



MEMO / NOTE DE SERVICE

To / Destinataire	Mayor and Members of Council	File/N° de fichier:
From / Expéditeur	Clara Freire, General Manager Community and Social Services	
Subject / Objet	Newcomer Reception System Update	Date: November 7, 2024

This memo responds to the direction from the July 10, 2024, Council meeting where staff were asked to provide further review and analysis of lands, including federal parcels, as part of a broader effort to respond to irregular migration and to create a sustainable and permanent system of welcome, transitional housing and support services for migrants and asylum seekers arriving in Ottawa. The memo outlines the extensive process undertaken to identify land parcels for the development of a newcomer welcome and reception centre, as well as an analysis of different building methodologies used to determine the most feasible rapid-construction option. As a result of this extensive and phased analysis, the two sites selected for construction of the tensile membrane (sprung) structures are first 1645 Woodroffe Avenue and as required 40 Hearst Way.

BACKGROUND

In the past two years, Ottawa has experienced an unprecedented inflow of asylum seekers and refugee claimants into the city. For many of these individuals and families, the shelter system is the first place of refuge before finding more permanent housing options. While immigration falls within the federal government's jurisdiction, the City of Ottawa, through the Community and Social Services Department (CSSD) and the Strategic Initiatives Department (SI), has been working to pursue medium- to long-term housing options to respond to the demand for immediate and transitional housing and to alleviate pressure on our local shelter system resulting from this irregular migration.

There are currently 330 beds at temporary emergency overflow centres, two of which are operating out of City-owned recreation facilities, and approximately 600 single individuals staying in shelters are newcomers, which represents 60 per cent of shelter users.

Council has directed staff to exit the operation of Physical Distancing-Emergency Overflow Centres in City owned recreation facilities so that they can be returned to their intended

community use, while also continuing to ensure that everyone who needs access to a shelter bed is able to acquire one. This was re-iterated through the Council approved 2022 [Respite Services Sustainability Plan](#), the [2023 Integrated Transition to Housing Strategy](#) and subsequent [2024 Update](#), as well as a series of motions passed at the [November 22, 2023 Council meeting](#).

For over a year, the City, through the Community and Social Services Department (CSSD), has been in discussions with Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) to solicit federal funding to create a permanent and sustainable newcomer welcome and reception system in Ottawa to properly welcome and support asylum seekers and migrants. The proposed newcomer reception system has been designed to provide a multi-pronged approach to addressing the needs of newcomers by providing temporary accommodations in purpose-built reception and lodging centres that will include a soft landing with onsite settlement supports, as well as housing search and employment related services, followed by relocation to community-based transitional or permanent housing within 90 days of arrival at the reception centre. The focus of the newcomer reception system is supporting single adults to move to permanent housing and stability. Newcomer families are accommodated throughout the family shelter system. The needs of families are different from those of single adults and will be the subject of ongoing discussions with IRCC.

Working with community partners over the past year, the City has been able to increase capacity in the permanent emergency shelter and transitional housing systems. Between June 2023 and June 2024, 164 newcomer beds in transitional housing (with individualized case management) were added. Cornerstone Emergency Shelter for Women was permanently relocated and increased its capacity to 150 permanent beds and 15 overflow beds. This was made possible through capital and operating funding from both the federal Interim Housing Assistance Program (IHAP) and City of Ottawa.

Despite actions taken to date, the inflow of asylum seekers and migrants continues to overwhelm the emergency shelter system (including temporary overflow shelters operating out of City-owned recreation facilities). This system was not designed to provide the necessary support required to address the lived experience of many asylum seekers and promote successful settlement in Ottawa.

NEWCOMER RECEPTION SYSTEM PROPOSAL

To build on Ottawa's reputation as a welcoming community, in July 2024, the City of Ottawa submitted a proposal to IRCC to seek capital and operating funding for the implementation of a newcomer reception system. The proposal outlines the City's intent to partner with newcomer serving community agencies and social service agencies to implement a permanent and sustainable newcomer reception system that will provide tailored supports

for single asylum seekers and migrants to ensure they can successfully integrate into the community. The newcomer reception system will support multidisciplinary and multi-agency interventions to ensure successful transitions to long-term settlement, thereby alleviating pressure on the existing shelter system.

