



**The Corporation of the City of Cornwall**  
**Regular Meeting of Council**  
**Report**

Department: Planning, Development and Recreation  
Division: Planning  
Report Number: 2023-34-Planning, Development and Recreation  
Prepared By: James Fawthrop, General Manager, Planning, Development and Recreation, Lisa Smith, Manager, Housing Services, and Mellissa Morgan, General Manager, Human Services and Long-Term Care  
Meeting Date: April 24, 2023  
Subject: Vacant Land Use – 504 Fourth Street East (Former Bob Turner/Joe St. Denis Field)

**Purpose**

To provide Council with an update on previous discussions regarding the future use of vacant land at 504 4th St. East (Former Bob Turner/Joe St. Denis Field).

**Recommendation**

That Council approve the designation of municipally owned vacant land located at 504 Fourth Street East for a future affordable housing development.

**Financial Implications**

None, at this time (related to the housing development).

**Strategic Priority Implications**

This project aligns with Council's Strategic Plan to grow quality housing stock, including affordable housing.

## **Background / Discussion**

As a mandate of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the City (as Service Manager) was required to complete a Ten-Year Housing Plan and subsequently a Five-Year Update to that original Plan. Following a presentation to Council on July 8, 2019, the Five-Year Update was approved by council at the August 12, 2019 meeting.

As a recommendation from the Five-Year Update, on October 13, 2020, Council approved The Cornwall SD&G Housing Revitalization Plan (the Plan) which identified that the most resource intensive component of providing housing is capital investment required to create new housing (Council report # 2020-226-Social and Housing Services). This includes land which can be a great cost component to the overall cost of development.

To translate the above strategy into achievable projects, the housing needs were further dissected across two five-year periods – 2021 to 2026 and 2027 to 2031. The existing sites and potential new sites in the Cornwall and SDG areas were reviewed for constraints and opportunities to developing new units through additions to the existing site, demolishing existing and building new or building new units in a greenfield site. As part of reviewing constraints and opportunities, sites that allowed shovel ready projects considering current site conditions and applicable regulations were identified. A list of potential projects was identified, including municipally owned vacant lands at 504 4th St. East and the corner of Ninth St. and McConnell in Cornwall.

The Plan also pointed to a clear consensus emerging for more affordable housing units suitable for families and individuals in all stages of life and of varying financial standing. Development on municipally owned vacant land could address a good portion of those needs. Results also showed that there is a preference for creating self sufficient communities with public services and amenities such as recreational, healthcare, and educational facilities.

Furthermore, the housing needs assessment showed that, approximately 740+ units will be required in the Cornwall and SDG area by 2031. Over 40% of the identified housing needs will be in the City of Cornwall.

To make projects more viable and to support diversified communities, as indicated above, we have determined that at least 30% of any development

should be at or near market rent. In addition, since COVID, we anticipate that the 740+ units that were originally identified are now under understated.

Total Affordable Units Required (by 2031 – from the Plan)	741
Total Affordable Units Required (post COVID 20% est. increase)	889
Total % Required in Cornwall (40%)	356
Additional Units – Market/Near Market Rent (+30%)	106
Total Units Required in Cornwall (by 2031)	462

In early 2022, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing adopted a Community Housing Renewal Strategy (CHRS) which outlined a plan to work with municipalities, non-profits, and housing co-ops to stabilize and grow the community housing sector. There have also been other Ministry reports and action plans that have addressed the need for more housing in Ontario.

According to the Ontario Housing Affordability Task Force Report (Feb. 2022), “While the affordability crisis began in our large cities, it has now spread to smaller towns and rural communities.”

“Time is of the essence. Building housing now is exactly what our post-pandemic economy needs.”

“Resolving a crisis requires intense focus and a clear goal.”

As part of this report, it also identifies that undeveloped land inside and outside existing municipal boundaries must be part of the solution, particularly in northern and rural communities.

On May 5, 2022, as part of continued action from our Plan, City Council passed a resolution and approved the Declaration of an Affordable Housing Crisis. That report indicated, amongst other things, that Administration provide City Council with what it will take to implement more aggressive targets and a framework for action, in order to:

- preserve and increase the affordable housing supply,
- increase access to housing affordability,
- ensure people are supported to achieve housing stability and long-term housing retention; and
- that Administration be directed to develop a long-range financial plan to meet the targets as set out in the Housing Revitalization Plan.



Additionally, on May 24, 2022, Council received the final report and recommendations from the Mayor's Housing Task Force (Council Report # 2022-17-CAO). One of the recommendations within that report was to "Support and endorse the recommendations made in the Housing Revitalization Plan, as previously approved by Council."

