

## For Information Only

### Public Feedback on the Draft Brownfield Strategy and Community Improvement Plan

Presented To: Policy Committee

Presented: Wednesday, Jun 22, 2011

Report Date: Wednesday, Jun 15, 2011

Type: Correspondence for Information

### Recommendation

For information only.

### Finance Implications

The four financial incentive programs total approximately \$550,000 as identified in the "Reclaiming our Urban Places" document. If the final plan and strategy is approved, the request for funding will be forwarded to the Finance Committee for consideration in the 2012 budget.

## Background:

On June 11, 2008, City Council approved Planning Committee Recommendation #2008-17, as follows:

*"THAT City Staff be directed to prepare a Brownfield Community Improvement Plan for Greater Sudbury, as described in the report dated May 21, 2008 from the Manager of Community and Strategic Planning."*

On March 23, 2011, city staff updated the Policy Committee on the status of this initiative and presented *Reclaiming our Urban Places* – the Draft Brownfield Strategy and Community Improvement Plan for the City of Greater Sudbury. As part of this update, city staff indicated that the draft would be shared with the community in the spring for review and comment and that the feedback from this process, together with suggested changes, would be presented to Policy Committee in June.

## Purpose:

This report briefly describes the community engagement strategy, the feedback received from the community and the recommended modifications to the draft document.

## Discussion:

### Signed By

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*Digitally Signed Jun 15, 11*

**Division Review**

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The draft Brownfield Strategy and Community Improvement Plan (the draft strategy and plan) was formally released to the community and other persons and public bodies in April.

- The draft strategy and plan was posted to the City's website and members of the public were invited to provide their views on the draft strategy and plan at two public open houses held at Tom Davies Square on May 16 and 18 from 4:00 to 7:00 pm. The open houses were also advertised on the city's website and Facebook page, and in the local press (both statutory ads and banner ads). Four people attended the open houses to provide their views.
- The draft strategy and plan was also sent directly to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing and 22 prescribed persons and public bodies (e.g. First Nations, Nickel District Conservation Authority, utility companies), as required under the *Planning Act*. It was also sent to 18 individuals interviewed during the reconnaissance phase of the work program (e.g. developers, commercial associations and community groups). These prescribed persons, public bodies and individuals were invited to the open houses and/or to provide their comments in writing by May 24. Five written submissions were received. These submissions are summarized below.

The feedback received at the open houses and through the written submissions show general support for the draft strategy and plan. Suggestions have also been made to further strengthen the four-part brownfield revitalization strategy contemplated in the draft.

*Part 1. Continue to build awareness and capacity.*

The strategy proposes to strengthen awareness and capacity to address brownfields through four actions. The comments received support the proposal to create an interdepartmental staff team to collaborate and respond to key brownfield opportunities as they emerge.

*Part 2. Use financial mechanisms to reduce the cost of eligible brownfield projects.*

The strategy proposes to use four financial incentive mechanisms to help offset the upfront costs associated with remediating and redeveloping brownfields, subject to Council's approval and the various terms and conditions within the draft plan and strategy being met. The four proposed financial incentive mechanisms include a tax assistance program, a landfill tipping fee rebate program, a planning and building fee rebate program and a tax increment equivalent grant program. The comments received to date support the proposed use of incentives. Suggestions have been made to clarify and strengthen the provisions of the incentive programs. These suggested changes can be made.

*Part 3. Attract investment to select brownfield properties.*

The draft strategy and plan proposes to help attract investment to brownfields through the creation and implementation of a marketing strategy that would effectively communicate brownfields and brownfield redevelopment opportunities to property owners, developers, potential end uses and tenants. The comments received support the proposed marketing strategy. It has been suggested that the Community Action Networks (CANs) be more actively engaged in the marketing strategy. This would occur through a three-step process that would: inform the CANs on brownfields in their area; enable CANs to host a workshop to create visions for the future use of brownfields of interest; include this information in the marketing strategy. This opportunity can be further explored, should the draft plan and strategy be approved.

*Part 4. Create and implement a failed tax sale procedure.*

The draft strategy proposes to implement a failed tax sale procedure which helps address any outstanding financial obligations that may exist and could impede the successful sale, re-use and redevelopment of the property. The comments received support the proposed tax sale procedure. Suggestions have been made to strengthen the provisions of the municipal tax sale process and failed tax sale procedure. These suggested changes can be made.

Other comments were made regarding the need to integrate this initiative with other city initiatives such as housing, and use of pilot projects. Staff agrees and notes that these items are spoken to in the draft plan and strategy.

In addition to the above-described engagement strategy, city staff presented the draft strategy and plan to a brownfield industry conference in North Bay on May 17, hosted by the City of North Bay and OCETA (a Canadian Environmental Technology Advancement Centre). Approximately 75 individuals representing private developers, development service providers, senior levels of government and other municipalities attended this conference.

This presentation provided an important opportunity to test the draft strategy and plan with the audience and learn more about successful initiatives in other jurisdictions. The city's draft strategy and plan was well-received. In terms of lessons learned from other jurisdictions, presenters observed that:

- brownfield community improvement plans and incentives are a useful tool;
- incentives should be meaningful;
- incentives should be provided as early as possible in the redevelopment process;
- incentives should be provided in a predictable manner;
- phased incentives should be considered for large, multi-phase redevelopment projects;
- incentive agreements should be assignable to third parties.

These observations will be considered in the revisions to the draft strategy and plan.

## **Conclusion and Next Steps**

The draft strategy and plan was shared and tested with the community. The comments received to date support the city's effort to create and implement a strategy and plan to guide the revitalization of brownfields across the community. Suggestions have been made to further strengthen the proposed four-part revitalization strategy. The draft strategy and plan will be adjusted to reflect these suggestions, as described above.

In accordance with the *Planning Act*, the next step in the process will be to schedule a statutory public hearing on the final plan and strategy at Planning Committee. It is anticipated that this meeting will be scheduled for September. If the final plan and strategy is approved, the four proposed financial incentive programs totalling approximately \$550,000 as identified in "Reclaiming Our Urban Places" would be forwarded to Finance Committee for consideration in the 2012 budget.