Key elements of the proposed newcomer reception system include:

- **Temporary lodging in a newcomer reception centre for up to 90 days**, with onsite settlement services provided by community agencies with settlement and immigration expertise. These services will include individualized case management and assistance with things such as documentation, applications/hearings for status, work permits, newcomer benefits, and housing.
- **Connections to community and health resources**, including system navigation for social service supports, culturally relevant trauma support resources, connection to education resources, transportation, and other referrals to religious or cultural community support groups.
- **Employment, interpretation and translation services, and language training** provided onsite at the reception centre.
- **Access to transitional housing and ongoing housing support.** As the reception centre is intended to be a short-term housing solution, newcomers who have not found housing will be provided with access to temporary transitional housing with ongoing services, to ensure newcomers can access and retain permanent housing.

Implementation of the newcomer reception system will be undertaken through a multi-pronged approach that could be operational by the end of Q4 2025. In addition to the system components outlined below, concurrent work is being done to create a service delivery model that is co-designed with community partners that are experts in immigration and settlement.

- **Transitional Housing Facilities (currently underway):** For the last couple of years, staff in Housing and Homelessness Services and Housing Solutions and Investments have reviewed over 200 public real estate listings for buildings having potential to be used as temporary shelter and/or transitional housing for newcomers and have undertaken countless targeted inquiries with community and public agency partners, including school boards and other levels of government, resulting in the exploration of over 60 facilities. In the end, the City is converting two facilities into transitional housing for newcomers. The existing transitional housing for families at the Taggart Family YMCA has been relocated to the Corkstown Transitional Housing Program

and the YMCA will be used to provide transitional housing for newcomers. Additionally, the City has acquired a former convent building at 1754 St. Joseph Boulevard that will be converted to transitional housing for newcomers. These two facilities will initially be used to accommodate asylum seekers currently staying in the City-operated overflow shelters in recreation facilities. Once the newcomer reception system is operational, these sites will accommodate new placements coming from the reception centre. These sites will be able to support up to 300 newcomers and will help facilitate the decommissioning of overflow emergency shelters operating out of City recreation facilities, which include the Heron Community Centre and the Bernard-Grandmaître Arena.

Transitional Housing Scattered Homes (end of 2024/early 2025): the City intends to facilitate the purchase of up to 20, 4 to 5-bedroom, homes throughout the community to be used as transitional housing to support up to 200 people at a time. During this phase, the City will ensure the sector has the necessary resources to support flow within the system.

- **Reception Centres (complete by end of 2025):** the City will purchase and construct semi-permanent structures for the purpose of establishing up to two newcomer reception centres, as needed, that could be operational by Q4 2025. These newcomer reception centres are intended to provide a more dignified option for newcomers who are currently sleeping on bunk beds in recreational facilities that have not been designed for human habitation.

