



RECOMMENDATION REGARDING THE DISPOSITION OF THE POLICE CLUB BUILDING

at 600 Stonehaven Avenue

Presented by: Stonehaven Residents' Committee

November 23, 2020

RECOMMENDATION: Rather than demolishing the Police Club Building, ownership should be transferred to the Town of Newmarket so the building can be re-purposed.

COMMUNITY CONCERNS:

1. It would be **environmentally irresponsible and a waste of resources** to put a 20-year-old, 15,000 square foot, functional, well-built building in a landfill site. Whether the building is used for the Town's purposes, or for a private venture, it is far more environmentally responsible to repurpose the building than to tear it down.
2. **The building has served the community well in the past and should continue to do so for a long time into the future. It is a valued asset in our community.** Although privately owned, the building has demonstrated its ongoing value to the Town as a venue for many community functions such as proms, year-end sports banquets, weddings, meetings, events, conferences, etc.

3. **It would be financially irresponsible of the Town to pass up the opportunity to acquire such a valuable asset at no cost to the Town.** Newmarket is growing and will need further recreational and community meeting space in the future. Residents feel that it will save the Town significant future expense.

PROPOSAL:

Under the Planning Act, the developer is required to provide approximately 1.8 acres of developable land within the subdivision for use as a Public Park. We recommend that the 1.8 acres provided to the Town be 1.8 acres which includes the Police Club Building.

Note: 1.8 acres is an estimation of the amount of land required to be given to the Town. That number is based on several factors, including density, which will likely decrease as the development solidifies. It will likely be more in the range of 1.5 acres but this proposal is workable even with 1.5 acres or less being given to the Town.

JUSTIFICATION:

1. **Saves the Town approximately \$10 to 15 million in future building costs.** As our Town continues to rapidly grow, it will be necessary to acquire, or build, additional recreational space. By acquiring this building at no cost, it will decrease future capital expenditures by approximately \$10 to \$15 million, not including time and resources spent by the Town to debate, analyze, plan, source, tender, and manage the development of a new space.
2. **This modern building would require very few upgrades or modifications.** Unlike the Old Town Hall, or the Mulock Property, this building is only 20 years old. It conforms fairly close to current building code standards. It is handicap accessible and has an elevator. The capital expense to put this building into service for the Town would be minimal. It would likely require only cleaning, painting, and minor repairs.
3. **It is a multifunctional building and could be used for a variety of purposes.** Committee and community members have suggested it could be used by the Town for one or more of the following purposes:
 - a. New Seniors Centre
 - b. New Branch Library
 - c. The ballroom, lounge and meeting rooms could be used as event space, bookable by individuals and groups from the community.
 - d. Venue for the Town's recreational programming, such as fitness, culture and arts programs.
 - e. Offices upstairs can be leased to community groups, or private businesses that serve the community such as therapists, counsellors, tutors, etc.
4. **The building could generate revenue for the Town.** If it is determined that additional recreational space is not needed by the Town at this time, then it could be leased out on a commercial basis for, say, 5 to 10 years, until our growing Town does need additional space.

The Town could lease it to:

- a. One entity that would use it for its own purposes, such as a business.
- b. One entity that would sublease various parts of the building to a variety of tenants.
- c. A variety of tenants (though this would require more administration on behalf of the Town)

A multi-purpose building like this could accommodate one or more of the following types of tenants:

- a. Private School and/or childcare facility
- b. Collaborative workspace for remote digital workers (a strong emerging trend)
- c. Fitness studio, dance studio, martial arts dojo
- d. Professionals such as a community law practice, bookkeeping service, speech therapists, counselling practice, personal trainers, tutors, etc.
- e. Community organizations such as charities, arts groups, sports organizations
- f. Community kitchen or catering company or food service
- g. Etc.

