



PORT COLBORNE

MEDIA RELEASE

Affordable housing a top priority as one in four residents at risk of homelessness

Port Colborne, ON (Feb. 17, 2021) – Affordable housing is a top priority for the City of Port Colborne as one in four residents are at risk of homelessness.

At a virtual Public Meeting held last night with Port Colborne City Council to review a rezoning application to support an affordable housing development at Chestnut Park, representatives from Port Cares and the community were in attendance to share information and express their viewpoints.

“For years there has been a shortage of affordable housing in Port Colborne and it’s only getting worse,” said Christine Clark Lafleur, Executive Director, Port Cares. “One in four residents is at risk of homelessness because they are spending more than 30 per cent of their net income on housing. And of the one in four at risk of homelessness, 50 per cent are over the age 55. Seniors are at a higher risk of experiencing homelessness due to marital or relationship separation, illness, cost of medications and job loss.”

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. One of the solutions, as announced last year, is the City’s donation of Chestnut Park to Port Cares for the purpose of building affordable housing units.

“We have an opportunity to support members of our community and give them a safe place to call home,” said Mayor Bill Steele. “After reviewing several options, it was determined Chestnut Park would benefit the community by being repurposed and redeveloped. Its important residents know the City will be moving the park equipment to the adjacent Lockview Park. Upon moving the equipment, the City will work with the neighbourhood to improve Lockview Park by investing in new amenities that will make it more modern and accessible for the entire community to enjoy.”

According to Niagara Regional Housing, the average wait time for individuals seeking social housing in Port Colborne is as follows:

- Seniors aged 55 and older looking for a one-bedroom unit: five years
- Singles aged 16 – 54 looking for a one-bedroom unit: 11 years
- Households with dependents looking for a two or three-bedroom unit: four years

“With more than 150 individuals and families actively in search of affordable rental housing, there is a need within this community,” said Christine Clark Lafleur. “When we announced we were building affordable housing units in partnership with the City, we received more than 300 calls from local residents asking to be put on a wait list for tenancy.”

Residents were also present at the virtual meeting and expressed concerns regarding location of the housing units and the removal of Chestnut Park. City staff addressed these concerns and provided

clarification regarding relocating the playground equipment at Chestnut Park to nearby Lockview Park. The City's goal is to create premier parks by investing in new amenities to make them more modern, enjoyable, and accessible for residents and visitors. City staff will seek public consultation from residents in the spring to better understand the needs within the community to make Lockview Park and other parks in the area an enhancement to Port Colborne neighbourhoods.

With more than 30 residents bringing forward concerns and questions at the meeting, City staff will compile a questions and answers report that will be available publicly on the City's website by March 2, 2021. A frequently asked questions document will also be created and published online and updated throughout the planning process. Taking into consideration resident concerns and City staff recommendations, a report will be brought to Council in the next several weeks. At this point, Council will decide if they approve the construction of the affordable housing unit at Chestnut Park.

City staff will continue to work with Port Cares on next steps in the planning and development process and establish a due diligence period to allow Port Cares time to complete design work and studies, as well as secure funding grants and project financing. This will be outlined in a staff report and a proposed Memorandum of Understanding between the City and Port Cares that is on the February 22, 2021 Council meeting agenda.

About City of Port Colborne

Located on the south coast of the scenic Niagara Region, Niagara's Port of Call has found the perfect balance – successful industrial and commercial sectors, comfortable and scenic residential areas, white sand beaches, unique culinary choices, the world class Sugarloaf Marina, fishing, golfing, trails, shopping districts along the historic Welland Canal and an energized festival and entertainment scene that includes live theatre – truly a community that adds to the overall Niagara Experience.

About Port Cares

Port Cares - Port Colborne Community Association for Resource Extension - was established as a not-for-profit registered charity in 1986. Port Cares mission is to help those in our community with social and economic needs improve their quality of life. As one of Canada's first and most comprehensive wrap-around service community hubs, Port Cares provides training, literacy, employment, housing, homelessness prevention, youth justice, child development and parenting support services as well as basic needs services including a food bank, meal program, crisis intervention to enhance the quality of life for individuals in Port Colborne, Wainfleet and the surrounding area. To learn more about our organization please visit www.portcares.ca.

Donations to Port Cares can now be made electronically through e-transfer donations@portcares.ca or by logging onto www.portcares.ca and clicking on the DONATE button.

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