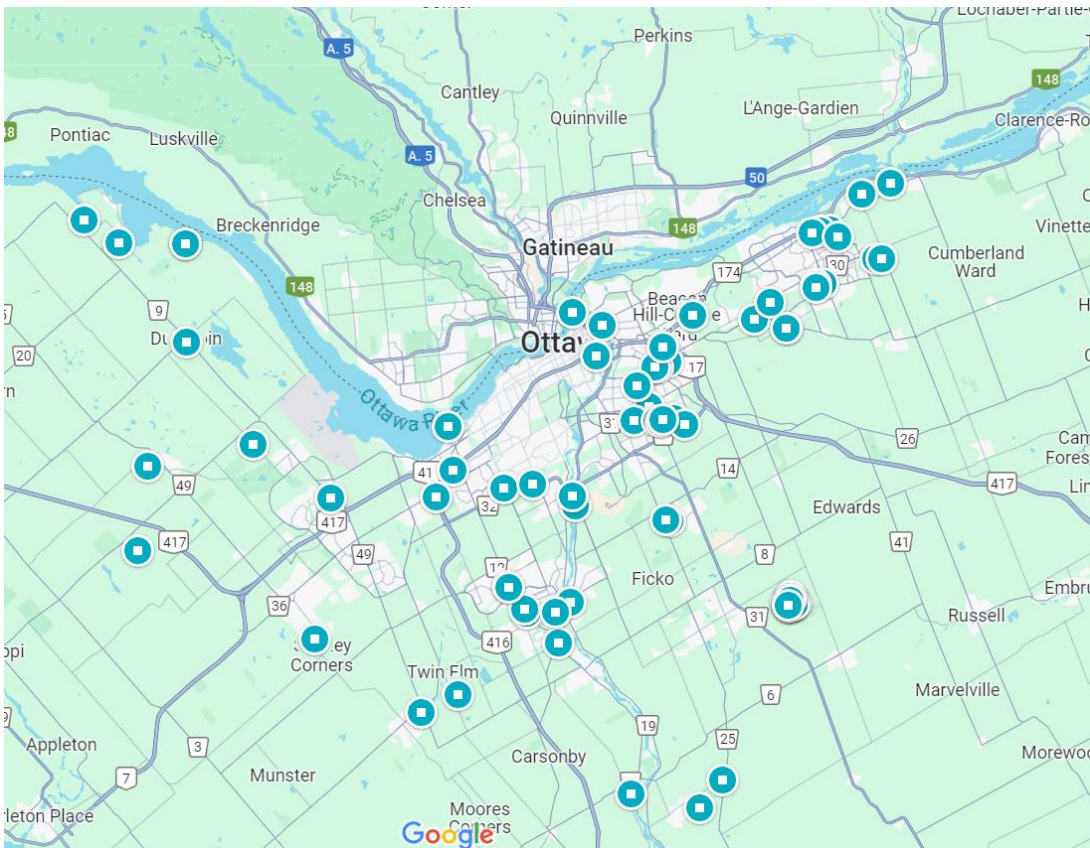
RECEPTION CENTRE SITE SELECTION

During the July 10, 2024, City Council discussion regarding the use of semi-permanent structures, staff were directed to provide further details on the land/site selection process. The process outlined below is presented in a linear and sequential form for clarity; however, some steps were iterative with considerations being revisited to ensure the best options were identified and prioritized.

City-owned lands were initially prioritized for this component of the newcomer reception system because negotiating leases or acquiring private land can be time-consuming processes that would cause delays to the project. Further, given consideration of the five per cent cost sharing requirement for the Interim Housing Assistance Program the land could be recognized as the City's contribution in the proposal.

Phase 1

To initiate the review of potential property options, staff identified City-owned land parcels across the city that met a minimum size requirement, have water and sewer infrastructure available, and that were not initially recognized as being committed to other priority initiatives like transit or affordable housing. In February 2024, Housing and Homelessness Services staff were provided an initial list of 92 potential properties to be reviewed for operational feasibility. The map below shows the locations of these 92 properties. Note, some parcels of land listed are adjacent to each other.



Phase 2

During Phase 2, staff reviewed the list of 92 properties and assessed them for operational feasibility based on the criteria outlined in the table below. As a result, 23 properties were analyzed further for potential use, while the remaining properties were eliminated from consideration. Appendix A includes the list of properties that were examined and removed from consideration during Phase 2 of the site selection process.

Criteria	Scoring	Result of property assessment
Availability of transit.	This was assessed by a “yes” or “no”. Properties were considered to have proximity to transit if there was a bus stop within 15 minutes walking distance and a bus option is scheduled at least once every 45 minutes from 7 am to 7 pm.	53% (49 properties) have limited to no access to transit.
Walkability to neighborhood amenities (social services programs, grocery stores, drugstores, etc.).	This was assessed as high, medium, or low. Properties were considered to have high walkability if an all-purpose or grocery store were within a 15-minute walk; medium if within 30 minutes and low if more than 30 minutes.	64% (59 properties) have low walkability.
Level of compatibility between the proposed development and the surrounding neighborhood’s context with respect to density, built form, height, and massing.	This was assessed by high, medium, or low. Low would indicate the property is not conducive to a context-sensitive development; medium would indicate a moderate level of compatibility; and high would indicate no compatibility issues.	13% (12 properties) had low compatibility.

