



PORT COLBORNE

Chestnut Park – Port Cares Affordable Housing Q&A Report

Accessibility

- How would Port Cares make it accessible for seniors to be able to do their grocery shopping? There are only convenience stores located nearby.
 - **Answer:** Port Cares is committed to helping families and individuals in our community and have considered the importance of mobility and accessibility. The expectation is that many of the seniors living in the building will have vehicles, or access to other forms of transportation such as public transit or taxis. The City is also working with Niagara Region to create an on-demand transportation system, as well, seniors or anyone else in the building without a vehicle would be able to call a local taxi provider. The closest public transit is one block north of the proposed development.
- How will residents get to doctors' appointments and grocery stores?
 - **Answer:** The tenants moving into these affordable housing units can access necessities the same way current residents in the neighbourhood would. They have the option to drive their vehicles, arrange for other transportation whether it be public transportation, taxis or ride sharing, and the closest bus route is one block north of the property.
- How will lower-income residents be able to access grocery stores and services?
 - **Answer:** Similar to the question above, low-income residents are still able to access services the same way middle-income residents do. They're able to drive their car, take a bus, or arrange for other transportation such as taxis or on-demand transit.
- Why are you building affordable housing away from amenities that people need?
 - **Answer:** Studies show individuals living in affordable housing units often have vehicles and therefore, have the mobility and independence as those in the middle-income bracket. They'll drive their car, take a bus, or arrange for other transportation such as taxis or on-demand transit. Also, the nearest bus route is one block north of the property.
- How is this an accessible location?
 - **Answer:** Although this location is on the East side of Port Colborne, studies show individuals living in affordable housing often have vehicles, if not, they can use other forms of transportation.
- How will local transportation be added? The busing system is not accessible.
 - **Answer:** The nearest bus route is one block north of the property and the City is working with Niagara Region to create an on-demand transportation system.

Affordable Housing Building & Parking

- If this building will accommodate 40 – 50 units, will there be parking for tenants?
 - **Answer:** As part of site plan control and ensuring compliance with zoning, Port Cares will be required to provide ample parking. The zoning by-law requires one space for every three dwelling units at a minimum for a “Public Apartment Building”.
- Will the current infrastructure sustain a 20-unit housing development at this location?
 - **Answer:** These details will be worked out between Port Cares and the Public Works Department through the Site Plan Control approval.
- Will this be a 2-storey or 4-storey building?
 - **Answer:** The R4 zone permits a height of 20 metres. The number of storeys/units is dependent on the lot density and parking allotted.
- Why can't this building be built in an area where there is already infrastructure available?
 - **Answer:** Municipal services are located and available in this area.
- Where are residents and their visitors going to park on a 3-car wide street?
 - **Answer:** As part of site plan control and ensuring compliance with zoning, Port Cares will be required to provide ample parking. The zoning by-law requires one space for every three dwelling units at a minimum for a “Public Apartment Building”.
- A 20-plus building seems fairly large size, but the City doesn't know for sure how many units there will be?
 - **Answer:** The Zoning By-law sets out parking and density requirements for apartment buildings. The requirements will determine how many units will be permitted.
- There is so much work that needs to go into this, like parking, and sewer systems, how will the City manage this?
 - **Answer:** These details will be worked out through the Site Plan Control process in the future. Port Cares will be responsible for site servicing and parking.
- Will the City be spending millions of dollars on this new affordable housing unit?
 - **Answer:** Port Cares is funding the affordable housing project and is working with the federal and provincial governments, and other agencies to secure project funding.
- Can we be confident that proper signage will be clearly visible for all those leaving or entering the building & parking areas?
 - **Answer:** Signage for ingress and egress of the property is dealt with through the Site Plan Control process.

