

Considering 171 King Street to be Surplus Public Comments – June 25, 2024

The Blue Mountains Attainable Housing Corporation, Received via email on June 6, 2024

The Blue Mountains Attainable Housing Corporation Board Members would like to express the importance of retaining this property as public land and would like to provide Council with suggestions regarding potential future uses of the property. This property is an ideal location for attainable/affordable housing with easy access to the downtown core and the Georgian Trail. The Board has identified two limiting factors to the provision of affordable housing in the Town: the cost of land and planning and development costs. If Council chooses to retain the land, it allows the Town to set parameters around the use of the land, providing control over future development and use of the land. These parameters could ensure the land is used for attainable/affordable housing in the community, in perpetuity. Further, if an RFP process were to be initiated by the Town, Council could outline relevant parameters through that process, including uses and standards Council will consider, or not consider, for the property, with the goal of prioritizing attainable housing. Some options available should the land be retained by the Town include holding the land in perpetuity, by the Town or a community land trust, or establishing a long-term land-lease agreement with a non-profit developer. The Board also requests that Council and the Town discuss with Grey County the potential for this property to be used by the County for the development of housing. The Board suggests exploring opportunities for the Town to obtain necessary planning approvals for the property in advance, so that it is development ready. Approvals could be obtained through the on-going Official Plan Review and the upcoming Zoning By-law update or by using the enhanced MZO process established by the province. If Council chooses to sell the land in the future, there would be limited control over how the land is used and the Town would put in jeopardy an important opportunity for attainable and affordable housing.

Pamela Spence, Received via email on June 21, 2024

I have listened to prior meetings on this matter and have been actively involved in the Town's Official Plan Review and background reports as well as several community groups such as Southern Georgian Bay Institute, BMRA, Craigeith Community Working Group and the Economic Development Advisory Committee. I have not heard that any of these groups support the intention of this public meeting namely that 171 King Street should be sold. In this time of a **dire** affordable housing shortage, the Town should not be considering selling a valuable asset without thorough consideration for the views of the community. Having worked in the development industry for much of my career, it is rare that the first go around for any development gets off the ground. Usually there are several reiterations until a viable project goes forward. The land should be reconsidered for another affordable housing project. The project originally slated for 171 King St was good intentioned but the RFP went out at the height of supply shortages, labour challenges and continued uncertainty in all market sectors especially finance and construction. The fact that the proposed project did not work as anticipated is not a fault necessarily of the concept. It could have been timing and players available at the time. Several pieces of that puzzle have changed now and it might be time to re-organize and try again. TBM has community groups that Council listens to and respects and seems to value their good work, yet you are not hearing their voices. Most voices say there is a greater need than cash at this time. I would like to add that TBM's publications have an emphasis on resiliency, sustainability and community values. I think repurposing the land should be explored further, the community groups are willing and able to help and should be engaged to address these above questions. There are more players in the affordable housing sector that are investing and challenging the market real estate norms. More opportunities may be out there that should be explored. More time should be allowed to consider inventive and creative concepts such as land trusts, community bonds, social financing, non-profit interests, restrictions on title, land lease just to mention a few. Finally, I do not favour selling any land because numerous considerations have not been thoroughly vetted, namely,

-what is the "corporate strategy" here?

-how does this "fit" our mission and values?

-what is the appraised value?

-are there conditions to maximize its highest and best use and hence value (ie zoning change, etc.)?

- cash or Vendor Take Back or land swap?
- what will the proceeds from any sale be used for?
- options to retain minority interest in exchange for community benefits?
- neighbours concerns (avoid nimbyism)?
- timing options given neighbouring public works?
- etc, etc

Do not make a hasty decision. Please delay the decision and not sell this land.

Blue Mountains Ratepayers' Association (BMRA), Received via email on June 24, 2024

Access to land is a significant constraint to affordable housing providers. By contributing land at low cost or no cost, the Town of the Blue Mountains could have a critical impact on the cost of projects which would result in lower rents or purchase prices, as well as give the Town control over the form of development and its long-term affordability. For this reason, the BMRA would like the Town to consider retaining ownership of 171 King Street East and making the property available for affordable housing. To facilitate this, BMRA suggests that either the Town or The Blue Mountains Attainable Housing Corporation (BMAHC) be structured as a land trust, and that 171 King Street East be leased to an affordable housing provider. Making land available on a long-term leased basis is seen as the most effective form of support as it protects affordability in perpetuity for future generations. Land trusts typically retain ownership of the land and offer long-term ground leases. Buildings developed on leased land have permanent restrictions registered on title on use and resale. Furthermore, Council has recommended a Committee of Council be struck to study the housing crisis and has asked that this group work with the Housing Strategy Working Group made up of multiple local interested citizens. The CAO advised this ad hoc group is set to present to Council. The BMRA (which is part of this ad hoc group) recommends no steps be taken on BMAHC until these two parties (Committee of Council and Working Group) have been heard.