In addition to the above-noted criteria, the list of potential properties was further refined by eliminating:

- Properties that are already committed to other projects (five properties or five per cent of the initial list of properties)
- Properties where other factors like site configuration or features of the site (e.g. environmentally protected lands, lack of critical infrastructure, or the lot configuration)

made development unfeasible. Of the initial list, 22 per cent (20 properties) had other factors which required them to be eliminated from consideration.

- It should also be noted that the initial list of options included properties that were greater than 0.3 acres. As project requirements were refined, the minimum property size was increased to 0.75 acres and 36 per cent (33 properties) did not meet the refined minimum lot requirement.

Phase 3

The review, assessment, and elimination of properties in phase two resulted in three properties being identified as being the most viable. The table below summarizes the top three properties.

No	Property	Status / Rationale for Inclusion or Removal
1a	1671 St. Laurent Boulevard (Ward 18)	Considered a top three site. St. Laurent is adjacent to light industrial uses and located on two major arterial roads.
1b	1661 St. Laurent Boulevard (Ward 18)	To be considered alongside 1671 St. Laurent Boulevard.
2	1005 & 1045 Greenbank Road (Ward 24)	Considered a top three site. Greenbank is bounded by the transitway, rail line and 4-lane arterial road. It is ideal for a temporary structure since the site cannot be redeveloped in the long-term as there are plans for an LRT maintenance yard in the future on portions of the site.
3	2060 Lanthier Drive (Ward 19)	Considered a top three site. Lanthier is bounded by a Loblaws and a Hydro substation. The area to the west of the site is being developed and developments will be connected via an extension of Vanguard Drive.

After identifying the top three sites, further due diligence was undertaken to confirm their viability, including the standard internal and utility circulation process per the Disposal of Real Property Policy, and it was determined that 2060 Lanthier Drive and 1671/1661 St-Laurent Boulevard needed to be removed from the list, as outlined below.

2060 Lanthier Drive

The site at 2060 Lanthier Drive is adjacent to the future extension of Vanguard Drive, which has not yet been completed. It was determined that constructing a semi-permanent structure on the site will push back the construction of the road and impact the planned residential development to the west and south of 2060 Lanthier Drive. As such, the site has been

removed from consideration for the newcomer reception centre because it will impede the planned Vanguard Road extension. Disposal of part of the property will facilitate cost sharing of the construction of the road, which has the potential to service around 4,500 new homes over the next ten years.

1671/1661 St-Laurent Boulevard

Upon further analysis of the sites at 1671 and 1661 St-Laurent Boulevard, multiple issues were identified that impact the viability of the site for the newcomer reception centre. Due to the lot configuration, engineering staff have indicated servicing for the site will be challenging. Additionally, these parcels contribute to a sanitary sewer catchment that is experiencing capacity issues and is associated with historical flooding. Lastly, the parcel at 1661 St-Laurent Boulevard is designated Industrial & Logistics (I&L) in the Official Plan. The intent of the Industrial & Logistics designation is to protect and preserve these lands for industrial type uses that cannot typically compete with rents of other uses in Hubs, Corridors or Neighbourhoods designations, have potential adverse impacts on adjacent sensitive uses, and require clustering of similar uses are located within I & L areas. Lands designated as I&L are considered employment areas under the Provincial Policy Statement. If 1661 St-Laurent Boulevard were to be developed alone, access would have to be provided across 1671 St-Laurent Boulevard to Innes Road, and it would have potential impacts on the developability of the surrounding industrial land.

Phase 4

Following the July Council meeting, and as a result of the site evaluation processes outlined above and the elimination of all but one site, the identification of additional sites for consideration and review was required. The following steps were taken to identify additional properties for consideration:

- In collaboration with Transit Services, three OC Transpo Park & Ride sites were identified.
- Through advocacy to the federal government and the National Capital Commission (NCC), a list of NCC properties was provided to the City for review. In collaboration with the NCC, one site was identified as being a viable option for a newcomer reception centre.
- Staff reached out to the Ottawa Carleton District School Board (OCDSB), who identified numerous sites, but none were considered viable in the short term.
- One additional vacant municipal site was also identified but did not meet the Phase 2 selection criteria outlined above.

