

Delegations / Presentations



Request for Recommendation

City of Greater Sudbury Proposed Brownfield Community Improvement Plan

Presented To:	Planning Committee
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Recommendations

That City Staff be directed to prepare a Brownfield Community Improvement Plan for Greater Sudbury, as described in this Report.

Finance Implications

Any funds required for the report will be directed from the Official Plan Capital Envelope. Any budget impacts will be identified through the CIP process and prior to any costs being incurred.

Signed By

Report Prepared By

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Recommended by the Division

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STAFF REPORT

Purpose:

This report proposes that the City of Greater Sudbury prepare a city-wide Community Improvement Plan (CIP) to help facilitate the redevelopment of "brownfields".

There are many different ways to define a "brownfield". The National Round Table on the Environment and Economy defines a brownfield as "... abandoned, idle or underutilized commercial or industrial properties where past actions have caused known or suspected environmental contamination, but where there is an active potential for redevelopment." The Province of Ontario defines a brownfield as "an undeveloped or previously developed property that may or may not be contaminated. They are usually, but not exclusively, former industrial or commercial properties that may be utilized, derelict, or vacant."

There are many properties in the City that meet these definitions (e.g. old gas stations, old industrial sites). The proposed Brownfield CIP will build on the commonalities in these and other examples to best define what a brownfield means within the varying contexts of the Greater City.

The report also describes a phased process for the implementation of the CIP.

Background:

In recent years, the federal and provincial government have focussed a substantial amount of attention on the issue of "brownfields" and their redevelopment. For example:

- In 2001, the Federal Government of Canada asked the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy to prepare a National Brownfield Redevelopment Strategy. This Strategy, which was released in 2003 and is called *Cleaning up the Past Building the Future*, is designed to support brownfield redevelopment through three strategic directions: apply strategic public investments to address upfront costs; establish an effective public policy regime for environmental liability and risk management; and, build capacity for and community awareness of, brownfield redevelopment.
- In recent years, the Province of Ontario has enacted a series of changes that are designed to: establish a consistent land use planning policy framework for brownfield redevelopment; clarify the science behind brownfields; clarify issues relating to liability and risk; and, to provide municipalities with new financial tools that can be used through a CIP to stimulate the revitalization of brownfields.

Municipalities across Ontario are responding to this evolving policy and legislative framework, by preparing Brownfield CIPs, suited to their own particular needs. Many municipalities, including Hamilton, Brantford, Kingston, Toronto, North Bay and Sault Ste Marie have developed a CIP to facilitate brownfield redevelopment.

The new Official Plan, which recently came into effect, after receiving approval from the Ontario Municipal Board, provides a policy platform to guide the redevelopment of brownfields across the City.

- The Official Plan recognizes the opportunities for brownfield redevelopment, and the connection between brownfield redevelopment and other key objectives such as intensification. Policy 10.5, for example, states "The redevelopment of abandoned or underutilized industrial and commercial sites is consistent with policies encouraging increased intensification in built up areas." Brownfield redevelopment is also linked to commercial area revitalization and heritage conservation.

- The Official Plan also recognizes CIPs as the vehicle to address brownfield redevelopment. Policy 15.3.e, for example, states that "brownfield redevelopment" is a community improvement project.
- The Official Plan also anticipates that the City may use a CIP to make financial incentives available to stimulate brownfield redevelopment. Policy 10.5.1, for example, states "The City may consider financial and other incentives to promote the redevelopment and reuse of brownfield properties that are subject to environmental constraints." Furthermore, Policy 15.4.k states "in order to effectively implement ... Community Improvement Plans, a variety of initiatives will be used. These initiatives may include, but are not limited to: ... the use of financial incentives to achieve objectives of the CIP...".

With these Official Plan policies in place, the City is well-positioned to move forward with the preparation of a Brownfield CIP that facilitates the redevelopment of brownfields across the entire City.

Brownfields:

What are some of the challenges associated with brownfields?

Brownfields can present many economic, social and environmental challenges.

- Economically, brownfields can have a negative effect on property values, assessment and taxation. In some cases, this effect can be felt beyond the brownfield itself. As vacant or underused commercial or industrial sites, brownfields represent lost economic opportunities in terms of productivity and jobs. Brownfields also contribute to the underutilization of existing hard and soft services.
- Socially, the derelict nature of brownfields detracts from a neighbourhood's quality of place and can affect the quality of life of neighbourhood residents. Those brownfields situated in key locations can also have negative effects on the quality and image of the City.
- Environmentally, the type, nature and extent of contamination can pose risks to human health and the environment.

What benefits could be realized through brownfield redevelopment?

The redevelopment of brownfields in Greater Sudbury has the potential to generate many economic, social and environmental benefits.

