



Report: CSD-HOU-20-17

Region of Waterloo

Community Services

Housing Services

To: Chair Tom Galloway and Members of Regional Council

Date: August 11, 2020 **File Code:** S13-40

**Subject: 127-161 Bechtel Street, Cambridge Alternative Housing Pilot Project
Affordable Housing Design Guidelines and Standards and
Neighbourhood Communications Strategy**

Recommendation:

That the Regional Municipality of Waterloo take the following actions regarding the 127-161 Bechtel Street, Cambridge Alternative Housing Pilot Project, as outlined in report CSD-HOU-20-17, dated August 11, 2020:

- a) Approve the Neighbourhood Communications Strategy; and
- b) Approve the use of the Region's Affordable Housing Design Guidelines and Standards ("Guidelines and Standards") in modified form as applicable to the development of alternative housing.

Summary:

Nil.

Report:

On July 15, 2020, Regional Council approved issuing an Expression of Interest (EOI) to private and non-profit proponents to build an alternative housing pilot project at the existing Waterloo Region Housing (WRH) site known as 127-161 Bechtel Street Cambridge ("the Site") as set out in report CSD-HOU-20-15. Before approving issuance of the EOI, Regional Council has directed Region staff to develop a neighbourhood communications strategy as well as design guidelines for inclusion in the EOI, including those focused on building design and greenspace.

1.0 Development process and site planning

To encourage innovative proposals, the EOI will provide general, high-level guidelines related to the development process and site planning, zoning and density, affordability, and site concept, as described below. The EOI process and resulting units will set the stage for future opportunities to use the alternative housing form to expand the stock of affordable housing in Waterloo Region. The Region hopes to receive submissions that explore new and innovative ideas about how to build alternative housing, present partnerships and/or collaborations that maximize specialities and support the objective of creating more affordable housing. The Region will encourage new and creative solutions to develop alternative housing that explore different operating models, financing options, inventive partnerships between all types of stakeholders (builders, agencies, levels of government), and the size and type of dwelling to be developed.

Preference will be given to proposals that integrate good urban design elements, demonstrate enhanced energy efficiency and accessibility features, and that meet the City of Cambridge's planning objectives and design guidelines. As this is an infill project, specific attention to landscaping and green space will be required.

2.0 Development process, site planning, and application of the Guidelines and Standards

2.1 Zoning and density

The zoning designation of the site is Multiple Unit Residential Buildings (RM4), which permits several uses that would allow for a broad range of alternative housing types to be proposed through the EOI process. The City's Zoning By-law permits multiple residential buildings on a lot where buildings are held in single ownership (e.g. WRH), meaning that a variety of development types could be proposed on this property despite the current building type. There are currently 18 units on the site. As current zoning allows for 24 units on the site, up to 6 additional units can be added without a zoning amendment. While the Region will retain ownership of the land, long-term lease options and ownership of the alternative housing built on the site will be considered.

2.2 Affordability

Units will remain at an affordability level permitting the integration of a mix of households with different social and economic circumstances. The affordability target is 30% of units at, or below, 80% Median Market Rent with preference to submissions that can achieve an optimal rent level closer to social assistance shelter rates.

2.3 Site concept

The site concept will propose design and building materials compatible with and informed by the Bechtel neighbourhood through an extensive and meaningful engagement process. The alternative housing solution will be truly integrated into the

community, with extensive landscaping and greenspace creating an open concept design. The inclusion of outdoor seating areas, community gardens, and open green space into proposals is encouraged.

2.4 Design Guidelines and Standards

The WRH Master Plan (“Master Plan”) was developed in 2019 to ensure the continued support and improvement of services for all tenants, providing a vision and strategy to revitalize housing communities through future redevelopment and growth. The Master Plan recognizes the potential to create a minimum of 600 additional units within existing WRH communities, effectively generating more affordable housing within Waterloo Region. In implementing the Master Plan, the project team prepared the Affordable Housing Design Guidelines and Standards (“Guidelines and Standards”). The Guidelines and Standards are intended to accompany the EOI for the Bechtel pilot project, and serve to provide a detailed set of overarching requirements for the development of new WRH units.

The Guidelines and Standards have been included in Appendix A, and outline the requirements and recommendations to guide staff, consultants, and contractors throughout the design and construction process of developing affordable housing for WRH. The Guidelines and Standards define the nature, functions, and elements that combine to form the built environment of WRH affordable housing communities. The Guidelines and Standards are intended to promote the production of attractive, efficient, and functional housing.

The Guidelines and Standards have been established as minimum acceptable standards relating to materials, products, workmanship, and services. Staff, consultants, and contractors are encouraged to go beyond these requirements and recommendations to foster innovation, efficiency, and functional affordable housing developments that are to be compatible with the surrounding neighbourhood, and that provide support services to facilitate independent living.

