



Re: HSIR Work Program: City Property Review and Property Disposition Strategies (PED23099(a)/HSC23028(a)) – 171 Main St East

Dear Mayor Horwath and Councillors,

Transit-oriented affordable housing was promised by the City of Hamilton, Metrolinx, and the federal government as a condition for constructing the Hamilton Light Rail Project. We continue to face a housing crisis with a dearth of supply across the affordability spectrum. Last week, on December 6<sup>th</sup>, General Issues Committee Item 8(a) of that day's business consisted of a staff proposal to sell off the property at 171 Main Street East. The Hamilton Community Benefits Network (HCBN) and its members and partners have long advocated for a strategic land use policy, including land banking of valuable transit developable land for use as affordable housing. The land at 171 Main Street East is prime LRT development land; it cannot be replaced once sold. The temporary cash influx from its sale would be quickly lost as the city would have to return to the private market to acquire new LRT transit lands in full competition with the private sector. As we have seen with the lost opportunity at Delta High School, the not-for-profit sector cannot compete with private businesses.

The decision to sell off this prime piece of city-owned land seems at odds with the long-term need for more affordable housing along Hamilton's LRT corridor. The 0.47-acre site wholly owned by the city represented a chance to create a mixed-used building of 280 units of deeply affordable and purpose-built rental housing, with the additional announcements in the fall economic statement of extra investment from the National Housing Strategies Co-investment Fund and Rental Construction Financing Initiative the city perfectly positioned to shepherd this site into the same density profile as a market housing provider. The sale of the land would only provide a temporary cash infusion, requiring the purchase of expensive additional land at other locations along the Hamilton LRT corridor. **Of crucial consideration is that funding options from the federal government to build affordable housing on this land require the City of Hamilton to retain ownership to UNLOCK the FUNDING!**

The HCBN has heard in conversation with partners in Hamilton is Home that the city has much greater potential to retain ownership of this land. I would urge this council to reconsider the decision made at the Wed, December 6<sup>th</sup>, General Issues Committee and suspend that decision until February when affordable housing providers might present to council members a more fulsome plan for the dense development of the site for non-market housing use. This could be accomplished without impacting local-level investment (EG with no requirement for new taxes), taking advantage of existing Federal housing programs. Please do not rush to this decision. Cancel the sale of this land, or at least suspend the decision until February, giving Hamilton is Home affordable housing providers time to provide you with an alternative model for consideration.

On behalf of the HCBN, I urge you to reconsider the sale of this property.

Karl Andrus – Executive Director

**The Hamilton Community Benefits Network envisions Hamilton as an inclusive, thriving city in which all residents have equitable opportunities to contribute to building healthy communities and a justice prospering economy. Community Benefit Agreements (CBAs) are a proven approach to achieve this vision.**