In late 2022, to support the ambitious goals laid out in the local Five-Year Housing Update, the Housing Revitalization Plan, and the 4 separate regional Housing Reports (including the Mayor's Task Force), there was a recognized need to form a Working Group to be tasked with developing and realizing common strategies and priorities related to affordable housing.

The Affordable Housing Progress and Development Collaborative (A HOME) was created to improve service integration, which will promote positive development in the City of Cornwall, Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry housing and homelessness situation. To ensure maximum effectiveness of the Collaborative, membership is comprised of a cross-sector of disciplines from amongst the City and Counties staff, who share the vision of increasing housing opportunities across the region. To the best of our knowledge, this has been the first committee of its kind with 100% collaboration from across the geographic region.

Amongst the Collaborative's first tasks has been to identify all municipally owned vacation lands across the City of Cornwall and S.D.&G. that could be designated for future affordable housing projects. To prepare for a long-term strategic development, it is imperative to begin work early to identify potential lands. Considerable time savings can be realized by pre-qualifying the land to make it "shovel-read" when funding becomes available.

In the 2023 budget, Council approved the hiring of a consultant to complete a long-term housing development strategy. This will be completed in the latter half of 2023, once all Councils have approved the designation of lands suitable for affordable housing.

This initiative also aligns with the Eastern Ontario Warden's Caucus (EOWC) priority of affordable and attainable housing, which includes their '7 in 7' Regional Housing Plan. This plan proposes building at least 7,000 community rental units over seven years across the EOWC region to address housing wait lists. Using a mixed-model approach, the '7 in 7' plan has the added benefit to bring on 21,000 additional market rate units. This would total 28,000 housing units.



As per the Housing Revitalization Plan, some municipally owned lands were identified as suitable for affordable housing developments. Administration met to review options that currently exist within the city.

Initial reviews of municipally owned vacant land indicate that there will not be enough municipally owned land to meet our development needs. As not all lands are suitable for affordable housing, as we reviewed existing vacant lands, we considered the following:

- approximation to existing amenities, resources, and services (ie, grocery stores, hospitals, schools, churches, recreation facilities, etc.)
- situated on a transit route
- enough square footage to develop a diverse housing community that includes mixed income profiles (including better tenant support)
- operational efficiencies (ie, economies of scale when developing, ongoing maintenance, better tenant support)

### **Future Plans**

#### **504 4th St. East (Former Bob Turner/Joe St. Denis Field)**

The Council approved Housing Revitalization Plan identified the subject lands as potential for future affordable housing.

504 Fourth St. East, Cornwall - Full municipal water and sanitary sewer servicing is available to the site with adequate capacity to accommodate mid to higher density residential development. The site is served by a bus route and stop located directly adjacent to the north side of the site on 4th Street East. The site is centrally located within Cornwall's core area and enjoys a high level of pedestrian access to commercial services and amenities on 2nd Street and the Downtown. Being located within the City of Cornwall, the site has excellent access to potential jobs in the region's main hub of employment.

The future housing development would be called, **Bob Turner Court** which preserves the naming of the previous athletic site.

The future development would also contain designated parkland (as identified in the Recreation Master Plan) which would be called, **Joe St. Denis Park** thus preserving the naming of the previous field.

Both dedications would continue to honour the hard work and commitment of these citizens to the City of Cornwall.



Lastly, as we move forward with the development of this property (and future properties), we would also consider the addition of commercial space to provide for other amenities (ie, doctor's office, community room, childcare, etc.).

### **Aligning with the Recreation Master Plan**

#### *Relocation of Existing Football Field*

The subject property was formerly the City's main recreation hub consisting of the Bob Turner Memorial Centre, two outdoor tennis courts, 4 ball fields, and one football field named Joe St. Denis Field. Currently, Joe St. Denis Field, is the only recreation amenity that remains on the property.

Prior to the closure and demolition of the Bob Turner Memorial Centre, the 2009 Recreation Master Plan, originally identified the potential relocation of the football field as an option for future consideration. The 2009 Plan states that the local football club requested improvements to the field and the field house and identified the poor condition of the field as being due to extensive use. The City has since constructed temporary change rooms and washroom facilities on site using three portable classroom structures.

Today, the condition of the field remains an ongoing challenge. In order to improve field conditions, field use is limited to only the local minor football association programming and a charity high school football game in the Fall. The overhead field lighting is in poor condition, does not provide adequate light levels and requires replacement. Staff have been hesitant to proceed with capital recreation infrastructure investments at the field, such as new overhead lighting, due to the uncertainty surrounding the future use of the property.

