

GRAND RIVER CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

REPORT NO.

DATE: February 12, 2007

TO: Committee of the Whole (Administration, Finance and Personnel)

**SUBJECT: Grand River Conservation Authority Property Disposition Guidelines
Establishing Standards for Sustainable Development**

RECOMMENDATION:

That when Grand River Conservation Authority disposes of surplus lands for urban development, wherever possible, processes be used and conditions be placed on the sale of such lands, to ensure that the resulting development of those lands be exemplary leading edge models of green sustainable design and construction.

SUMMARY:

The Grand River Conservation Authority's formally adopted vision, is for a healthy and sustainable natural environment in the Grand River watershed. The Grand River Conservation Authority's mission includes being involved with programs to improve water quality, reduce flood damage, maintain reliable water supply and provide environmental education. As stated in our environmental policy, the Grand River Conservation Authority will:

- Meet or exceed the requirements of all environmental laws and regulations.
- Participate in exchange of environmental management techniques and, where feasible, adopt best available environmental technologies and best business practices.
- Promote ownership, responsibility and accountability for environmental protection and management.
- Increase environmental awareness of employees and the public through training, education, outreach, and communication programs.
- Contribute to conservation of resources through minimization programmes in energy, materials, and water consumption.
- Minimize environmental impact of operations through environmental management programmes to minimize waste generation, air emissions, and effluent discharges.
- Continually improve environmental performance through:
 - Setting and reviewing measurable environmental performance objectives and targets; and
 - Reporting on environmental performance.

To meet the above mentioned objectives the Grand River Conservation Authority would encourage all development that occurs on its surplus lands exhibit exemplary standards of sustainable development that could also serve as a target or benchmark for others.

REPORT:

The Grand River Conservation Authority owns approximately 50,000 acres of land in the Grand River watershed. From time to time small parcels of these lands which do not perform a significant environmental, educational or recreational purpose may be considered surplus to the needs of the organization.

Revenue from the disposition of surplus Grand River Conservation Authority lands must be placed in a special reserve fund, which is only available for Capital Projects that meet the criteria set out by the “Policies and Procedures for the Treatment of Conservation Authority Generated Revenue” (MNR, June 1997). These reserve funds are generally used for land acquisitions that meet the goals of the Grand River Conservation Authority’s approved land acquisition policy.

Municipalities in the watershed are at various stages in the move toward implementation of sustainable development policies. As an environmental agency with the aforementioned policies, it is imperative that the Grand River Conservation Authority ensure that it promotes environmental responsibility to its utmost ability.

As an agency that also has regulatory responsibilities, we need to lead by example, if we are to credibly encourage positive change in the behaviour and practices of others, when it comes to the form and function of urban growth.

There are disposition methods available that will allow us to ensure minimum property development standards for the planning and development of surplus property. We can ensure, through the use of “expressions of interest” and “requests for proposals”, (with specific conditions), that only those organizations willing and able to design and build to these standards have the opportunity to acquire our surplus lands.

The “Policies and Procedures for Disposition of Conservation Authority Property” (MNR, June 1997) require that open and transparent disposition processes be utilized.

Some of the environmental technologies that a developer may propose in response to a Request For Proposal could include:

- Opportunities for district / alternate energy systems.
- Solar orientation, passive and active solar systems, wind, vegetation and landform techniques.
- Ground source heating on an individual or communal scale.
- “Leed Certified” Buildings.
- Rainwater and grey water recycling systems.
- Planting Programmes.
- Minimize impervious surfaces.
- Leading edge storm water techniques.
- Meeting or exceeding the 2012 building code standards for energy efficiency starting now.
- Emissions reductions – “0” footprint.

- Renewable energy opportunities such as co-generation and energy from waste. (The cleanest and cheapest energy source is existing energy that is wasted through inefficiency).
- Maximize use of recycled materials.
- On-site composting.
- Setting overall development performance targets such as:
 - % reduction in household water requirements.
 - % reduction in household discharge flows (sanitary / storm).
 - % reduction in household solid waste.
 - % reduction in household energy use (aim for European standard).
 - % reduction in household greenhouse gas emissions

The Grand River Conservation Authority has the ability to ensure through the municipal planning approval process, that the form and configuration of land use provides for the most opportune type of sustainable development. Implementing architectural design and mechanical systems is only one way to achieve improved performance targets. To be able to achieve the most impact, the form of urban development needs to be considered very early in the planning process. Innovative planning from day one will allow for planning to be holistic, system based, and integrated, as opposed to addressing opportunities on a case by case basis. Some technologies such as district energy systems, communal and more efficient ground source heating systems, and building massing opportunities which take advantage of solar orientation can only be properly incorporated when the intent is included from the outset.

The GRCA can enlist the services of leaders in these fields with our selected planning consultants, to ensure that these developments are successful.

Municipalities are starting to promote and demand that these issues be considered. Helping to reduce the “peak” energy requirements of a municipality assists society by reducing the need for new electrical infrastructure, and its resulting environmental impacts.

With the adoption of the motion in this report, staff will be able to share our organizational objectives with municipal staff involved with processing our land development initiatives. Approvals and decisions would come from the shared understanding of common goals. Reduced consumption and discharges will also assist municipalities in reaching population and sustainability targets contained in the Provincial “Places to Grow” policy.

The adoption of this position by Grand River Conservation Authority will help the development application process, and provide assurances to Municipal Councils, staff, and the public, about what they can expect from land development applications that involve Grand River Conservation Authority lands.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATION:

Placing conditions on property for sale may impact the potential selling price by a small amount.

The cost of development of this type is projected to cost between 5 & 10% more than traditional development. It is reasonable to conclude that one third of these additional costs associated with development of this type can be absorbed in market pricing, and two thirds offset by avoiding long term energy supply costs. (Payback over time).

By being at the leading edge of this initiative, grants may also be available to pilot some of these concepts, from organizations such as NRCAN, F.C.M., and A.M.O., to name a few!

OTHER DEPARTMENT CONSIDERATIONS:

All departments are in support of this initiative.

Prepared by:

Approved by:

Tom Smith
Manager of Property

Keith Murch
Assistant C.A.O. / Secretary-Treasurer