



Planning & Urban Development Department

TO: Councilor Duson, Chair
Members of the Housing Committee

FROM: Victoria Volent, Housing Program Manager

DATE: February 23, 2018

RE: City Owned Property

Introduction

In accordance with Section 2-313 of the City Code, the city may provide city-owned land for housing development and offer the land below market price to encourage housing development or support greater affordability. Selling city owned land provides the city with unique control over the timing, location, and affordability of housing development in Portland. It also has the added benefit of turning land with no tax liability into an income generating property for the city's tax rolls.

Inventory of City Owned Property

In 2013, Portland's Assessing Department identified more than 400 city-owned land parcels which included parks, cemeteries, and other properties designated as recreation/open space, resource protection zones, or in the land bank. Eliminating parcels such as schools, and land likely slated for other uses or purposes (for example trail expansion) from the original list resulted in a revised list of 253 properties. From that list, eight lots were identified for further review and discussion as possible affordable housing locations. Subsequently the vacant lot at the site of the former Adams Elementary School was utilized towards the development of eight workforce units at 65 Munjoy Street. Six parcels of city-owned land in the Bayside neighborhood used by Portland's Department of Public Works were sold in April of 2017 under the stipulation that roughly 100 units of mixed use housing be built.

In August 2015, the United States EPA awarded \$200,000 to the Greater Portland Council of Governments to work closely with the City of Portland to develop a Brownfield Area Wide Plan for the East Bayside neighborhood. The 130 acre land area of East Bayside has the potential for the development of retail, wholesale, greenspace, and affordable housing. A site referred to as the Franklin Reserve is a 1.88-acre parcel that was reportedly reserved for the four-lane highway known as Franklin Arterial, but was never utilized for this purpose. Currently, the Franklin Reserve includes community focused urban farms occupied by Cultivating Community (central and northern portions of 2 Boyd Street), and undeveloped land (eastern portion of 2 Boyd Street). The 2018 Housing Committee work plan proposes the presentation of the Franklin Reserve Massing Study at the March 28 meeting for the committee's review.



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Another possible site is located on outer Westbrook Street. This site is a seven acre city-owned lot that abuts the Turnpike, Fore River Sanctuary, and Tech Park. Though not part of any on-going discussion to sell this parcel, the lot would allow 16 units of single family housing. Additional research is necessary to evaluate the appropriateness of this site for housing development.

City-Owned and Tax-Acquired Property Committee

In April of 2016, the City Council adopted order 190 – 15/16 amending the rules for the disposition of city-owned and tax-acquired property. The, City-Owned and Tax-Acquired Property Committee (COTAPC) was tasked with: eliminating neighborhood blight; assisting with neighborhood preservation and revitalization efforts; improving the City's housing stock; and putting properties back on the tax roll. The responsibilities of COTAPC include the selection of properties for sale using pre-established criteria. The committee is comprised of staff members representing departments involved in the disposition of tax-acquired and other City-owned property.

Land Evaluation

Though the City owns hundreds of parcels, the majority pose significant obstacles for developing affordable housing due to topography (extensive amount of ledge or significant wetland), infrastructure costs (a number of paper streets would require construction of connected roadways, and sewer and storm water expansion), and zoning (industrial locations; density limits). Some lots lack depth; they are long and thin (similar to a strip of spaghetti), or they are the location of playgrounds or community gardens, or are used for drainage. The City conducts on-going evaluations of properties for housing options.

Summary

Two main themes from Portland's new comprehensive plan were housing insecurity and lack of sufficient and suitable housing. The City recognizes that its vitality rests on the availability of diverse, secure housing options for existing residents, new arrivals, and all stages of life. Staff will continue to provide the committee with information regarding other potential housing parcels.

Attachments

Franklin Reserve site layout and sampling locations
Outer Westbrook Street parcel map