on rural lands consideration should be given to maintaining and adapting these as community hubs, where feasible, to meet the needs of the community. Section 7 defines public service facilities as “*means land, buildings or structures for the provision of*

programs and services provided or subsidized by the government or other body, such as social assistance, recreation, police and fire protection, health and educational programs, and cultural facilities.”

- Section 4.1 stipulates that the rural lands of the Protected Countryside are intended to continue to accommodate a range of commercial, industrial and institutional (including cemetery) uses serving the rural resource and agricultural sectors. They are also intended to support a range of recreation and tourism uses such as trails, parks, golf courses, bed and breakfasts and other tourism-based accommodation, serviced playing fields and campgrounds, ski hills and resorts.

Official Plan

- Designated Parkland Area – Schedule A2.
- Section 4.1.1 (a) permits a range of uses in all designations, including municipal and regional uses, which may include uses related to partnerships that provide for community betterment, buildings and structures. The location of such uses shall be justified and compatible with the surrounding land uses.
- Section 6.6 does not permit residential and/or institutional uses such as an apartment building or affordable housing facility, and contains various policies/requirements applicable to development within the Parkland Area designation.

Zoning By-law 500

- Zoned Rural (RU) – Map 1.
- Section 5.39 stipulates that the provisions of the By-law do not apply to any use of land or to the erection or use of a building or structure on land owned or leased by the Town or any local board thereof.
- Sections 28.1 and 28.2 do not permit residential and/or institutional uses such as an apartment building or affordable housing facility in the Rural (RU) Zone.

Proposed Zoning By-law 600

- Zoned Open Space (OS) – Map 4.
- Section 5.40 stipulates that the provisions of the By-law do not apply to any use of land or to the erection or use of a building or structure on land owned or leased by the Town or any local board thereof.
- Section 20.1 prohibits residential uses and Section 20.2 does not permit institutional uses in the Open Space (OS) zone.

In short, although the Zoning Bylaw effectively provides a blanket land use exemption for Town-owned lands, it is not meant to be used as a tool to avoid conformity with the Provincial Greenbelt Plan or the Town’s Official Plan. In this regard, converting the existing Civic Centre into, for example, an affordable housing facility such as an apartment building, would appear to contravene both the Greenbelt Plan and the Official Plan as this form of residential and/or institutional development is directed to settlement areas.

Building Condition, Design and Construction

In 2021, Accent Building Sciences Inc., carried out Building Condition Assessments of 81 Town Facilities. The report was submitted in 2022. The cost estimate (in 2021 dollars) provided by this Building Condition Assessment (BCA) for the work that should be completed on the existing Civic Centre was \$5.2M within the first five years. Of this amount, \$3.2M should be completed within the first two years. These repairs and maintenance items are unrelated to the official occupancy of the building and should be carried out if the Town is to retain and maintain the asset.

All of the Town's 81 Facilities were assessed and were assigned a Facility Condition Index (FCI) which is calculated by dividing the current repairs and maintenance costs for the first two years by the current replacement value. The existing Civic Centre was assigned a FCI of 12.6% and ranked 9th out of 31 Facilities all within the lowest rated condition category of "Poor".

The decision as to what type of housing is needed and what can be done to the existing Civic Centre to best address the need has a major impact on what needs to be renovated, built, etc. For example, will the existing Civic Centre provide for separate apartment units? Will it provide for communal type living with bedrooms, communal washrooms, showers, and kitchen facilities, etc.?

If the solution requires extensive renovation, the work required to change the current use of the Civic Centre from "Office" to "Residential," will require it to be done in accordance with the latest and relevant Building Codes and requirements. Following are some, but certainly not all, of the issues that will at least need to be considered:

- a. Are the current offices, room sizes adequate to act as bedrooms or do they need to be changed?
- b. Will there be communal washrooms or would each room need its own washroom? All washrooms will need to be designed to today's code requirements for residential use. The requirement for showers will be a significant addition and will require more space along with the associated drainage and ventilation systems.
- c. If the existing offices and rooms need to be changed in terms of their location and size, then the fire ratings and separations may need to be addressed.
- d. Any form of affordable housing should provide for a proper habitable and ambiently controlled environment to allow for fulltime living conditions. Currently staff already face constant challenges through the seasons in trying to manage the temperature and ventilation in the building. It is very difficult and extremely challenging in certain sections of the building to control the ambient temperatures and humidity levels. As such there already currently exists a need to address the overall building insulation and ventilation. Providing for proper Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC) should be investigated and provided regardless of the type of housing that is being provided. This could require new ductwork to be installed to allow for supply and return air to all the various rooms. This will require finding routing through