Of the sites identified in Phase 4 of the site selection process, four were prioritized based on the criteria below. These criteria represent a refined analysis of operational considerations. Four out of five sites listed in the table below received the same total score, in which case, properties were prioritized based first on transit scores, then walkability, then Neighbourhood Equity Index.

- **Proximity to transit:** 4 points for being located within a 10-minute walk of a Light-Rail Transit (LRT) station; 3 points for being located within a 10-minute walk of a Bus-Rapid Transit (BRT) or Transitway station; 2 points for being located within a 10-minute walk of a bus stop that is not an LRT or BRT station.
- **Walkability to neighbourhood amenities:** 3 points for being within a 0-10-minute walk of grocery/all-purpose store; 2 points for being within a 10-20-minute walk of a grocery/all-purpose store; 1 point for being within a 20–30-minute walk of a grocery/all-purpose store.
- **Neighbourhood Equity Index** (a tool to assess and compare inequities at a neighbourhood level on factors impacting wellbeing): 2 points for a Dark Green (i.e. no equity concern) neighbourhood; 1 point for a Light Green (i.e. nominal equity concern) neighbourhood; 0 points for Yellow or Red (i.e. possible and strong equity concerns) neighbourhoods.

Information about the other sites identified during this phase but removed from consideration can be found in Appendix A. In addition to the four sites prioritized based on the criteria noted above, the parcel at 1005/1045 Greenbank Road (evaluated in phase 3) continues to be considered a top five site. It is important to note that all five sites shortlisted for the newcomer reception centre are not being made available indefinitely. The City is not currently in a position to divest of these properties, and they are therefore not suitable for any type of permanent housing development at this time. Staff will assess the need for the semi-permanent structures in five years to determine if they are still required to respond to the need for additional shelter space, or if they can be repurposed for other municipal uses or removed from the sites altogether.

No	Property	Status / Rationale for Inclusion or Removal
1	40 Hearst Way (part of Eagleson Park & Ride, Ward 23)	The site is located west of Eagleson Road and the Eagleson BRT station and is located within approximately 5 km of a future Stage 2 LRT station. The site currently serves as overflow parking for the Eagleson Park & Ride. Neighbourhood amenities, including a grocery store, are within a 15-minute walk from the site. This is considered a top five site.

2	3311 Woodroffe Avenue (part of Nepean Woods Park & Ride, Ward 24)	The site is a vacant portion of the Nepean Woods Park & Ride bounded by Woodroffe Avenue, the Transitway, and Crestway Drive. The site is adjacent to a BRT station, is located within approximately 5 km of the Limebank LRT station and is within a short walking distance to neighbourhood amenities, including a pharmacy and grocery store. This is considered a top five site.
3	160 Lees Avenue (Ward 17)	This is a vacant parcel located southeast of the Lees LRT station. The site has been held for years for the future Alta Vista Corridor outlined in the City's Transportation Master Plan. Preliminary functional design plans for the corridor show the eastern portion of the site will remain unencumbered by the future corridor and is slated for future residential development. From an operational perspective, the site is ideal for a newcomer reception centre because of its proximity to an LRT station. This is considered a top five site.
4	1645 Woodroffe Avenue (NCC, Ward 9)	This site is a portion of the NCC owned parcel at 1645 Woodroffe Avenue, for which the City has an existing lease for an underutilized football field. The Nepean Sportsplex and an OCDSB training facility are also located on this site. The site has a somewhat low level of walkability but has access to bus rapid transit along Woodroffe Avenue and is less than 5 km from future Stage 2 LRT station. From an operational perspective, the co-location of the Nepean Sportsplex on site could allow for additional programming space for the newcomer reception centre. This is considered a top five site.
5	1005/1045 Greenbank Road (Ward 24)	Carried forward from phase 3. This is considered a top five site.

Phase 5: Site Analysis and Concept Development

Stantec Consulting Ltd. (Stantec) was retained by the City to undertake an independent technical review of the five sites being considered to help inform site selection on the basis of engineering feasibility and site function. The scope of the work completed by Stantec included preliminary servicing evaluation, site plan concept development, functional servicing and grading, geotechnical and transportation planning review, and site civil opinion of probable cost for options.

