

## **Background**

The City of Greater Sudbury is in the process of developing an Employment Land Strategy in order to assist in the City's efforts to attract new investment to the community and assist existing businesses with their expansion efforts. In parallel to this initiative, we are building an inventory of employment lands in order to assist with the site selection process for investment and expansion opportunities.

On November 28, 2019, the Ontario government launched Canada's first Job Site Challenge, in an effort to identify shovel-ready mega sites where automakers or other advanced manufacturers could invest in Ontario by building and establish large-scale industrial operations.

The Job Site Challenge invites municipalities, economic development agencies, real estate developers or individual industrial property owners to propose large tracts of land between 500 and 1,500 acres that are already zoned or could be zoned for industrial use to support large-scale manufacturing operations. These sites should be serviced or easily serviceable by utilities, transportation networks and other support infrastructure.

The Job Site Challenge is intended to raise Ontario's profile and improve its attractiveness internationally in order for the province to compete with other North American jurisdictions for coveted large-scale investments in automotive and other advanced manufacturing and create good, high-paying jobs for Ontario.

In 2019, the City of Greater Sudbury adopted a new Strategic Plan, which placed significant emphasis on Council's desire to support the city's thriving local economy and attractiveness to prospective investors by including the following goals:

Goal 2: Business Attraction, Retention and Development

Goal 4: Economic Capacity and Investment Readiness

Completing the exercise of developing and submitting a proposal to the Province's Job Site Challenge program will serve as a positive step toward both of these goals.

## **Opportunity for City of Greater Sudbury**

Participation in the Job Site Challenge, offers Greater Sudbury the opportunity to vet local sites for a variety of future investment prospects, and create greater awareness of our community's investment potential to policy makers and industrial site selectors. The program is intended to offer the following opportunities to the communities whose sites are selected into the program:

- An internationally recognized site selector will endorse and validate the site for inclusion in the inventory of certified mega sites.

- The Province and the site selector will then lead a marketing campaign to have the selected sites profiled to the global investment community. The first shovel-ready sites are expected to be made available to investors in fall 2020.
- The Challenge is intended to raise Ontario's profile and improve the province's attractiveness internationally in order to compete with other North American jurisdictions for coveted large-scale investments in manufacturing.
- Proactively taking the steps to prepare and identify shovel-ready mega-sites speeds up investment as companies need to spend less time and money on their own due diligence; have easier and more transparent access to accurate site information; and, can have confidence that the land being acquired is ready for development, allowing construction to begin in an expedient manner.

Should the City be successful in attracting a large-scale development through the program, there will be a significant return on investment for the community and surrounding areas. An opportunity of this scale will inject local investment through job-creation, the expansion and creation of manufacturing supply chain small and medium sized businesses, leading to more jobs and economic benefits locally.

#### **Specific Program Benefits:**

In addition to the economic opportunities listed above, the specific benefits outlined in the program guidelines for sites accepted into the Job Site Challenge are as follows:

- Site Selector Expertise and International Validation – the City will be able to engage in negotiations with confidence as opportunities emerge, knowing the site has been endorsed and validated by an internationally recognized site selector.
- Sophisticated Marketing Campaign – the site and city will be marketed by the Province and site selectors to the global investment community. Various marketing strategies, including site selector guild conferences, digital media, public relations, website exposure among others, will be used to promote the sites.
- Streamlined Approvals Review Process – If selected, the site will be provided with a streamlined approvals review process for any applicable provincial licenses, permits and environmental approvals required to develop and service the site. The Province will also support the streamlined review of non-provincial licenses and permits by working directly with municipalities, agencies and entities that may have implications with the site.

**\*\*It is important to note that the Job Site Challenge is not a funding or grant program, but rather a partnership with municipalities and private landowners where the Province will be able to provide valuable in-kind services.\*\***

## Program Criteria

Potential mega sites will be evaluated based on the criteria below:

- **Site size and configuration:** 500-1,500 acres of contiguous land, suitable for development.
- **Location and Transportation:** Maximum flexibility and effectual access to goods movement by rail, port and highway.
- **Utilities and servicing:** All required services and utilities should be available at or near the property boundary.
- **Site Condition and previous uses:** Sites must be suitable for development, with minimal constraints.
- **Automotive and/or advanced manufacturing footprint:** Sites located within or proximate to established clusters are preferred.
- **Talent and training:** Sites located in proximity to a skilled labour force and/or post secondary academic institutions are preferred.
- **Ownership and title:** Clear unencumbered ownership and title are strongly preferred.
- **Policy and regulatory framework:** Sites should be located in close proximity to strategic employment growth and/or economic development investment areas. Favorable planning and permissions (zoning) will be preferred.
- **Government approvals:** Submissions with demonstrated strategies to expedite and streamline any necessary approvals/permitting from relevant authorities will be favored.
- **Engagement with Indigenous Communities:** Prior engagement with neighboring Indigenous communities will be favored.
- **Incentives:** Proposals which identify access to potential incentives (financial/economic/social/environmental) will be favourably received.
- **Community benefits:** Sites which best demonstrate the potential to achieve community benefit goals through this initiative will be favourably received.