The Guidelines and Standards were prepared for multi-unit buildings, and as such may require amendments to address the size and built form standards of alternative housing. These will form an integral part of the evaluation of this pilot project.

Further to Council direction regarding greenspace, Standard 1.6 in the guidelines provides direction regarding green space, and will assist in planning and addressing the concerns of the neighbourhood regarding the impacts of the new units.

The complete Guidelines and Standards can be found on the Region's website at [WRH Affordable Housing Guidelines and Standards](#).

3.0 Neighbourhood communications strategy

Through a community engagement project team that includes Region and City of Cambridge staff, the Bechtel neighbourhood has been provided with the opportunity to contribute to elements of the EOI. Two virtual community town halls have been held and feedback has been received through the dedicated email, phone line, and Engage Waterloo Region project webpage. The focus of the feedback to date has been on the site concept and greenspace, including comments about the type and design of the units and building materials, along with the use and preservation of green space. These elements have been included in the EOI evaluation, and will remain a focus of the project.

To ensure the respondent continues to engage the neighbourhood on design elements and the preservation of green space, the EOI process will secure a respondent with a well-developed engagement plan for the Bechtel neighbourhood. This strategy will be included as a requirement in the EOI to be assessed and will be informed by the WRH Community Engagement Specialist. The successful respondent will ensure the Bechtel WRH tenants are engaged. Engagement strategies may include virtual community meetings, drop-in “think tank sessions”, option surveys, design charrettes, and environmental scans of other similar projects. Feedback and suggestions from the neighbourhood will be encouraged and updates will be communicated on a regular and timely basis. The Region’s Neighbourhood Communications Strategy has guided the pilot project, and has been included in Appendix B.

4.0 Revised timeline

Action	Date
Release Expression of Interest	August 24, 2020
Pre-bid Meeting	August 31, 2020
Deadline for Questions	September 25, 2020
Deadline for Release of Final Clarifications	September 29, 2020
EOI Closing Date	October 7, 2020
Proponent Interviews (if required)	Week of October 12, 2020
CSC Report with Recommendation for EOI Award to Successful Respondent	October 27, 2020
Regional Council Meeting	November 4, 2020
Conditional Letter of Commitment	January 29, 2021

5.0 Continued alignment with the 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan

Region staff continues to encourage the development of innovative housing solutions, including assessing alternative housing models that are designed to meet the needs of diverse populations in Waterloo region. These responses align with the 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan through Strategic Direction 3, to facilitate the development of an appropriate range of housing options.

Quality of Life Indicators:

Creating new affordable rental housing aligns with Economic Well-Being (e.g., increased access to affordable housing); and Physical and Emotional Well-Being (e.g., having safe and affordable housing positively impacts daily functioning and how they feel about their life).

Corporate Strategic Plan:

This report addresses the Region's Corporate Strategic Plan 2019-2023, Focus Area 4: Healthy, Safe and Inclusive Communities; Strategic Objective 4.2: to make affordable housing more available to individuals and families.

Financial Implications:

No direct financial implications are resulting from this report.

Other Department Consultations/Concurrence:

Nil

Attachments

Appendix A: Affordable Housing Design Guidelines and Standards Table of Contents

Appendix B: Bechtel Neighbourhood Communications Strategy

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Appendix A – Affordable Housing Design Guidelines and Standards

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Appendix B: Bechtel Neighbourhood Communications Strategy

Early “Seed” Communication

March - June 2020

Target Audiences	Key Messages to direct to each target audience	Tools/Activities to communicate	Measurements to evaluate tool/activity
Regional Council and Region Staff	The Region’s 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan (10-Year Plan) calls for the creation of new affordable housing. The 10-Year Plan calls on the Region to develop innovative housing solutions to meet the needs of diverse populations (Action 3.1). Affordable housing has been identified as a key area of community concern through the City of Cambridge and the Region of Waterloo strategic planning processes.	1. Develop alternative housing review memo for Senior Management Team (SMT) and Steering Committee (SC), along with a PowerPoint Presentation 2. Hold internal meetings to develop plan 3. Develop Expression of Interest memo for SMT and SC 3. Develop Report(s) to Council to provide information about the project.	4 internal meetings held, 2 including senior management and 1 including Regional Councillors (Steering Committee) 2 Council Reports developed
External Partners, including the City of Cambridge Council and Staff	This project represents a great opportunity to use Regional surplus lands to address the need for affordable housing identified in the City of Cambridge. Affordable housing has been identified as a key area of community concern through the City of Cambridge and the Region of Waterloo strategic planning processes. The Expression of Interest process has requirements that will ensure that we secure a respondent who will engage with the neighbourhood and exceed the	1. Hold pre-consultation meeting with city staff 2. Develop a project team to oversee neighbourhood engagement and communication. This starts with a broader meeting including senior management from the Region and City. 3. Meet with the project team to consult on communications strategy and flyer,	2 meetings held with external partners 3 meetings of the project team, including 2 meetings focused on communications (approve flyer, distribution map, virtual meeting)