Stantec undertook a preliminary evaluation of each site, which included an environmental review based on available environmental and geotechnical reports. Through this process, Stantec recommended staff not proceed with further review of 160 Lees Avenue due to significant environmental concerns identified. Additional evaluation of site conditions, risk assessment and/or risk management measures would be required to support further consideration of this site, which is not feasible given the timelines associated with the development of the newcomer reception centre.

The preliminary evaluation of the other four sites demonstrated there are no environmental concerns associated with 1645 Woodroffe Avenue and 3311 Woodroffe Avenue. The sites at 40 Hearst Way and 1005/1045 Greenbank Road will require records of site condition under Ontario Regulation 153/04 due to the change from a current (40 Hearst Way) and historical (1045/1005 Greenbank Road) community land use to a more sensitive (residential) land use.

Based on the analysis and concept planning completed by Stantec, and staff evaluation through phases 2-4 of the site selection process, the top two sites identified as being most viable are identified below:

Site 1: 1645 Woodroffe Avenue (NCC-owned parcel)

The site at 1645 Woodroffe Avenue is a portion of the Nepean Sportsplex complex located at Woodroffe Avenue and West Hunt Club Road. The portion of the site to be developed is bounded by the Ottawa Carleton District School Board (OCDSB) Confederation Education Centre to the west, West Hunt Club Road to the north, a wooded area to the east, and the Nepean Sportsplex to the south. The parcel is currently owned by the NCC.

The technical evaluation of the site undertaken by Stantec indicates there are no significant engineering, environmental, transportation, or planning issues with the site. The site has been deemed suitable for the construction of a newcomer reception centre. In addition to the technical analysis of the site, Stantec has also provided a pre-construction opinion of probable costs for the engineering site works. A Class D estimate for 1645 Woodroffe Avenue indicates the total cost is \$3.5 million, which includes a 25 per cent contingency per City requirements for a Class D estimate.

Engineering considerations

An analysis of available wastewater and water servicing for the site indicates there are no downstream wastewater constraints for the public sewers and adequate water supply is available through the private watermain on site. Additional analysis of the private sanitary sewer capacity is required; however, has not been identified as a major concern. No issues with stormwater management on site were identified, and the preliminary geotechnical analysis has determined the underlying soils are suitable for the development.

Environmental considerations

The analysis undertaken by Stantec did not identify any major environmental concerns on site.

Transportation considerations

Access to the site will be provided from the existing access from Woodroffe Avenue. Sidewalks connect the site to the existing multi-use pathway running through the site, and to West Hunt Club Road and Woodroffe Avenue. Access to bus rapid transit is available on Woodroffe Avenue at the entrance to the site. Cycling facilities are accommodated onsite and connect to the Woodroffe Avenue and West Hunt Club Road bike lanes and existing multi-use pathways in the area.

Planning considerations

The site is currently zoned RI4 – Rural Institutional Zone, Subzone 4. Within the RI4 zone, a shelter is a permitted use. As the site is owned by the NCC, the development is subject to the Federal Land Use Design and Transaction Approval (FLUDTA) process.

Operational considerations

This site is served by frequent bus service along Woodroffe Avenue, which connects to the Transitway in front of the site. It is strategically located within three kilometres of the City's Employment and Social Service Centre (West Office), and all-purpose stores are located within the required walking radius per the evaluation criteria noted earlier in the memo.

The large size of the site will provide flexibility through the refined design phase of the project to ensure all operational needs are met in ideal configurations and allows for additional outdoor amenities space for clients. The co-location of the site with other community facilities also presents the opportunity for programming synergies and is ideal for future repurposing of the structure, if no longer needed, to serve community and/or recreational functions.

The proposed structure is considered compatible with the surrounding density, built form, height, and massing.

Site 2: 40 Hearst Way (part of Eagleson Park & Ride)

The site at 40 Hearst Way is located on the western side of the Eagleson Park & Ride lot in Kanata. The site is bounded by Hearst Way to the south, a commercial plaza to the west, the Highway 417 exit ramp to the north and Eagleson Drive and the remainder of the Eagleson Park & Ride to the east.