5. **Re-purposing, rather than demolition, would demonstrate to the community that the Town of Newmarket truly is a leader in environmental stewardship.** Destroying 15,000 square feet of modern built space, only to rebuild a similar amount of built space is wasteful of our earth's resources. The huge amount of carbon emissions that were created to manufacture the materials and build the original structure would all be for naught if it was torn down, only to be replaced by other built structures that would result in the creation of an equal amount of additional carbon emissions.

The Town considers itself to be "one of Canada's most progressive environmental leaders". Repurposing this building would demonstrate that "Newmarket's commitment to the environment remains steadfast." (Quotes are from the Town's own website: www.newmarket.ca)

6. **The land required to be given to the Town is for the purpose of Public Park and this land would be used for Public Park—it just happens to also have a very useful building on it.** Whether it is 1.8 acres, 1.5 acres or less that will be given to the Town, there is still plenty of room for the building, the required parking AND a parkette.
7. **The Planning Act encourages the "efficient use of existing resources". Retaining this building helps the development proposal meet that objective.** Infill rather than greenfield development is encouraged by the Planning Act because it results in less financial and environmental cost for implementing servicing, transportation, schools, and other public facilities. Retaining this 20-year-old, solid, well-maintained building is an excellent way to make "efficient use of existing resources", as required under the Planning Act.
8. **The Provincial Policy Statement, which is part of the Planning Act, supports the retention, rather than demolition, of this building.** Under the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS), this building, which is widely used by the community, fits the definition of a "Public Service Facility" as it has been, and would continue to be, used for *"the provision of programs and services provided or subsidized by a government or other body, such as social assistance, recreation, police and fire protection, health and educational programs, long-term care services, and cultural services."*

Section 1.6.3 of the Provincial Policy Statement states:

Before consideration is given to developing new infrastructure and public service facilities:

- a. the use of existing infrastructure and public service facilities should be optimized; and*
- b. opportunities for adaptive re-use should be considered, wherever feasible.*

Re-purposing this building is definitely an opportunity for “adaptive re-use” as encouraged by the PPS and Planning Act.

9. **Re-using the building, rather than destroying it, is supported by the “A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe” policy.** Section 4.2.9 of the policy report states that:

Municipalities will develop and implement official plan policies and other strategies in support of the following conservation objectives:

iii promotion of building conservation and adaptive reuse.

Even if the Town of Newmarket has not yet implemented a formal policy as part of its Official Plan to support the above objective of the “A Place to Grow” report, the Town is required to act as if it had. Section 5.1 of the report states:

Where a municipality must decide on a planning matter before its official plan has been amended to conform with this Plan, or before other applicable planning instruments have been updated accordingly, it must still consider the impact of the decision as it relates to the policies of this Plan which require comprehensive municipal implementation.

10. **Retaining the building does not detract from the Planning Act’s objective of “intensification”.** The amount of new built space planned for the 1.8 acres on which the Police Club is located is approximately the same amount of built space that is currently on it. Therefore, demolishing the Police Club and building houses on that land is not furthering “intensification”, it is simply changing it from one purpose to another, at a great cost to the environment.

11. **The community very much wants this building to be re-purposed rather than destroyed.**