- Economically, brownfield redevelopment results in increased assessment, increased property value and increased tax revenue. For example, in Guelph, the redevelopment of four industrial sites for residential/commercial uses resulted in \$26.7 million increase in assessment (from \$1,801,116 to \$28,534,580) and a corresponding \$569,000 increase in tax revenue (from \$58,718 to \$627,704).
- Socially, brownfield redevelopment can help to repair the fabric of existing communities, improving quality of place and life.
- Environmentally, brownfield redevelopment can help to remove threats to human health and safety, temper pressures for development of the Living Area 1 land supply, and, in urban areas, improve air quality and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by providing increased opportunities for closer live-work relationships, especially if the brownfield is situated on a public transit line.

What are the barriers to brownfield redevelopment?

The experience of other communities suggests that there can be numerous barriers to brownfield redevelopment. These include:

- lack of awareness of brownfields;
- threat of real or perceived contamination;
- concerns regarding liability and risk;
- substantial and/or prohibitive clean up costs;
- tax arrears; and,
- not in my back yard attitudes.

What can the City do to help stimulate brownfield redevelopment?

The City of Greater Sudbury can pro-actively address some of the above barriers by initiating a comprehensive city-wide Brownfield CIP.

- The proposed Brownfield CIP would help to raise the level of awareness for brownfields and approaches to brownfield redevelopment. A key element in this awareness raising could be a "Brownfields Symposium" which could be held in the Fall of 2008. This symposium could be targeted towards those involved in developing Greater Sudbury (i.e. Council, staff, developers, lawyers, lenders, appraisers and other professionals and stakeholders) and bring together an array of relevant experts, who would speak of their experience with successfully redeveloping brownfields.
- The proposed Brownfield CIP would provide the City with a unique vehicle to stimulate brownfield clean up and redevelopment, thus helping to level the playing field between already developed and undeveloped sites. Properties across the City meeting certain criteria (e.g. contaminated, in a town centre) would be eligible for incentives to help offset the cost of remediation and redevelopment. The incentives offered would be similar to the Downtown Tax Increment Financing Program. With the proposed Brownfield CIP, the brownfield redevelopers would also be able to access the provincial Brownfield Financial Tax Incentive Program, which allocates matching education property tax assistance for the rehabilitation and development of eligible brownfield properties.
- The proposed Brownfield CIP would also provide the City with additional policy and financial tools to facilitate the sale and redevelopment of former commercial and industrial properties through the municipal tax sale process.

How should the City prepare a brownfield redevelopment strategy?

The Brownfield CIP for the City of Greater Sudbury would be developed and implemented through a five phase process that would begin in June 2008. This process, which is described below, would be led by Planning Services and involve an interdepartmental staff team.

Phase 1. Reconnaissance (June to October, 2008)

- Create interdepartmental staff team (e.g. planning, economic development, finance, property).
- Review provincial legislation, regulations, policies and programs.
- Review comparable municipal precedents.
- Conduct key stakeholder interviews.
- Characterise the scope and nature of brownfields in Greater Sudbury.

Phase 2. Greater Sudbury Brownfield Symposium (October 2008)

- This day-long event would be designed to raise the level of awareness of brownfields in Greater Sudbury, as well as successful approaches to their redevelopment. All relevant stakeholders would be invited to this event including Council, key City Staff, key community stakeholders, developers, lawyers, lenders, insurers and other relevant technical specialists.

Phase 3. Formulate Draft Brownfield CIP (November 2008 to March 2009)

- Based on the results of Phases 1 and 2, City Staff would create a draft Brownfield CIP for Greater Sudbury. The draft Brownfield CIP would be circulated to key stakeholders for comment. Public open houses would also be held to solicit feedback on the draft Brownfield CIP. The location, number and timing of the public open houses would be tailored to the scope the draft Brownfield CIP.

Phase 4. Finalize and Adopt Brownfield CIP (April to June 2009)

- Based on the feedback received during Phase 3, City staff would finalize the draft Brownfield CIP. It is anticipated that the Brownfield CIP would be adopted by City Council according to the provisions of Sections 28 and 17 of the Planning Act, which provides for a formal public meeting and establishes appeal rights.

Phase 5. Promote, Implement and Monitor Brownfield CIP (June 2009 to Ongoing)

- Once in effect, the Brownfield CIP would be promoted using new brochures and through the City website. The administration of the plan would be undertaken by Staff, who would provide Council with annual reports regarding the implementation of the plan. The plan would also be monitored during implementation to determine the need for any future adjustments. All major adjustments would require Council approval.

Conclusion:

The City of Greater Sudbury should prepare a Community Improvement Plan to help stimulate the revitalization of brownfields across the entire City. This plan should be developed following the above-described work program.