The technical evaluation of the site indicates there are no significant engineering, environmental, transportation, or planning issues with the site. The site has been deemed suitable for the construction of a newcomer reception centre. In addition to the technical analysis of the site, Stantec has also provided a pre-construction opinion of probable costs for the engineering site works. A Class D estimate for 40 Hearst Way indicates the total cost is \$1.9 million, which includes a 25 per cent contingency per City requirements for a Class D estimate.

Engineering considerations

An analysis of available wastewater and water servicing for the site indicates there are no wastewater constraints and there is adequate municipal water supply to service the proposed structure. No stormwater management issues were identified, as the site is currently a largely impervious surface so there will be minimal change between the pre- and post-development conditions on site. A preliminary geotechnical assessment has determined the underlying soils are suitable for the proposed development.

Environmental considerations

The analysis undertaken by Stantec did not identify any major environmental concerns on site. A Record of Site Condition may be required for the proposed development.

Transportation considerations

Vehicular access to the site is proposed to be provided via a new access from Hearst Way and the existing accesses to the Park & Ride. Pedestrian access to the site can be provided via Hearst Way and Eagleson Road. There is an existing pedestrian connection from the site to the Eagleson transit station that will be maintained. While there are no specific cycling facilities within the site nor along Eagleson Road, there is a paved shoulder along Hearst Way and a path along Katimavik Road, which connects to Hearst Way. The park and ride lot on the west side of Eagleson Road has not been fully used by transit customers for several years, making it a feasible location for the temporary structure. With the remaining spaces in this lot in addition to all the spaces in the main lot on the east side of Eagleson, there is a great deal of room for OC Transpo to welcome additional customers. Customers will still have access to the west side lot and to the frequent bus service provided from Eagleson to the O-Train connection at Tunney's Pasture.

Planning considerations

The site is currently zoned IL1[1438] – Light Industrial, Subzone 1, subject to urban exception 1438. The proposed development can be designed to comply with the existing performance standards within the IL1 zone. However, the existing zone for the site does not include 'shelter' as a permitted use so a rezoning is required for the use. Further design refinements may impact compliance with applicable performance standards, which would be considered as part of a rezoning application. Section 4.2 of the City's Official Plan includes a policy that recognizes that emergency and transitional shelters are a key component of the

housing continuum, and through the Zoning By-law, emergency shelters and transitional shelters shall be permitted in all urban designations and zones. The City's new comprehensive Zoning By-law will include provisions that align with this Official Plan policy. The rezoning for this development will bring the zoning for the site in alignment with this Official Plan policy.

Operational considerations

This site has access to Bus Rapid Transit and is within walking distance to community amenities such as grocery stores. These are key operational requirements to complement the supports to be provided to clients on site. The proposed structure is considered compatible with the surrounding density, built form, height, and massing.

BUILDING METHOD ANALYSIS

Housing & Homelessness Services and the Realty Initiatives & Development unit have been actively exploring private market opportunities for facilities that can be purchased and/or leased to meet current system needs and have found that available options will not be sufficient to meet the required demand in the necessary timelines. In addition to the new development discussed in this memo, the City and partners are converting an office to transitional housing at 230 Queen Street, and the City has purchased a former convent at 1754 St. Joseph Boulevard for transitional housing for newcomers.

The concept of using a semi-permanent structure for the reception centre component of the newcomer reception system was first introduced in the [Integrated Transition to Housing Strategy](#), approved by Council in July 2023. Furthermore, on November 22, 2023, Council approved a motion brought forward by the Emergency Shelter Crisis Taskforce directing staff to "actively pursue the option of a Sprung Structure or other semi-permanent facility". An immediate solution is required to establish a reception centre and have it operational as early as possible in 2025.

In early 2024, in response to Council's direction to staff to pursue the development a semi-permanent facility, staff undertook an assessment of rapid construction mechanisms including federal mobile health centres, individual sleeping cabins, tensile membrane structures (e.g. Sprung Structure), and modular complexes (similar to school portables). This analysis found that tensile membrane structures are the best option to meet project requirements. The initial project costs identified by staff were anticipated to be comparable to the other rapid construction methods, while ongoing maintenance and lifecycle costs were anticipated to be lower. Additionally, the use of a tensile membrane structure will allow us to meet project timelines, as it has been demonstrated to have the shortest construction timelines. This information was described in a [memo to Council](#) dated July 9, 2024.