Location

- What makes this park land suitable for this development?
 - **Answer:** Both the City and Port Cares like this site because it's within an existing neighbourhood and large enough to accommodate the proposed development.
- What about other properties in the area?
 - **Answer:** City staff and Port Cares have been looking at various suitable options all over the City. At this time, this is an ideal site for this development.
- The City just sold off 6 properties in the community. Could none of these properties have been used?
 - **Answer:** None of these sites would have been large enough for what Port Cares is proposing. They are proposing between 20 and 40 units, all of which are desperately needed for community.
- Is this the most suitable location for what Port Cares is planning?
 - **Answer:** Everyone agrees that having affordable housing in our community is important. How do you define suitable? This is a mature residential neighbourhood and more residential units will be added within this development. The City and Port Cares have been looking at various options and this site is ideal. City Council recognizes the situation is serious and is committed to working with local partners like Port Cares to find solutions to build economic and social sustainability in the community; everyone deserves a safe place to call home.
- Are there locations already ready in Port Colborne for rezoning?
 - **Answer:** Any property in Port Colborne has the potential to be rezoned. There are limited residentially zoned properties for this type of development.
- Why can't other lands be considered for this project?
 - **Answer:** The City and Port Cares have been looking all over the City for sites. Any other vacant sites that are large enough are owned privately and are too expensive. This site is ideal. Everyone agrees on the importance of affordable housing and we all deserve a safe place to call home.
- There are many places where this complex can be built. Why in a residential area?
 - **Answer:** This proposal is a residential building. Residential buildings are supported in the Urban Residential designation of the City's Official Plan.
- What is wrong with vacant lands on the West side of town?
 - **Answer:** Currently, there are no suitable affordable vacant lands on the West side.

- Why can't you take farm property that's currently for sale and create affordable housing there?
 - **Answer:** Provincial, Regional and City policies do not allow any fragmentation of Agricultural land. These lands are protected to ensure the long-term viability of the agricultural sector. Further, Agricultural lands are privately serviced, higher density developments are required to be located within the built boundary where sufficient services are in place. City Council recognizes the situation is serious and is committed to working with local partners like Port Cares to find solutions to build economic and social sustainability in the community; everyone deserves a safe place to call home

Chestnut Park

- Who determined Chestnut Park is underutilized and could be repurposed and redeveloped?
 - **Answer:** The City's Parks and Recreation Master Plan indicates the City has too many parks in comparison to other cities and towns of a similar size. Everyone agrees that we need more affordable housing options in our community. With nearby Lockview Park a blank canvas for redevelopment and renewal, a decision was made to make Chestnut Park surplus.
- Will Council consider having a park in place at Lockview, prior to the zoning being approved for Chestnut Park?
 - **Answer:** Yes, this is a possibility. The redevelopment of Lockview Park will likely be a multi-year project and will depend on budget availability, but ideally the City would like to have some park amenities/equipment at Lockview when Chestnut Park is redeveloped.
- Why is Chestnut Park being sold?
 - **Answer:** Council and the community recognize affordable housing is a critical need in our community. This park is being redeveloped and repurposed for a greater community benefit.
- Why are we losing one of the nicest parks on the East side?
 - **Answer:** Port Colborne is fortunate to have so many nice public parks and City staff take pride in maintaining them. The community will have an opportunity to be involved in creating a new park in nearby Lockview Park.
- Why does Port Colborne need to move this park to make room for affordable housing?
 - **Answer:** Everyone agrees we need affordable housing in our community. After looking at various options, this was determined to be the best location for an affordable housing unit.

- Why does the City want to remove a park that has been there for years?
 - **Answer:** The City has an abundance of parks. The consultants who completed the City's Park and Recreation Master Plan indicated that the City has more parks than other cities and towns of a similar size. We have an opportunity to repurpose an existing park for maximum community benefit. Council and Port Cares are working together to repurpose this parcel of land for a greater community benefit.

- How are we supposed to take our children to a park and let them thrive, when you're going to take a park away from them?
 - **Answer:** Lockview Park is a blank canvass and the community has an opportunity to help create a new park with new amenities, equipment, and landscaping. Lockview Park is a 5-minute walk from Chestnut Park.

- Why can't Lockview Park land be used for the housing development?
 - **Answer:** The City is recommending that Lockview Park be redeveloped into a new park with the repurposing of Chestnut Park for a great community park.

- Why this specific park? Why build up an area where people have made it a community and purchased their home because of the park?
 - **Answer:** The community has an opportunity to provide input into the redevelopment of Lockview Park, a 5-minute walk from Chestnut Park. The consultants who completed the City's Park and Recreation Master Plan indicated that the City has more parks than other cities and towns of a similar size. We have an opportunity to repurpose an existing park for maximum community benefit. Everyone agrees on the importance of affordable housing and we all deserve a safe place to call home.

- Relocating a park comes with a cost. Will taxpayers have to pay for this?
 - **Answer:** There are ongoing operational and capital costs associated with maintaining parks and recreational amenities. There is a greater community benefit when we can partner with a non-profit organization to provide affordable housing options for our residents.

