



REPORT

REPORT TO: Mayor Bonnette and Members of Council

REPORT FROM: Tara Buonpensiero, Planner-Policy

DATE: May 31, 2010

REPORT NO.: PDS-2010-0049

RE: School Sites Land Use Planning Study – Background, Issues and Options Paper

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Report No. PDS-2010-0049 dated May 31, 2010, regarding the School Sites Land Use Planning Study - Background, Issues and Options Paper (provided under separate cover) be received;

AND FURTHER THAT staff be directed to hold a Public Open House in September 2010 to obtain public comments on the School Sites Land Use Planning Study – Background, Issues and Options Paper;

AND FURTHER THAT a copy of the School Sites Land Use Planning Study – Background, Issues and Options Paper be posted on the Town's website for public review and comment;

AND FURTHER THAT a copy of Report No. PDS-2010-0049 be forwarded to the School Sites Land Use Planning Study Stakeholder Advisory Committee and Technical Advisory Committee.

BACKGROUND:

Report Purpose

Through the approval of the recommendations of Report No. PDS-2009-0033, Council approved the Terms of Reference for the School Site Land Use Planning Study, which

outlined a five phase planning process as follows:

- Phase 1 - Background Analysis and Issue Identification
- Phase 2 - Policy and Regulatory Alternatives
- Phase 3 - Select the Preferred Policy and Regulatory Alternative
- Phase 4 - Initial Policy and Regulatory Formulation
- Phase 5 - Final Policy and Regulatory Formulation

The purpose of this report is as follows:

- To provide a brief summary of the School Sites Background, Issues and Options Paper; and,
- To seek direction to hold a Public Open House to obtain public comments on the School Sites Background, Issues and Options Paper.

COMMENTS:

School Sites Background, Issues and Options Paper

Meridian Planning Consultants Inc. have prepared a School Sites Background, Issues and Options Paper, which is the key deliverable for Phases 1 and 2 of the planning process. The School Sites Background, Issues and Options Paper is comprised of seven sections as follows:

- **Section 1.0 Introduction**

Section 1.0 is the introductory section and includes a summary of the purpose and structure of the Background, Issues and Options Paper.

- **Section 2.0 Review of Existing Policies, Regulations and OMB Decisions**

This section provides an overview of existing policies, regulations and OMB decisions relevant to this study. Provincial planning documents reviewed include the Provincial Policy Statement, Places to Grow – Greater Golden Horseshoe Growth Plan, and the Greenbelt Plan. Regional documents reviewed include the technical and background reports related to Sustainable Halton, and the Halton Region Official Plan. With respect to the Town of Halton Hills, the following documents, policies and procedures were reviewed:

- Strategic Plan;
- Official Plan;
- Intensification Strategy;
- Draft Comprehensive Zoning By-law;

- Existing and Proposed Schools;
- Cash-in-lieu of Parkland By-law;
- Land Disposition By-law; and,
- Development Charges By-law.

In addition to the information above, this section also summarizes key components of a number of Acts, including the Education Act, Development Charges Act and Planning Act. It also provides an overview of the education funding formula, and other relevant Ministry, and School Board policies and guidelines.

- **Section 3.0 Land Use Approaches in Other Municipalities**

Section 3.0 summarizes the Official Plan policies and Zoning By-law provisions respecting school sites in Burlington, Milton and Oakville. Each Official Plan includes policies related to considering alternative ways to maintain parkland levels in instances when schools are declared surplus. A policy in the Town of Milton's Official Plan outlines alternative uses for institutional sites that are not required for schools or parks in a priority order, with another institutional use having a highest priority and low and medium density residential uses having a lower priority.

