

UPCOMING DATES

MARCH

- 24 Brampton Council, 9:30 a.m.
Durham Regional Council, 9:30 a.m.
Georgina Council (Public Planning), 7:00 p.m.
Halton Regional Council, 9:30 a.m.
Hamilton General Issues Committee, 9:30 a.m.
Mississauga Council, 9:30 a.m.
Richmond Hill Council, 9:30 a.m.
Richmond Hill Council Public Meeting, 7:30 p.m.
- 25 Peel Regional Council, 9:30 a.m.
York Regional Council, 8:30 a.m.
- 29 Clarington General Government Committee, 9:30 a.m.
Hamilton General Issues Committee, 9:30 a.m.
King Council/Committee of the Whole, 6:00 p.m.
Mississauga Planning & Development Committee, 6:00 p.m.
Newmarket Council, 1:00 p.m.
Oakville Council, 6:30 p.m.
Oshawa Council, 9:30 a.m.
Scugog Council, 6:30 p.m.
Whitby Public Meeting, 7:00 p.m.
- 30 Aurora Council, 7:00 p.m.
Caledon Council, 6:00 p.m.
Markham Development Services Committee, 9:30 a.m.
Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Planning, 7:00 p.m. (if required)
- 31 Brampton Committee of Council, 9:30 a.m.
Georgina Council, 9:00 a.m.
Hamilton Council, 9:30 a.m.



■ PORT COLBORNE TO CONVEY CHESTNUT PARK FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROJECT

PARTNERING IN AFFORDABILITY



Marc Mitanis

The City of Port Colborne has partnered with local non-profit poverty reduction organization **Port Cares** to deliver a low-rise affordable housing project on the site of a local park. City staff, the local councillor, and the mayor say the project will help address the critical need for affordable housing in the city, where the social housing wait time currently exceeds four years.

In December 2020, Port Colborne city council voted to declare the public lands at Chestnut Park —located just east of the Welland Canal—surplus, to convey the property to Port Cares for \$1, and to develop a renewal plan for the adjacent Lockview Park. The playground equipment currently located at Chestnut Park will be moved to Lockview Park. The Chestnut Park property has not yet been rezoned to allow the affordable housing project.

Port Cares is a community organization striving to reduce poverty in the city by providing social and housing supports. City of Port Colborne strategic initiatives manager **Gary Long** said the partnership was a natural fit.

“Port Cares is an organization in our city that has a track record of helping those in a lower socio-economic profile,” Long told *NRU*. “It certainly made sense for us to partner with them.”

The low-rise affordable housing project will accommodate 30 to 40 one- and two-bedroom units. The city says the intent of the project is to create affordable housing for independent seniors over the age of 55 and for single-parent families with children. The units will only be available to Port Colborne residents.

According to **Niagara Regional Housing**, the average wait time for seniors aged 55 and

older seeking a one-bedroom affordable housing unit in Port Colborne is five years. For single residents aged 16 to 54, the wait time climbs to 11 years. Households with dependents looking for an affordable two- or three-bedroom unit are faced with a wait time of four years. In Port Colborne, one in four residents is at risk of homelessness because at least 30 per cent of their net income must be spent on housing. Half of those at risk of homelessness are over the age of 55.

“It’s a no-brainer that we have housing issues,” Port Colborne ward 2 councillor **Angie Desmarais** told *NRU*. “In Canada, every municipality is facing huge challenges with trying to get adequate housing for residents, and Port Colborne is not any different. But we do have a unique situation here. Port Colborne has unfortunately been able to display the

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PARTNERING IN AFFORDABILITY

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

highest core housing need in Niagara Region for a few years running—for seniors and single people in particular.”

Port Colborne mayor **Bill Steele** said the project gives seniors an affordable opportunity to downsize from their current residences.

“Seniors in our community are looking for ways to get out of their house, where they may not be able to look after it anymore,” Steele told *NRU*. “But they might not be able to afford some of the apartments that may be within the community; this gives them an opportunity to retire and [to] be able to live off the amount that they sold their house for.”