- the entire building that is essentially a masonry block building, resulting in cutting, patching and possible reinforcing of duct size openings. The need for fire dampers may also be necessary at fire rated separations.
- e. It is likely that in order to accommodate and achieve the necessary residential HVAC requirements, new units such as Chillers and Boilers will need to be provided.
 - f. The building is currently not sprinklered. In changing uses to residential, the building would now need to be sprinklered.
 - g. If the solution is a major renovation, and with the expectation that the Town would want the affordable housing to at least be compliant with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) throughout, the currently defunct elevator would need to be replaced. This will require a major effort to accommodate given that the current dimensions of the elevator shaft are not code compliant and is made of masonry/ concrete walls for which expansion could mean adjusting the surrounding concrete stairs which is extremely impractical. The solution would be, as it was in the past, to add on to the building to facilitate a new code compliant elevator.
 - h. If there is a new internal layout that may be required to address room sizes, washrooms and kitchen spaces, it could affect the window placement throughout which could mean extensive cutting and patching resulting in a need to likely have to address the exterior façade.
 - i. The electric power supply, water supply, drainage and ventilation will need to be added to facilitate kitchen requirements.
 - j. The exterior windows are mainly comprised of vinyl double glazed windows of different ages starting in 1988 all the way through to some old single pane windows from 1958. The windows should be replaced with better energy rated types of windows. The 2021 BCA cost to address all the windows was approx. \$680K.
 - k. All the interior doors could very likely need to be changed depending on the fire separation and or code requirements.

Outside of the potential building design and renovation issues above, there are other overarching site servicing design and construction related aspects that need to be considered, such as:

- Sanitary system within the building: Given the change in usage from Office to Residential, the sanitary pipes and services within and under the building will very likely need to be upgraded, which will involve opening up masonry walls and/or providing for space encroaching shafts and the breaking up of the basement floor slab where required, to add/replace the pipes, drains, etc. There is a high degree of confidence that this will be required given the recent blockages that occurred in the summer and winter for which the floor slab had to be broken out and sections of old clay pipe replaced.
- Site Sanitary system: The new Civic Centre is effectively replacing the existing Civic Centre and so the existing sanitary capacity of the system outside of the building that connects to the main street/Town sanitary system, has the capacity

to handle the new Civic Centre. If the existing Civic Centre is kept and converted into a fulltime residential building, it is very likely that, due to the change in use, that the sanitary system on the Town's campus lands could be inadequate (both on flow and capacity). Following the appropriate assessment and modeling, it is likely the system will require upgrading with larger pipes or twinning and new or modified structures (MHs) in order to accommodate the needs of both buildings.

- *Main Town Sanitary system:* The current main sanitary sewer pipe along Civic Centre Road, that captures all the inflow from the Animal shelter, Water and Parks Works yard, Civic Centre, Pioneer Village, Lawn Bowling, ROC and Chalet building is 200mm (8 inches) in diameter. By converting the current Civic Centre into some sort of high density residential building, flows within the Town's main system would increase. It would therefore be very reasonable to infer that the main Town sanitary system along Civic Centre Road leading to the appropriate pumping station, prior to reaching its ultimate terminus at a treatment plant, would need to be analyzed in terms of pipe sizes as well as the allocation capacity of the receiving pumping station. It is plausible that the assessment would dictate that the main sewer pipes would need to be increased in size or twinned to maintain capacity and flow, and the associated structures augmented to meet the demand. The cost for this endeavour alone, should it be required, would be in the millions of dollars.
- Additional power will need to be provided as the new Civic Centre will be electrically fed off of the existing transformer. A new feed and transformer will be required to re supply the existing Civic Centre.
- The capacity of the immediate current gas supply line will need to be assessed to verify that it can actually support both buildings.
- The staff parking lot at the rear of the existing Civic Centre is being retained and will be the staff parking for the new Civic Centre. The capacity to provide for both the new replacement Civic Centre and the potential residential building will need to be assessed to see if it is sufficient or requires upgrading or an additional parking lot.
- There is no existing storm water sewer system for the current Civic Centre. The new replacement Civic Centre storm water is being managed via an entirely site contained drainage system which necessitated, and includes, all new swales around the building, bioswales and a storm water retention pond. This was required to meet the design and code requirements/restrictions as it relates to minimizing and controlling surface water runoff. Impermeable surfaces such as sidewalks, parking lots and the building footprint itself, all negatively affect permeable surfaces (grass, soil, etc) and therefore affect the amount of and size of storm water management ponds and swales required. If the existing Civic Centre is to remain with the official occupancy being changed, along with the renovation work and possible parking lot addition, then this may require that the

storm water run off created by the existing civic centre will also need to be managed via new swales and retention ponds.

All of the above items would have a cost associated with them, not only in terms of the actual renovation and construction effort, but also for the upfront design and feasibility assessments that a respondent to an EOI would need to perform to make an informed decision.

