

May 31, 2011 Budget & Corporate Services Committee: BurlingtonGreen Delegation

Re: Draft Strategic Land Acquisition Policy. ([L-17-11](#), [Appendix A](#))

Chair Sharman, Mayor Goldring, Members of Committee & Staff:

BurlingtonGreen appreciates this opportunity to comment on the Draft Strategic Land Acquisition Policy. Some of you may be aware that BurlingtonGreen addressed the issue of the Strategic Land Acquisition fund for at risk greenspace in the past along with related comments about identifying and protecting our city's green spaces as part of the Parks Master Plan document.

Generally, we are very supportive of much of the content of this report. However, noting this is presented as a DRAFT document, we would like to respectfully offer the following input for your thoughtful consideration:

1. The reference to Strategic Plan 3.1.b addresses "at risk or "environmentally significant green spaces...". The Draft SLAP with its much wider scope, waters down the initial objective of supporting green space at risk. There does not appear to be a priority included for such areas in the Draft SLAP and yet there should be as of course these areas can be considered irreplaceable. Unless they are acquired and protected, they are at risk of being lost forever to development.

Appendix point 7 lists the proposed criteria staff would use as part of the SLAP in determining acquisition priorities and we believe greenspace protection should not only be added to the list but ranked as the top priority. Additionally, the report does not comment specifically on how competing land acquisitions would be handled? If multiple purchase opportunities presented themselves at a given time, with the limited Strat funds available, how would the properties be assessed /compared given the proposed criteria? Again, emphasizing the need for environmental areas that cannot be replaced, deemed top priority.

2. The report's introductory Discussion indicates the plan "*will allow the City to be more strategic, responsive and prepared for future land acquisition requirements...*"

Given that Burlington is fast approaching build out and therefore we can expect pressures for land development to be at their peak, we suggest rather than a "responsive" approach, a proactive approach to be appropriate and necessary. As suggested back in December 2009, we recommend the COB create a greenspace masterplan where a thorough inventory of green space is mapped regardless of land ownership and like the City of Ottawa, rank the spaces as primary", and "Supporting" & Contributing" to produce a more complete picture of the overall landscape. Ottawa looked at distribution, equity and accessibility to greenspace within communities.

http://www.ottawa.ca/residents/planning/master_plans/gmp/index_en.html Complete mapping and inventory of Burlington's inventory of ALL green spaces together with a strategic plan to acquire any that are deemed beneficial in the support of the city's goals and objectives to create a sustainable future would be considered to be a more proactive approach.

3. Purpose # 2 Greenlands includes "identify valley lands and creek blocks that are not likely to be subject to future development, however, we would argue that the plan should include green space that could be developed in the future as well.

4. Under "Environmental Matters", it suggests the policy "include" environmentally sensitive land etc however, as stated earlier, we suggest these areas should be the primary focus of the SLAP, not simply included. Stating this will ensure clarity of the plan's purpose for current and future members of Council.

5. Finally, ongoing, meaningful consultation with the public and relevant stakeholder groups is essential. The proposed city wide green space masterplan with ranking for acquisition purposes would go a long way in outlining the long-term vision and help to minimize surprise occurrences of at risk property sales.

A relevant quote that our Association often references is:

***"In the end our society will be defined not only by what we create,
but by what we refuse to destroy"***

(J.C. Sawhill - President, The Nature Society)

An effective, accountable SLAP with a focus of protecting our remaining green spaces can be a vital tool in supporting this vision.

Thank you for your time.

Amy Schnurr
Executive Director,
BurlingtonGreen Environmental Association