In August 2024, Colliers Project Leaders was retained to complete a further analysis comparing tensile membrane structures (aka tensile fabric structures) to mass timber construction (specifically the methodology used by Element 5), modular construction, and traditional construction to determine differences in construction timelines and cost to construct. The analysis provided by Colliers points to tensile membrane structures remaining the preferred building mechanism given timelines, costs, programming requirements, and future adaptability as service needs evolve or it is determined the structure can be moved or converted for a different municipal use.

Mass timber versus tensile membrane structures

The comparison between tensile membrane structures and mass timber construction showed that tensile membrane structures cost \$30 per square foot less than mass timber, which would equate to \$900,000 for a 30,000 square foot building, which is the approximate size of structure required based on programming requirements. As well, tensile membrane structures can be constructed within 12 months versus 18 months for mass timber buildings. Another important consideration is future adaptability of the structure. Tensile membrane structures can be disassembled, reconfigured and repurposed, or relocated to another site, while mass timber buildings are not typically designed and constructed to be disassembled and relocated. A tensile membrane structure was constructed in two months at the Ottawa Hospital Civic Campus to support the development of an Offload Medicine Transition Unit, which demonstrates the rapid nature of this building mechanism. The report indicates that there are no Ottawa-based examples of completed mass timber projects by Element 5.

Modular construction versus tensile membrane structures

The comparison between tensile membrane structures and modular construction showed that tensile membrane structures cost around \$15 per square foot up to \$145 per square foot less than modular, depending on the type of modular construction utilized. The Colliers report provided an analysis of two types of modular construction: combination of precast panels and heavy gauge steels studs, and a combination of structural steel and cold-formed steel modular construction with concrete base. The timelines provided in the Colliers report for both tensile membrane structures and modular building mechanisms are comparable at around 12 months; however, local experience with modular builds has demonstrated a 12-month timeline for construction is unrealistic. One local modular project at 399-401 Bell Street South took two years to construct. The interior space of tensile membrane structures can be easily reconfigured in the future. The interior space configuration for modular buildings needs to be determined in advance as interior layout is dependent on the size of the modules, unless using a combination of traditional and modular construction, which would increase project timelines. Both structure types can be disassembled and relocated; however, this would need to be factored in during design of the modular building.

Based on the findings of this study, and previous analysis completed, the tensile membrane structure remains the recommended building mechanism to deliver on operational needs, project timelines and budgets.

NEXT STEPS

As per the findings outlined in this memo, staff will be proceeding with development of tensile membrane structure first 1645 Woodroffe Avenue and followed by 40 Hearst Way, beginning with one site and then advancing to the other, as needed.

In order to finalize the newcomer reception centre project, staff will:

- Advance the required planning applications and will work with the NCC to obtain the necessary approvals for 1645 Woodroffe Avenue.
- Staff expect a zoning report for 40 Hearst Way to be brought forward to Planning and Housing Committee and Council in January 2025.
- Site Plan Control applications for the two sites will be submitted in early 2025.
- Community notification and consultation will form part of the planning application process to solicit feedback on site design. This consultation process does not consider the end users, or the type of structure used for the proposed development.
- Staff anticipate building permit applications for the structures will be submitted by end of Q1 2025.
- Moving through the procurement process to issue a design-build contract.

Staff will work with the Ward Councillors for the sites identified herein to provide additional information about the project and support any public engagement that the Ward Councillor would like to advance.

Following the issuance of this memorandum with final site and building mechanisms confirmed, Staff will seek a formalized letter of commitment for funding from IRCC the Newcomer Reception System.

Based on high level project timelines currently available, the Newcomer Reception Centres aim to be operational in Q4 2025 as needed. Work continues on the other identified elements of the Newcomer Reception System, including the transition of single adult clients to the YMCA, operationalization of 1754 St. Joseph as transitional housing, and the procurement of 20 scattered homes to operate as transitional housing.

Sincerely,

Clara Freire
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Senior Leadership Team
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