The relocation of Joe St. Denis Field is also identified in the recently adopted Recreation Master Plan Update (RMP, April 2021) as recommendation #38:

*Install a multi-use artificial turf field with lights at the Benson Centre. The field should be thoughtfully located to benefit from the shared parking and support amenities within the recreation centre. This project should coincide with the removal of the football field from Joe St. Denis Park, for which future use options should be evaluated further.*

The community feedback collected as part of the development of RMP (April 2021), identified 44% supported investment in an outdoor artificial turf field that could accommodate football and other field sports. Some local sports organizations are supportive of an artificial turf field as this would extend the





season, allow for play during all weather conditions, and create new opportunities (e.g., youth flag football league). However, the Cornwall Minor Football Association (CMFA) has stated that they would prefer to maintain the current field location as well as its natural turf condition and maintain the current restrictions on its use. The CMFA is aware of the field's deficiencies and have been in ongoing discussions with City administration for several years seeking to improve field turf conditions and identified the need for new overhead field lighting. Each season the CMFA and its members volunteer considerable amounts of time to improve the conditions of the existing turf field by applying topsoil over dressing, seeding, and watering efforts.

The recent trends for municipal football fields in the public recreation sector favour artificial turf over natural grass turf, as artificial turf fields can accommodate at least three times as much use as a typical grass field.

There is an opportunity to consolidate some sports fields at the Benson Centre, which would improve operations and convenience, and free-up existing sites for other purposes. The lands immediately north of the Benson Centre were originally intended to support two grass soccer fields; preliminary investigation suggests that this area has sufficient space to accommodate one large multi-use field that can be used for a variety of sports, which should be designed to maximum dimensions and have football/rugby uprights to allow the greatest flexibility. Such a project would allow the City to re-allocate football rentals away from Joe St. Denis Field, which has below average turf quality, temporary washrooms/change rooms, and limited parking. In addition, the City has recently acquired lands formerly owned by CN Rail adjacent to the Benson Centre for the future expansion of recreation amenities onsite.

The updated RMP (April 2021) prioritizes its recommendations and specifies an approximate timing for each recommendation. The specified order of priority and timing of the recommended actions contained with the updated RMP are organized into the following categories:

- High Priority: Immediate attention is strongly suggested during the timeframe recommended. (2021 to 2023)
- Medium Priority: Attention is required when high priority actions have been initiated or completed, or when suitable partners have been identified for funding. (2024 to 2026)
- Lower Priority: Attention is required when high and medium priority actions have been initiated/completed. (2027 and beyond)

Recommendation #38 within the updated RMP, identified the relocation of Joe St. Denis Field to the Benson Centre site as “medium priority”.

The updated RMP also mentions that a portion of the existing Bob Turner/Joe St. Denis Field site be retained, after the relocation of the field, for the development of a new neighbourhood park. The RMP identified a shortage of neighbourhood park space within the limits of the City’s historic “square mile” area, as this area of the City is currently underserved from a neighbourhood park space perspective.

As part of the affordable housing long-term development plan, a centrally located area within the site will include the development of a new neighbourhood park, which would align with the recommendations of the RMP and would serve the residents of the new housing development as well as existing residents in the surrounding area.

In addition to what was previously listed above, when planning a housing community development, other affordable construction factors should also be taken into consideration, such as:

- Densification of the exiting property (including height limitations)
- Utility constraints
- Alignment with Official Site Plan requirements

To consider utilizing additional land for more park space, above what is identified in the RMP, would:

- Reduce the # of units that could be developed on the subject property (which does not align with the Housing Revitalization Plan).
- Reduce the opportunity to potentially partner with other non-profit/social service resources (to provide onsite resources to tenants).
- Create additional costs related to site plan design and potential complications and development delays, to ensure that the site is fully reviewed for multi-use development (beyond just community housing).

### **Other Financial Considerations**

Further to this report, Council may wish to consider an annual contribution to reserves, commencing in 2024, to ensure adequate funding is available to commence/complete the relocation of the football field to coincide with the future housing development plans of the site.

Additional funding may need to be borrowed to cover the overall cost of the new football field. The cost to construct an artificial turf football/soccer field complete





with overhead lighting, and subsurface drainage and irrigation systems is estimated to be approximately \$3 million.

### **Accessibility Impact**

Future development would meet or exceed requirements in the Ontario Building Code.

Document Title:	Vacant Land Use - 504 4th St. (Bob Turner Site) - 2023-34-Planning, Development and Recreation.docx
Attachments:	
Final Approval Date:	Apr 19, 2023

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

**Lisa Smith - Apr 18, 2023 - 10:47 AM**

**Mellissa Morgan - Apr 18, 2023 - 10:48 AM**

**James Fawthrop - Apr 18, 2023 - 4:47 PM**

**Tracey Bailey - Apr 18, 2023 - 10:17 PM**

**Mark A. Boileau - Apr 19, 2023 - 8:33 AM**