## Site Selection

In an effort to select a site for submission, parameters and criteria were developed in order to narrow down the potential sites throughout the city. The criteria was established taking into account the Program's requirement for ease of development as well as the City of Greater Sudbury's Settlement Boundary, as identified in the Official Plan.

Through the City's GIS mapping system, a number of sites were identified as meeting the minimum criteria, which included the following:

- A minimum of 500 contiguous acres
- No more than three owners across all parcels
- Sites fully or partially located within the settlement boundary

From the sites that met this criteria, other factors such as access to services and utilities, current land use, topography and access to transportation were considered against each of the properties to identify a site that met as many of the Program's criteria, as per the Request for Submissions, in order to "put our best foot forward" and maximize likelihood of success.

### **Proposed Site**

Taking into account all factors from the program criteria, established planning policies as well as future development potential, a site at the intersection of Maley Drive and Falconbridge Highway was selected for submission into the program. The proposed site includes four contiguous parcels, with two owners for a total size of 836 acres, well within the specified range of 500 to 1,500 acres identified by the program criteria. The site meets many of the identified criteria including size, topography, zoning, access to transportation infrastructure as well as access to utilities and municipal services.

### ***Official Plan Designation & Zoning***

According to the City's Official Plan, the proposed site is designated Living Area 1, Parks and Open Space, General Industrial, Heavy Industrial and Aggregate Reserve. Land intended to be used for Employment purposes can be designated Centres, Mixed Use Commercial, Institutional or Industrial. An Official Plan amendment would be required to amend the designation of those lands that are not currently designated for industrial use. Permitted uses within the General Industrial designation include manufacturing, fabricating, processing and assembling of consumer products, repair, packing and storage of goods and materials, and related industrial activities, which are in-line with the target industries of the Job Site Challenge.

A portion of the subject property is located within the settlement boundary while a portion is directly adjacent to the boundary. Settlement area boundaries may be expanded where it can be demonstrated that, amongst other criteria, sufficient opportunities for growth exist.

The site currently includes a mix of zoning (M1, M3, M5, Open Space, Rural and others). It is anticipated that re-zoning may be required for part of the property depending on the proposed use.

The site currently holds number of Secondary Aggregate Resource Licences, for which the majority of the aggregate supply has now been depleted and the land rehabilitated, creating a flat, clean landscape for development. The owner is in a position to relinquish aggregate licences, should an industrial development opportunity emerge and another use for the site be proposed that is beneficial to the community.

Should this site be selected, the City would work with the Province to undertake the necessary Planning Act processes and Provincial approvals to harmonize the existing Official Plan designations and zoning.

### ***Transportation***

From a transportation perspective, the site is very well-positioned. The Greater Sudbury Airport is situated 14 kilometers from the site, access to Hwy 17 is 4.5 kilometers from the site, while access to the Hwy 17 bypass (to Hwy 69/400) is located 9 kilometers away. In addition, the newly completed Maley Drive is located immediately adjacent to the proposed site, providing easy and quick access to many of the industrial sites across the city, which may support future development in this area. There is also rail access to the CN Rail mainline, via a spur directly onto the site. From an employment support perspective, the new GOVA Transit system also has a stop directly at the entrance of the site.

The selected site also aligns well with future development potential for the area, as the City's Official Plan calls for the eventual extension of Maley Drive through this site south to Hwy 17, providing a direct link to the provincial highway network.

### ***Utilities and Servicing***

The site is also well-positioned for connection to utilities and municipal services. There is a sufficient supply of electricity and natural gas adjacent to the site as well as water and waste-water available in close proximity to the site. The costs to extend the water main and sanitary sewer across Falconbridge Highway at Maley Drive, to service this site were included in the 2019 Development Charges Background Study. From a servicing perspective, this site aligns well with Council's vision for future development in the area.

### **Next Steps**

Staff are currently working with the property owners as well as service and utility companies to compile all of the necessary documentation to submit a proposal to the Province by the program deadline of March 31, 2020.

The Province has made no indication as to how many sites will be accepted into the program. There is a possibility that sites not accepted into the program may still be included as part of Ontario's Investment Ready: Certified Site Program.

It should be noted that regardless of whether Greater Sudbury is selected to participate in the program, the exercise itself will be a valuable process in order to determine what is required to prepare this site for development, should a large scale investment opportunity be identified. This process will improve Greater Sudbury's investment-readiness and assist with business attraction efforts, in alignment with Goal 2 (Business Attraction, Retention and Development) and Goal 4 (Economic Capacity and Investment Readiness) the City of Greater Sudbury's Strategic Plan. This work will also inform the upcoming Employment Land Strategy.