- **Section 4.0 Parkland and Facilities in Halton Hills**

Since there is a strong relationship between school properties and parkland, this section of the report summarizes some key aspects of the Recreation and Parks Strategic Action Plan (2007) including a summary of the Town's facility and park inventories, parkland hierarchy, parkland requirements, and parkland acquisition/disposal considerations. This section also discusses the Reciprocal Agreement that is in place between the Halton Region local municipalities, and both the Halton District School Board and Halton Catholic School Board. This Reciprocal Agreement provides for the shared use of facilities and land for organized sports, meetings, continuing education and other programs.

- **Section 5.0 Discussion**

Section 5.0 provides an overview of the value of schools in communities including those beyond the primary role of providing education to children. Some of the key messages are related to the impacts of school closures, funding constraints school boards face and highlights the need for a coordinated and integrated approach to planning and infrastructure investment among Provincial ministries. This section also elaborates on

the apparent disjoint between the Provincial focus on intensification, and providing of complete communities compared to the Ministry of Education trend away from community schools and building bigger schools with a large catchment area.

- **Section 6.0 Land Use Options**

This section outlines five land use options which have been prepared and presented for discussion purposes. The differentiating factors between the options relate to the flexibility that the school board or a purchaser of a school property has with respect to alternative land uses on a school property or a portion of a school property.

Option 1: New Minor Institutional Area – Elementary School and Major Institutional Area – Secondary School Designation

Places existing public school sites in a new Minor Institutional Area – Elementary School designation and secondary school sites in a Major Institutional Area – Secondary School designation. These designations would only permit elementary schools and secondary schools respectively, and related uses. The implementing Zoning By-law would then zone these lands to only permit schools and related uses.

Option 2: Designate Elementary Schools ‘Minor Institutional Area – Special’ (Permit a Range of Institutional Uses Excluding Special Needs Housing)

Similar to Option 1, Option 2 places elementary schools in a Minor Institutional Area – elementary School designation, but expands the permitted uses to include a range of public and private institutional uses, with the exception of special needs housing. Secondary schools are already categorized under the Major Institutional Area designation which also permits a range of institutional uses. The implementing Zoning By-law could then zone these lands to permit only schools and related uses, or permit schools and a range of public and private institutional uses, in accordance with the Official Plan.

Another alternative in Option 2 would be to adopt a Neighbourhood Hub designation to recognize school/park campuses. This designation would permit a range of public and private institutional uses.

Option 3: Designate Elementary Schools ‘Minor Institutional Area – Special’ (Permit a Range of Institutional Uses Including Special Needs Housing)

This option is the same as Option 2, but would permit special needs housing in addition to institutional uses.

Option 4: Permit Residential Uses in Principle

In addition to the permitted uses included in Option 3, a wide range of low and medium density residential uses would be permitted in the Minor Institutional Area designation of the Official Plan. Policies would be included in the Official Plan which would outline criteria under which residential uses could be established. The implementing Zoning By-law would not permit the range of residential uses and therefore a new residential use would require an amendment to the by-law.

Option 5: Permit Residential Uses As of Right

This option is the same as Option 4, but the implementing Zoning By-law would permit the range of residential uses, subject to a Holding provision that would be lifted once certain conditions established in the Official Plan are met. The conditions may include factors related to design, layout, density, height and configuration.

Sub Option A: Bonusing & Density in Exchange for Public Benefits

In addition to the five options outlined above, there is a sub-option proposed which would include additional policies in the Official Plan to provide the framework to consider permitting more dense forms of housing, or increased height and density in exchange for increased provision of parks or other facilities.

• **Section 7.0 Other Recommendations**

This section of the report presents other potential recommendations for consideration by the Town, Region, Province and School Boards for legislative and policy changes to improve community building and the provision of schools. Shifts in legislative and policy frameworks are recommended to result in the best use of public assets. The recommendations are as follows:

- the need for coordinated long term planning and consistent planning horizons among and within all levels of government;
- providing the flexibility to allow underutilized school properties to be used for other community uses until student enrolment increases, or possibly permanently;
- revisions to the Education Act to permit and encourage school boards to explore other options (such as multi-use arrangements or lease school space) prior to considering the closure and sale of school sites;
- consideration of policy and legislative changes to allow for flexibility with respect to the requirement to obtain fair market value as it applies to school sites;

