

Staff Report



To	General Committee
Subject	City-Owned Surplus Lands Disposition Framework 2025
Date	June 11, 2025
Ward	All
From	M. Banfield, RPP, Executive Director of Development Services
Executive Member Approval	M. Banfield, RPP, Executive Director of Development Services
CAO Approval	M. Prowse, Chief Administrative Officer
Staff Report #	DEV016-25

Recommendation(s):

1. That the City-Owned Surplus Lands Disposition Framework attached as Appendix A to Staff Report DEV016-25, be approved by Council as a resource and guide for the future disposition of surplus City-owned lands.
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Executive Summary:

The purpose of Report DEV016-25 is to recommend a ‘City-Owned Surplus Lands Disposition Framework’ (Appendix A) to Council for approval as the standardized process for disposing of City-owned surplus lands to support housing development, in line with the City’s commitment under the Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF) Action Plan. This report recommends that staff be directed to implement a structured, consistent, and strategically aligned approach outlined in the Framework for the disposition of surplus municipal lands, with a particular emphasis on enabling affordable housing options. Council has already demonstrated strong leadership in advancing housing solutions by proactively making surplus municipal lands available for residential development. The proposed Framework builds on this vision by formalizing a process that reflects Council’s past actions and ongoing commitment to addressing housing needs. It will only be applied when Council identifies a City-owned property as surplus and suitable for development. This approach ensures the Framework remains a supportive resource for streamlining the process without prescribing outcomes. Council approval of the Framework is a key milestone under Initiative 6 of the City’s HAF Action Plan that must be completed in Q2 2025.

Key Findings:

Ensures Compliance with Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF) Action Plan to Unlock Funding

Approval of the Framework in Q2 2025 fulfills a key deliverable under Initiative 6 of the [City's Housing Accelerator Fund \(HAF\) Action Plan](#), which focuses on accelerating housing supply through the disposition of surplus municipal land. Adoption of the Framework helps the City remain in good standing with the HAF Contribution Agreement with Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) to remain eligible for future HAF funding payments. Continued eligibility for Year 3 funding is contingent on maintaining progress and achieving all program deliverables on schedule.

Builds on Council's Proven Leadership and Strategic Direction

Council has already demonstrated leadership by leveraging surplus lands to support housing initiatives. Through earlier actions that prioritized residential development on City-owned properties, Council has indicated a strategic commitment to utilizing the surplus land to address community needs. The Land Disposition Framework formalizes and reinforces these efforts, aligning with the direction already established by Council. By embedding this work in a policy-aligned structure, the Framework builds on prior initiatives while enabling consistent and impactful decision-making going forward.

Enable Strategic Land Disposition Using Established Legal Frameworks

The Land Disposition Framework is underpinned by existing legislative and policy tools that collectively authorize, guide, and enable the strategic disposal of municipal lands for housing development, particularly affordable housing. At the provincial level, Section 270(1) of the *Municipal Act* mandates that municipalities adopt policies governing the sale and disposition of land. In response, the City of Barrie enacted the Sale of Real Property By-law (By-law 95-104, see Appendix B), which outlines procedures for the disposal of City-owned property. While this by-law provides the legal framework for land sales, the City's [Housing Community Improvement Plan \(CIP\)](#), enacted under Section 28 of the *Planning Act*, grants Council enhanced flexibility to exempt certain dispositions from the by-law where affordable housing outcomes are prioritized through Section 3.6: Surplus Municipal Lands for Affordable Housing Program. Barrie's Housing CIP designates the entire municipal boundary as a Community Improvement Project Area, giving the City broad authority to apply these tools across all neighbourhoods. This ensures a city-wide, equitable approach to leveraging land assets for housing. The Framework is aligned with the City's Official Plan 2051, which sets out clear affordable housing targets and policy directions aimed at encouraging a mix of housing types, tenures, and price points. It also supports the 2022–2026 Council Strategic Plan, particularly the priorities of “affordable living” and “responsible governance.” In doing so, the Framework not only supports policy compliance but also operationalizes the Council's commitment to housing access and supply.

Supports Portfolio Based Asset Management and Interdepartmental Collaboration

Surplus and underutilized City-owned lands provide a valuable opportunity to advance Council's strategic objectives and are best managed as an asset portfolio with centralized administrative oversight. The Land Disposition Framework recognizes that municipal lands are a critical, finite resource that can directly support Council's

priorities, particularly related to housing, affordability, and long-term community growth. By treating surplus and underutilized properties as components of a larger asset portfolio, the City can take a more proactive and integrated approach to land management, balancing short-term development goals with future needs. This approach as mentioned in the Framework ensures decisions reflect long-term public value and reinforce Council's strategic direction.