- I was told the new park was going to be bigger and better, but why? If Chestnut Park is not being used, why invest in Lockview Park?
 - **Answer:** It is possible the Lockview Park, once redeveloped, may be bigger and better than Chestnut Park. The community will have an opportunity to shape the design and provide input on the amenities, landscaping, and equipment they would like to see.

Crime

- What proof from the City do we residents have that crime will not get worse?
 - **Answer:** It's unfortunate that some people have negative attitudes and stereotypes of people who live in an affordable housing units. This development will accommodate seniors and single individuals with children who can't afford market rents.
- Will this increase crime in the area? Will there be a risk to our families?
 - **Answer:** No.
- What about the safety of our children at the new Lockview Park?
 - **Answer:** The safety of children at Lockview Park or H.H. Knoll Lakeview Park or Chestnut Park or Lock 8 Park is no different. The community has an opportunity to be involved in creating a new park at Lockview and outlining their preferences for amenities, landscaping, and equipment.
- Will this be a safe area for our kids?
 - **Answer:** New housing units are being built everywhere. Most of these units will be occupied by seniors and single individuals with children. The City does not foresee any safety concerns related to Lockview Park.
- Do children have a say with City decisions regarding parks?
 - **Answer:** Yes. The community, including park users, are encouraged to provide input on what they want to see in a new park.
- Will the City ensure privacy for those who live around this park?
 - **Answer:** Residents enjoy privacy now and will continue to enjoy privacy. The City is not responsible for constructing privacy fences on private residential properties, that would need to be arranged by the property owner.
- Can Council let us know what those safety measures will be?
 - **Answer:** The community will have an opportunity to be involved in shaping the design of a new Lockview Park, including safety measures.
- Will City workers be ready to ensure upkeep of this park?
 - **Answer:** City Park staff take pride in maintaining City parks and their work shows. If there is ever a concern regarding park amenities or any issues, residents are encouraged to call City Hall at 905-835-2900.

- Is there a responsibility to make sure that the residents in this building are upstanding citizens?
 - **Answer:** It's unfortunate that some people have negative attitudes and stereotypes of people who live in affordable housing units. The intent is to create affordable housing for independent seniors who are over the age of 55, current Port Colborne residents, and are making less than \$35,000 a year; and/or single families with children, currently living in Port Colborne who make less than \$35,000 a year. City Council recognizes the situation is serious and is committed to working with local partners like Port Cares to find solutions to build economic and social sustainability in the community; everyone deserves a safe place to call home

Traffic

- Has a traffic study been completed by a consultant and/or will one be completed before any unit is constructed? Does the City feel this study is necessary?
 - **Answer:** The Public Works department reviews traffic impacts at the Site Plan Control stage. Should the proposal meet the threshold, a study may be required.
- Will traffic increase? Especially around the main intersection.
 - **Answer:** It's unlikely. There may be a few extra cars of those residents living in the building. The Public Works department reviews for traffic impacts at the Site Plan Control stage. Should the proposal meet the threshold, a study may be required.
- Has the City done surveys to make sure this can work? Will crossing guards be in the area? Is this in the best interest of the residents?
 - **Answer:** It's unlikely that more crossing guards will be needed. The City and Port Cares are optimistic that this will work. It's a new housing development whether it's a small apartment building or 8 new homes. Everyone agrees that we need affordable housing in our community. Let's partner for maximum community benefit.

Community Impact

- How does this proposed change impact our community?
 - **Answer:** This project will have a positive impact on our community as many residents do not have affordable housing. City Council recognizes the situation is serious and is committed to working with local partners like Port Cares to find solutions to build economic and social sustainability in the community; everyone deserves a safe place to call home.
- How will the affordable housing building spur economic growth?
 - **Answer:** The construction of this building will create jobs and economic activity. With COVID, individuals and families, and our economy need these types of projects more than ever.

- In 10 years, how will this change? Will it still be seniors? Or will it be a new demographics and how will this impact the community?
 - **Answer:** In 10 years, we can all say that we did something positive for individuals and families who need affordable housing. This proposed development, similar to 4 or 5 or 20 houses being built, will be blended into the neighbourhood and the community. Port Cares will maintain the waiting lists and will provide units to individuals and families who are eligible for affordable housing. The intent is to create affordable housing for independent seniors who are over the age of 55, current Port Colborne residents, and are making less than \$35,000 a year; and/or single families with children, currently living in Port Colborne who make less than \$35,000 a year

- How do we know our home values will not be affected?
 - **Answer:** Studies have shown that affordable housing does not negatively impact property values.