Recommendation: Providing access to sites for affordable housing is an important function which could be delivered by the BMAHC or the Town. Until such time as this potential role is considered, it is premature to offer the sale of 171 King Street East on the open market.

BMRA Remarks Concerning the Zoning of 171 King Street East

Before it is made available for development, the site at 171 King Street East should be derisked of delays in land use approvals. BMRA would like the Town to consider rezoning the property at 171 King Street East to allow four storeys, as well as to allow residential uses on the ground floor, either with or without a commercial component. This view has been informed by the community engagement process which resulted in design guidelines for the proposed Gateway project, as well as subsequent discussions in the community regarding the Official Plan Review currently underway. In its OPR Phase 2 submission to the Town on February 29, 2024, BMRA suggested that sites along Highway 26 in Downtown Thornbury/Clarksburg and Craighleith may be suitable for a building height of four storeys, with a step-back at the fourth storey. BMRA has called for a mapping exercise to identify possible four-storey sites and for broad public engagement in connection with the selection of proposed locations. BMRA has also called for a policy that ties the additional height to the provision of affordable housing. Sites acceptable for four storey buildings would be designated in the revised Official Plan and governed by a zoning by-law amendment. The BMRA suggests it is premature to change the use or ownership of 171 King Street until the Official Plan review has concluded and is able to guide next steps on this site.

Recommendation: The Town should consider rezoning the property at 171 King Street East to allow four storeys, as well as to allow residential uses on the ground floor.

TBM Housing Strategy Working Group, Received via email on June 24, 2024

The Housing Strategy Working Group consists of representatives of the BMRA, the Institute of Southern Georgian Bay, the Chamber of Commerce, and a development industry representative, MacPherson Builders. This group was formed because we recognize there is a housing emergency in the Town of The Blue Mountains. The Group launched this spring, and we are in the early stages of our fact finding and discussions. We plan to engage more community stakeholders, and to hold an Open Forum with Council in the near future. Later in the fall we intend to provide Council with a set of housing strategy recommendations which could contribute to the work of the proposed

Housing Committee of Council, and be part of a broader strategy for Grey County. Today we are faced with an average new home price of \$1.7 million as per page 29 of the November 2023 Housing Needs Assessment. This is an increase of 115% in seven years. New condominium townhouses sell on average for roughly \$800,000. More importantly, there is no purpose built rental housing in the Town. The Housing Needs Assessment concluded that 215 units are needed **right now**, and rents should be under \$1,300 a month in order to meet the needs of low and moderate income workers and seniors. Nothing has been built for these critical sectors of our community and we believe this is unacceptable. This housing emergency has threatened the sustainability of our community, and in particular the staffing and thus viability of our business sectors. Solutions were developed in the Town's 2022 sustainability plan, The Future Story. Bold Action 16 calls for stable funding for the BMAHC, and for BMAHC to take a role as a land trust. For instance, the property at 171 King Street East in Thornbury could be a property held in trust and leased for affordable housing development. Another role to consider in deciding the fate of BMAHC is managing **access** to affordable housing units so that they continue to be made available to households most in need. We therefore question the Committee of the Whole's decision on June 17th to dissolve the Blue Mountains Attainable Housing Corporation. We think that such an action would be premature given the initiatives underway and the housing emergency before us. The Working Group would like the Town to keep all its options open while the Working Group and the Committee of Council consider the future roles for the Town and the BMAHC in meeting the housing needs of an important segment of the population who work here and who would like to live here. We look forward to engaging with Council, and Town Staff, as the Housing Strategy Working Group efforts move forward.

Elaine Beard (102 Wards Road), Attended the meeting on June 26, 2024

Spoke in support of the Town retaining the property and using it for Attainable Housing unless another, better site can be procured to provide the community with Attainable Housing.

Joe Halos (23 Riverside Crescent), Attended the meeting on June 26, 2024

Spoke in support of declaring the land surplus, selling it on the open market and focusing Attainable Housing efforts at the Campus of Care property.

Paul Reale (139 Peel Street South), Attended the meeting on June 26, 2024

Spoke in support of the Town using the property for the provision of Attainable Housing through working with developers and considering an MZO to fast-track the project.

Public Meeting Video Link: <https://pub-bluemountains.escribemeetings.com/Players/ISIStandAlonePlayer.aspx?id=2118a435-e7d9-4f5f-b2b2-ea6e9edf87ff>