Additionally, this Framework creates structured opportunities for interdepartmental collaboration, guided by Council, to support the evaluation and disposition of surplus municipal lands. By clarifying the complementary roles of Development Services and Legal Services, the Framework enables a more coordinated, transparent process that aligns with Council's housing and governance priorities. Development Services brings policy and planning expertise to assess development potential, while Legal Services oversees portfolio management and ensures legal compliance. Under Council's leadership, this model reduces duplication, improves accountability, and streamlines decisions to ensure surplus lands are used in ways that maximize public benefit and long-term community value.

Financial Implications:

At this time, there are no direct financial implications for the Corporation of the City of Barrie associated with the approval of the City-Owned Surplus Lands Disposition Framework. The Framework is intended to serve as a guiding tool for Council when considering the future sale or lease of surplus City-owned lands. Any financial impacts arising from specific land disposition decisions, including potential revenue from sales or lease agreements, will be assessed on a case-by-case basis and presented to Council as part of future staff reports. This will also include recommendations on the allocation or use of any sale proceeds generated through such transactions.

Alternatives:

The following alternative is available for consideration by General Committee:

Alternative #1 – General Committee could direct staff not to adopt the proposed City-Owned Surplus Lands Disposition Framework and continue with the current ad hoc approach to surplus land disposition. This alternative is not recommended, as under the Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF) Contribution Agreement with CMHC, the City has committed to implementing this initiative. Meeting this deadline is critical to fulfilling the funding agreement and would put the City at risk of not meeting HAF milestones, defaulting on the terms of our HAF Contribution Agreement, and losing instalments 3 and 4 of HAF funding (approximately \$12 million).

Strategic Plan Alignment:

Affordable Place to Live	X	The Framework enables the strategic use of surplus City-owned lands to support a broader range of housing options. It directly advances Council's strategic priority of making Barrie an affordable place to live by facilitating the development of affordable and attainable housing. By introducing a standard approach
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		for disposing of surplus lands, the Framework streamlines decision-making and reduces uncertainty making it easier for Council and staff to advance housing projects efficiently and in alignment with long-term community goals.
Community Safety		
Thriving Community	X	A standardized approach for the disposition of City-owned surplus lands for housing contributes to broader community wellness by supporting the development of complete, inclusive neighbourhoods. Through partnerships with non-profits and housing providers, the City can champion equity and foster social inclusion.
Infrastructure Investments		
Responsible Governance	X	By creating a policy-aligned process for land disposition, the Framework supports responsible stewardship of public assets. It balances financial return with public benefit, encourages interdepartmental collaboration, and positions the City to meet federal funding requirements efficiently demonstrating accountability in municipal operation.

Additional Background Information and Analysis:

The Framework has been benchmarked against leading practices in other municipalities. To ensure the Framework reflects best practices, staff examined how other Ontario municipalities, including Kitchener, London, and Ottawa manage the disposition of surplus lands. Common themes include managing city-owned lands as an asset portfolio, embedding flexibility, and aligning land sales with broader strategies. Barrie's Framework is aligned with these principles while retaining local policy coherence, particularly with the City's Housing Community Improvement Plan (CIP), 2022–2026 Strategic Plan and Official Plan 2051.

Affordable housing remains a primary objective of the Framework. While the Framework can be applied to a variety of surplus lands, it explicitly supports the delivery of affordable housing outcomes by prioritizing projects that align with the City's Housing Strategy. The inclusion of affordable housing as a guiding principle ensures that land disposition decisions contribute meaningfully to the City's housing targets, particularly considering escalating housing demand and affordability pressures across Barrie, and beyond.

The Framework is intended to evolve with future policy and market conditions. Recognizing that housing and development contexts are dynamic, the Framework has been designed as a living document. As provincial and federal housing policies evolve, and as market conditions shift, staff will monitor the Framework's effectiveness and propose updates where necessary. This ensures that the City remains responsive to emerging challenges and opportunities in land management.

Consultation and Engagement:

There is no public consultation and stakeholder engagement required in relation to the recommendations.

Environmental and Climate Change Impact Matters:

There are no environmental and/or climate change impact matters related to the recommendation.

Appendix:

Appendix A – City-Owned Surplus Lands Disposition Framework 2025

Report Author:

S. Rabbi, Planner (Housing), Development Services

File #:

Not Applicable

Pending #:

Not Applicable