- What options will be made available to residents who are negatively impacted by this, including their overall mental health and wellbeing?
 - **Answer:** Everybody agrees that we need affordable housing in our community. It's unclear how new residential units for people in our community will have a negative impact.

- How will this neighbourhood keep its family friendly feel with this new concrete building?
 - **Answer:** Port Cares wants to ensure that the new building fits nicely and integrates well with the existing neighbourhood.

City Processes & Procedures

- How long has the Chestnut Park partnership with Port Cares been in the works? This was only brought to the public's attention on December 14, 2020.
 - **Answer:** Affordable housing has been a priority for Council and Port Cares for several years. Mayor Steele, members of Council, and senior staff have been focused on identifying potential sites for affordable housing over the past two years. Port Cares has also been looking for sites in Port Colborne. City and Port Cares officials started discussions last fall. City Council recognizes the situation is serious and is committed to working with local partners like Port Cares to find solutions to build economic and social sustainability in the community; everyone deserves a safe place to call home.

- Why were the Master Parks plans not followed?
 - **Answer:** The City's Parks and Recreation Plan provides findings, options, and recommendations for the City's consideration. The report indicates that the City has too many parks and outlines a process for repurposing parks if Council decides to do this.

- Who decided to disregard the Master Parks Plan steps in the process?
 - **Answer:** The process for repurposing a park outlined in the Parks and Recreation Plan is a recommended process, not a legislated or statutory process. The Parks and Recreation Master Plan is a document used by Council and City staff to make decisions and allocate resources for the future. The City will be engaging the community on the future development and preferred amenities of nearby Lockview Park.

- Why invest taxpayer money on a Parks and Rec Master Plan, when you do not intend to follow it?
 - **Answer:** Council and City staff use the Parks and Recreation Plan and its findings and recommendations to help with decision-making and budgeting.

- How will the \$1 transaction help revitalize Lockview Park? Where is that money coming from to make Lockview Park better?
 - **Answer:** Some funds have already been set aside in the City's budget to help with the redevelopment and revitalization of Lockview Park. Council will consider putting additional funds aside in 2022 and 2023 based on community input for what they want to see in terms of new park amenities and equipment.

- Why is there no timeline, plan, or cost outline for Lockview Park? Where will the money come from? It's not in the 2020 budget, so will Council vote to leave Lockview Park and the surrounding area without a park for years?
 - **Answer:** Some funds have already been set aside in the City's budget to help with the redevelopment and revitalization of Lockview Park. Council will consider putting additional funds aside in 2022 and 2023 based on community input for what they want to see in terms of new park amenities and equipment. The playground equipment at Chestnut Park will stay there in 2021 and part of 2022 until the development project begins. Then the playground equipment will get moved to Lockview Park. The City welcomes input from the community during the engagement process to happen sometime this summer.

- Why was this proposal approved in the first place when they are no answers to give to the public?
 - **Answer:** The Zoning By-law Amendment has yet to be approved for the property.

- Are we forcing taxpayers to invest this area with the creation of the affordable housing?
 - **Answer:** Port Cares is funding this project through donations and from the federal-provincial governments, and other agencies. They will also be covering site servicing costs.

- Can the City create private investment in this area?
 - **Answer:** The City is interested in attracting both private and public sector investment in our City.

- Do current residents of the area have any say on what happens in the neighbourhood?
 - **Answer:** The community has an opportunity to provide input on what they want to see at Lockview Park in terms of amenities, landscaping, and equipment.

- Why are residents receiving notifications regarding this project in the newspaper?
 - **Answer:** The City and Port Cares partnership was announced publicly in mid-December through a public Council report and a news release. This was followed by a notice to residents regarding a public meeting to review the proposed rezoning amendment. Later this year, residents will have an opportunity, through a public engagement process, to provide input in what they would like to see with the redevelopment of Lockview Park in terms of new amenities, landscaping, and equipment.

- Has this virtual meeting been accessible to everyone? There are many seniors in this neighbourhood that do not have access to computers.
 - **Answer:** The City of Port Colborne in conjunction with Ontario municipalities have moved to virtual meetings in accordance with the Province's direction. It has been noted that the format is not perfect, but it allows for suitable public participation. No public meeting is perfect; however, staff have made the virtual format as accessible as possible.