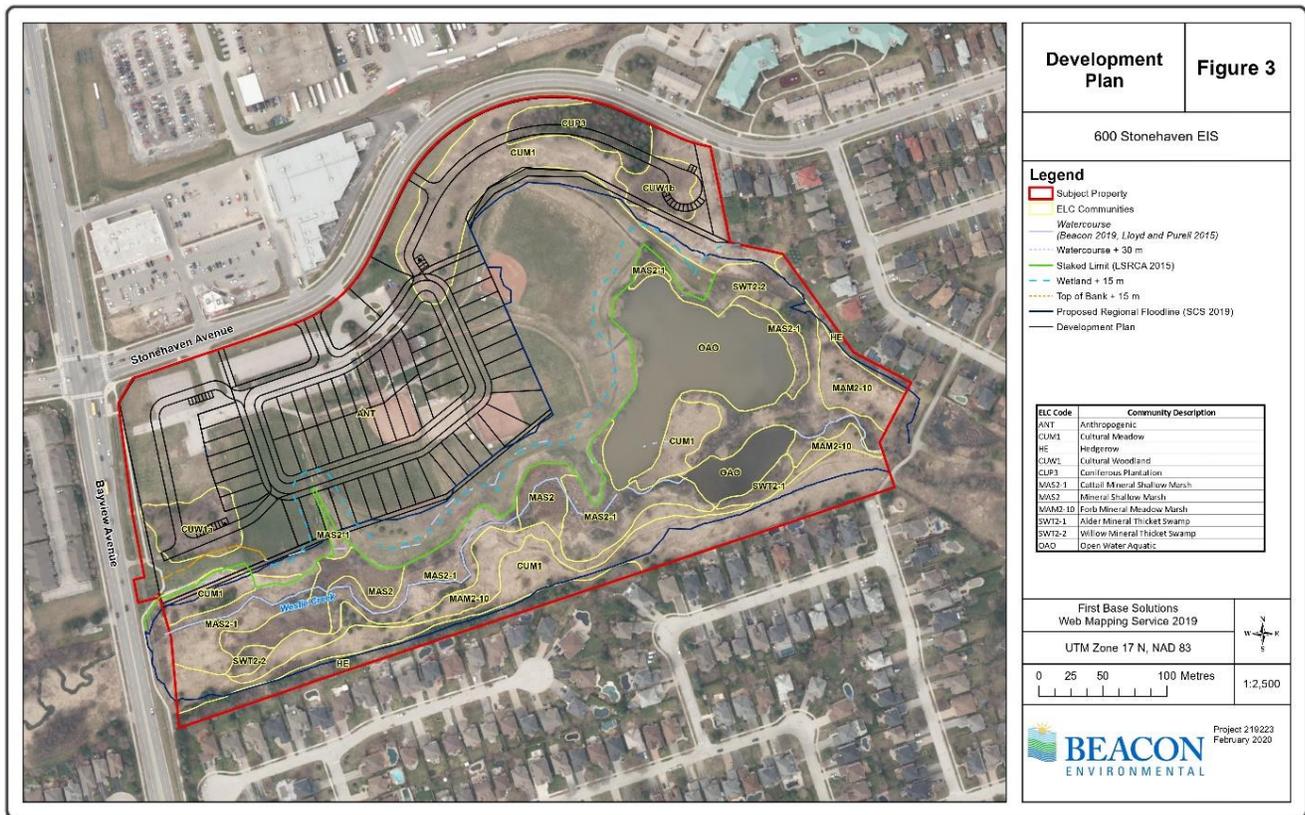
Neighbourhood comments, social media postings and letters to Council, have all clearly indicated that the community wants this building to be retained and re-purposed rather than destroyed.

The community is extremely concerned about the environmental impact of destroying it, and about the loss of a valued community resource. Acquiring this building for the benefit of the community would be seen as a responsible and forward-thinking action by the Town and would considerably mitigate the negative feelings that the community has towards this potential residential development.

12. **1.8 acres is sufficient size to include the necessary parking:** 1.8 acres is 78,408 sq. ft. The footprint of the building is about 5,000 sq. ft. but with overhangs, stairs, deck, etc. let’s assume the footprint is about 8,408 sq. ft. leaving 70,000 sq. ft. of land surrounding it. If only half of that was used for parking spots, leaving the rest for driveway, landscaping, AND a parkette, then over 186 parking spots could be

created. The number of parking spots needed is determined by the use of the building. A library has one of the highest requirements for parking at 1 space per 10 sq. metres (107.6 sq. ft.) for a total of 139 spots. Offices, schools, long-term care facilities all require much less parking, leaving much more land for landscaping and a parkette. Even it is 1.5 acres that the Town acquires, it still works.