Target Audiences	Key Messages to direct to each target audience	Tools/Activities to communicate	Measurements to evaluate tool/activity
	building standards of the City.	approach with neighbourhood, etc.	presentations).
Bechtel Neighbourhood	An innovative, environmentally sustainable affordable housing project is coming to Bechtel! Help us make this project a success by providing your feedback on the building design and green space considerations. Communities thrive when everyone has a place to call home. We want to increase the range of homes available in our community. Alternative housing (tiny homes/modular housing) are energy-efficient and attractive. Continuing to be a good neighbour is important to us. We want this to be a success and will work with this community to ensure that the development will result in innovative and welcoming homes.	1. Project team to develop communication materials with support from Creative Multimedia Services. Include information about an interactive method for community engagement after materials distributed to the neighbourhood. 2. Community Engagement Specialist to distribute flyers to WRH tenants living at the site, ensuring all tenants had access to a computer to participate in virtual meetings. 3. Host virtual meetings for the community 4. Request designated email and phone number for the project, and initiate the Engage Waterloo Region platform for launch at the same time as the community meetings. 5. Share project information with the Service First Call Centre to assist callers with inquiries related to the project.	Approximately 100 flyers distributed to the Bechtel community June 17 29 attendees at the June 25th and June 26th virtual meetings 24 emails received through the designated email (June 2020) No voicemails received through phone line (June 2020) 318 visitors to Engage WR page

Mid-Late Stream Communication

July 2020 – Project Completion

Target Audiences	Key Messages to direct to each target audience	Tools/Activities to communicate	Measurements to evaluate tool/activity
Regional Council and Region Staff	The Region's 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan (10-Year Plan) calls for the creation of new affordable housing. The 10-Year Plan calls on the Region to develop innovative housing solutions to meet the needs of diverse populations (Action 3.1). Affordable housing has been identified as a key area of community concern through the City of Cambridge and the Region of Waterloo strategic planning processes.	1. Develop Report(s) to Council to request approval to release the EOI 2. Develop EOI selection committee including representation from facilities, legal, finance, and procurement. 3. Develop additional Council report(s) to seek approval on the selection of respondent, and to provide project updates.	Stats to be Collected (July 2020-Summer 2021): # of meetings held # of memos/reports
External Partners, including the City of Cambridge Council and Staff	This project represents a great opportunity to use Regional surplus lands to address the need for affordable housing identified in the City of Cambridge. Affordable housing has been identified as a key area of community concern through the City of Cambridge and the Region of Waterloo strategic planning processes. The EOI process has requirements that will ensure that we secure a respondent who will engage with the neighbourhood and exceed the building standards of the City.	1. Project team manages neighbourhood engagement, and informs the development of the EOI based on community feedback from Phase 1 2. The project team communicates regularly with internal and external partners to provide a summary of themes of the feedback, key messages, project milestones.	Stats to be Collected (July 2020-Summer 2021): # project team meetings # of communication team meetings

Target Audiences	Key Messages to direct to each target audience	Tools/Activities to communicate	Measurements to evaluate tool/activity
Bechtel Neighbourhood	An innovative, environmentally sustainable affordable housing project is coming to Bechtel! Help us make this project a success by providing your feedback on the building design and green space considerations. Communities thrive when everyone has a place to call home. We want to increase the range of homes available in our community. Alternative housing (tiny homes/modular housing) are energy-efficient and attractive. Continuing to be a good neighbour is important to us. We want this to be a success and will work with this community to ensure that the development will result in innovative and welcoming homes.	1. Project team to develop additional communication materials to respond to community questions and concerns (e.g., frequently asked questions document(s), what we heard document informed by virtual meetings, project updates). 2. Once Council approves the release of the Expression of Interest, the project team will use Engage WR platform to gather community input on-site design and provide updates. 3. Project team may host additional virtual meetings as the project progresses (e.g. selection of respondent, updates, and input opportunities) 4. Continue to monitor the designated email and phone extension, and respond to community contact. 5. Neighbourhood engagement and communication expectations of the successful respondent to be detailed in EOI and by project team following the selection process.	Stats to be Collected (July 2020-Summer 2021): # community members attending virtual meetings # of emails received through the designated email # of voicemails received through phone line # of unique visitors and visits to EngageWR # of design comments

Target Audiences	Key Messages to direct to each target audience	Tools/Activities to communicate	Measurements to evaluate tool/activity
		6. The project team continues to be involved in Neighbourhood engagement and communication throughout the development process up to and including a grand opening celebration.	