Other General Considerations

- Without knowing what will actually be done to the existing Civic Centre to accommodate potential affordable housing, but assuming an option that requires a design to address the items identified in this section, staff surmise that the effort in just professional fees alone for the design, contract administration and management services, investigative reports, etc, that would be borne by the successful respondent to an EOI, or partner, could be in the \$2M+ range. Renovations are more time intensive to manage, design and construct than new builds.
- Maystar General Contractors Inc. is currently under contract to demolish the existing Civic Centre for a very competitive price to the Town. Removing this scope of work from the contract can be done, but it will be at a negotiated credit that will be less than the current scheduled value of the demolition. The risk that may also occur, (that will grow over time), is that if the demolition is removed the already contracted demolition subcontractor(s) to Maystar, may claim that their predicted revenue has been negatively affected as they may not have other work for the predicted time frame. Will they have enough time to secure replacement work? Does the contract between Maystar and its subcontractors have language to deal with this type of issue? These matters are not always black and white and so at this time, staff are just highlighting it as potential risk.
- Other relevant factors that would likely affect or impact a decision such as this, would include whether there are amenities that would need to be in close proximity to serve those in the affordable housing, such as grocery stores, a pharmacy, convenience stores, walk in clinics. None of these exist today.
- There is currently no public transit to the building nor are there sidewalks along Civic Centre Road to facilitate safe pedestrian access.
- The Town would also need to consider that if there is a time lag between staff moving into the new Civic Centre and the time when work would actually be able to start on the existing Civic Centre, the Town will need to maintain the facility in the interim to a degree that the building does not deteriorate. If this is the case other than the ongoing cost to provide heat and hydro, the Town may also need to pay for the provision of an additional new power supply if sufficient power is

not available from the current feed/ transformer that will then be feeding the new Civic Centre. This situation may also exist in terms of the gas supply.

Assessment by The Regional Municipality of York

From the Town's perspective, given the very likely extensive cost and the fact that the existing Civic Centre is in the middle of a publicly owned recreation campus, it is suggested that York Region (our upper tier partner) would represent the best partner for the Town. In all likelihood, York Region is the only non-private entity that would have the financial capacity to take on such a project.

Staff solicited feedback on the potential use of the existing Civic Centre to provide affordable/community type housing from the York Region Community & Health Services Department (from both the Housing Services and Social Services Branches). Following is the Region's collective response:

"York Region has undertaken an internal analysis to investigate the feasibility of retrofitting the existing Georgina Civic Centre for the purposes of emergency and transitional or community housing. As part of the review, a location assessment was undertaken. Given the site's remote location, it was determined that access to important supportive amenities necessary for emergency, transitional and community housing projects, such as transit, grocery stores, pharmacies, banks, community health and social services is limited.

Regional staff also reviewed the Building Condition Assessment of the existing Civic Centre and assessed the additional construction needed for conversion. The Building Condition Assessment reveals the existing building is in "poor" condition. The renovation and retrofit costs including substantial architectural, mechanical, electrical, accessibility upgrades are expected to far exceed established standards.

Based on the Region's preliminary analysis, this site and the existing building do not have high potential for retrofitting as Emergency and Transitional or Community Housing. Regional staff value the partnership with the Town in examining all options to increase the supply of emergency, transitional, and community housing in Georgina."

5. RELATIONSHIP TO STRATEGIC PLAN:

The Strategic Plan, in combination with the Official Plan/Secondary Plans, promotes a diversity of housing in the appropriate locations.

6. FINANCIAL AND BUDGETARY IMPACT:

There is currently no funding allocated in the 10 Year Capital Plan relating to any of the potential expenditures listed within this report.

7. PUBLIC CONSULTATION AND NOTICE REQUIREMENTS:

There is no statutory requirement to provide notice of this report.

8. CONCLUSION:

The above analyses, highlighted items and feedback throughout this report indicate the following:

Given the current *Planning Act* as well as the relevant policies and provisions in the Greenbelt Plan as well as the Town's Official Plan and Zoning Bylaw 500, converting the existing Civic Centre into, for example, a residential building, would appear to contravene both the Greenbelt Plan and the Official Plan as this form of residential development is directed to settlement areas.

The design and construction costs to entertain affordable housing options for the existing Civic Centre will be quite significant and in all likelihood cost in the high multiple million dollar range.

York Region's preliminary analysis finds that this site and the existing Civic Centre building do not have a high potential for retrofitting to an Emergency and Transitional or Community Housing building. The renovation and retrofit costs including substantial architectural, mechanical, electrical, accessibility upgrades are expected to far exceed established standards.

In addition, in order to issue a request for an Expression of Interest (EOI) and be respectful of potential respondent's time and effort, the Town should be issuing an EOI for a project that is genuinely thought to be in accordance with the Planning and other Acts as well as the Town's Official Plan. The project also needs to at least be theoretically feasible for which there are anticipated solutions that could be viable and assessed to be of value by an interested party or parties.

Staff's recommendation is therefore that Council approve that the potential Building Faster Fund of \$1.52M be utilized in another way that is more cost effective and impactful to address the Affordable Housing problem and that the existing Civic Centre be demolished as previously approved by Council and that has already been awarded via the existing contract between the Town of Georgina and Maystar General Contractors Inc.

APPROVALS

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