- amendments to the Planning Act to allow municipalities to acquire more than 5% of properties for park purposes on properties currently available for public uses;
- the need for a review of the provincial funding formula to introduce flexibility to more effectively deal with factors such as declining enrollment;
- reexamining the factors to determine if a school should be considered for closure including more community based factors;
- increased public notification and engagement in the challenges that school boards are facing far in advance of declaration of school closures; and,
- providing incentives to School Boards that provide for shared use of facilities and land to other levels of government and non-profit service providers.

Summary of Comments Received from the Technical and Stakeholder Advisory Committees

To provide input into the School Sites Land Use Planning Study, a Technical Advisory Committee and a Stakeholder Advisory Committee has been established. The Technical Advisory Committee includes staff representation from the following Town departments: Planning, Development and Sustainability; Recreation and Parks; and, Infrastructure Services. In addition to Town staff, there are also staff representatives from the Region of Halton, the Halton District School Board and the Halton Catholic District School Board.

The Stakeholder Advisory Committee is comprised of Councillor Hurst, the Town's Chief Administrative Officer, a Halton Hills resident and staff from the Planning, Development and Sustainability Department.

In mid April 2010, meetings were held with both the Technical and Stakeholder Advisory Committees to obtain their comments on the School Sites Background, Issues and Options Paper. The School Sites Background, Issues and Options Paper reflects input from the Technical and Stakeholder Advisory Committees.

Next Steps for the School Site Land Use Planning Study

Through the recommendations of this Report, staff are seeking direction to hold a Public Open House in September 2010 to obtain public comments on the School Sites Background, Issues and Options Paper. Staff will consider comments received from the Public Open House when moving forward with Phase 3 of the planning process which involves selection of the preferred policy and regulatory alternative.

During Phase 3, meetings will be held with both the Technical and Steering Committee to obtain input on the preferred policy and regulatory alternative, followed by a second

Public Open House. Subsequent to the Public Open House, the preferred policy alternative will be prepared and presented to Council for approval.

RELATIONSHIP TO STRATEGIC PLAN:

Preparation of the School Sites Land Use Planning Study relates to the following Strategic Directions in the Town's Strategic Plan:

- Foster a Healthy Community
- Achieve Sustainable Growth
- Provide Sustainable Infrastructure & Services
- Provide Responsive, Effective Municipal Government

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

Financial implications related to preparation of this study were outlined in Report PDS-2009-0089 the recommendations of which were approved by Council on September 8, 2009.

COMMUNICATIONS IMPACT:

A Steering Committee and Technical Advisory Committee have been established for the School Sites Land Use Planning Study. In addition, through the recommendations of this report, staff are seeking Council's authorization to post the Background, Issues and Options Paper on the Town's website for public review and comment, and to hold a Public Open House on the School Sites Land Use Planning Study in September 2010.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT:

Any environmental impacts will be considered through the evaluation of alternatives, which will be completed in Phase 3 of the planning process for this project.

CONSULTATION:

Through staff representation on the Technical Advisory Committee, affected Town departments (Recreation and Parks and Infrastructure Services), the Halton District School Board, the Halton Catholic District School Board, and the Region of Halton have been consulted on the preparation of the School Sites Background, Issues and Options Paper.

CONCLUSION:

This report has summarized the School Sites Background, Issues and Options Paper, and outlined the next steps in the project which includes obtaining public comments on

the Background, Issues and Options Paper through a Public Open House and initiating Phase 3 of the planning process, which involves selection of a preferred policy and regulatory alternative.

Respectfully submitted,

Tara Buonpensiero, MCIP, RPP
Planner - Policy

Bruce MacLean, BA, MCIP, RPP
Director of Planning, Development &
Sustainability

Dennis Y. Perlin
Chief Administrative Officer