- The location of the parking could easily be changed from its existing location to make use of land that is less suitable for development.** Although the developer is required to provide flat, buildable land to the Town, the Town may want to consider accepting some land which is not so suitable for development, but could still accommodate parking, perhaps to the east and north of the building. Putting parking on the east and north side of the building (rather than houses) would also help to preserve the views of the green space from Stonehaven Avenue that community cherishes and very much wants to retain.



OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

- The developer may consider it inconvenient to re-draw the Site Plan to accommodate the retention of the building.** The Site Plan already needs to be redrawn for a variety of other reasons that have been identified. This could be accommodated at the same time.

2. **The developer may consider it inconvenient for construction equipment to work around an existing structure.** By its very nature, infill housing does require working around existing community features, and this would be no different. Upon reflection, the developer will likely realize that having a significant amenity space within the subdivision is a strong selling feature for the sale of homes and well worth the care it takes to retain the building.
3. **The home building companies plan to use the Police Club building as a Presentation Centre for pre-selling the houses and condos.** The building would still be available for the home building companies to use. Only minor alterations would be needed to accommodate the Presentation Centre and those could be easily undone to re-purpose the building for its future use.
4. **The developer will save on the cost of demolition and the disposal of the rubble.** While a developer's costs are never a factor in the Town's decisions, it is worthy to note that there is a financial benefit to the developer of giving this 1.8 acres, rather than some other 1.8 acres of developable land.
5. **The developer will benefit from an enhanced public image.** The retention of the building, and acquisition by the Town, will be seen very positively by the community. The developer will be perceived as being responsive to the community, and environmentally and socially responsible.
6. **The developer may feel that they can make more profit by building on that 1.8 acres and would therefore rather provide cash-in-lieu to the Town.** For all the reasons stated in this report, the Stonehaven Residents' Committee strongly requests that the Town enforces its right to choose land instead of cash.
7. **If, after giving it thoughtful and thorough consideration, the Town deems it does not want to acquire this building for its own purposes, even if it can be done at no cost to the Town, then one of the following should be done:**
 - a. **The Town should still acquire it (at no cost, as they are entitled to) and re-sell the building and a portion of the land to someone who would re-purpose it.** (The parkette could be built on the portion of the 1.8 acres that the Town retains.)
 - b. **As a condition of the subdivision approval, the Town should require the developer to re-purpose the building, or to sell it to someone else who would re-purpose it.**

It is simply far more environmentally responsible to re-purpose than to demolish and re-build.

8. **Re-purposing this building would likely be as equally profitable for the developer and/or home building companies as demolishing and re-building.** While a developer's profits are never considered by the Town when making decisions, it is worthy to note that this 1+ acre of land with the building on it could be sold for substantially more than the land-only price that was paid for it, without having to spend anything further to develop it. While it would likely be sold for a lower price than what the new homes built on that site would be sold for, there would be no expenses incurred to sell the building "as is", unlike the new homes which would require a major investment to construct.

Alternatively, if the developer were to re-purpose the building themselves for, as an example, condominiums or rental units, then both their revenue and costs would be higher.

Thus, the same amount of net profit would likely be generated by either (a) selling it “as is”, (b) re-developing into condos, or (c) demolishing and re-building with new homes.

The only difference between those options is that re-purposing requires a bit more creativity and a willingness to do what is best for the environment and the community, rather than do the “clear-everything-off” method developers often use. There is likely no financial difference to the land-owner for these three options.

SUMMARY: Under the Planning Act, the Town of Newmarket has the right to receive at no cost about 1.5 to 1.8 acres of land. The location of that land could easily be negotiated to include the Police Club building at no cost, given that the developer was planning to demolish it anyway.

The Building could be used for a wide variety of purposes, has sufficient parking, and would still leave enough room for the needed community parkette.

The Planning Act, The Provincial Policy Statement, the Place to Grow policy, and the Town of Newmarket’s own environmental policies and pronouncements clearly require and/or support the re-purposing of this building rather than demolition.

It would be in the Town’s financial, social, environmental, and political best interests to acquire the building and re-purpose it.