Steele said partnerships like the one between Port Colborne and Port Cares could serve as a blueprint for future affordable housing projects in the city.

“We’ll look for these types of partnerships with other non-profits within the municipality, whether they could fit another municipally-owned property, or we can have negotiations with private enterprise that own property that they may want to sell to become a partner in something like this,” Steele told *NRU*.

Long said the city would like to see more private-sector investment in affordable housing construction.

“I think city council is very interested in looking at other possibilities and opportunities where we can partner with others—whether it’s Port Cares, Niagara Regional Housing, or maybe a local church who may have some surplus property that could be made available,” Long told *NRU*. “I think we can build on the success of this

partnership, and use it as a blueprint or a template for other affordable housing projects in the future. Any time like-minded organizations come together for a common purpose, a lot can be achieved, and a lot can be realized for the public interest.”

Long said Port Colborne is currently exploring policy options and potential financial incentives through community improvement programs (CIPs) to spur the development of affordable housing. The city currently lacks affordable housing

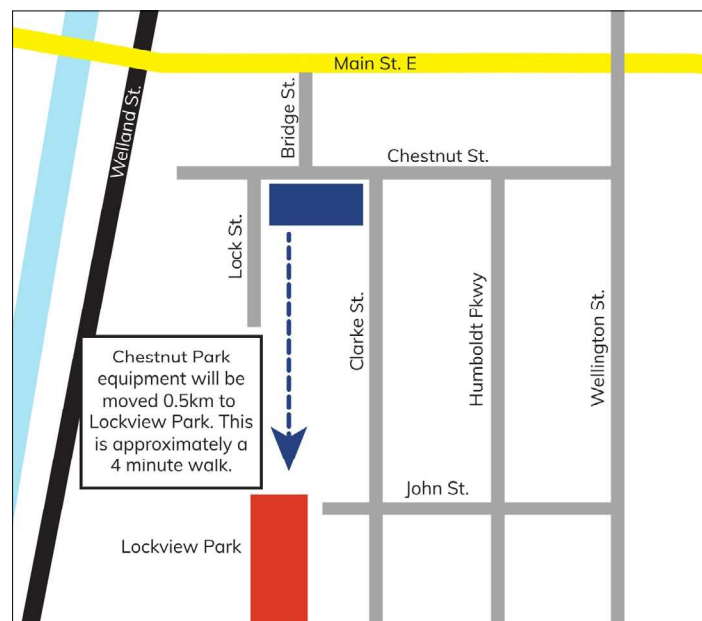
policies in its CIPs, but will be retaining a consultant this year to conduct a comprehensive review and update of the city’s CIP incentive programs and to make recommendations on possible new CIPs that the city could consider. The city says funding has been approved to complete an affordable housing strategy, and that having CIP policies which incentivize the development of affordable housing would be a key part of the strategy.

The playground equipment currently located at Chestnut Park will be moved to the adjacent Lockview Park. Reserve funds in the 2021 municipal budget have been set aside for potential infrastructure improvements to Lockview Park.



Photo (left to right) showing Port Colborne ward 2 councillor Angie Desmarais, Port Cares executive director Christine Clark Lafleur, Port Colborne mayor Bill Steele, and Port Colborne strategic initiatives manager Gary Long at Chestnut Park. The city is donating Chestnut Park to non-profit agency Port Cares to facilitate the construction of a low-rise affordable housing development with approximately 30 to 40 one- and two-bedroom units.

SOURCE: CITY OF PORT COLBORNE



Map showing the location of existing playground equipment at Chestnut Park in Port Colborne. The equipment will be moved to nearby Lockview Park in order to accommodate a low-rise affordable housing development on the site of Chestnut Park. Port Colborne staff say the residential units will help alleviate the demand for affordable housing in the city.

SOURCE: CITY OF PORT COLBORNE