



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ's)
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE VIEUX-VERGER PROJECT

ACQUISITION OF THE VIEUX-VERGER

1. Why does the Town want to purchase the Vieux-Verger land?

The Town of Sutton wishes to purchase the Vieux-Verger land to promote the development of a financially accessible residential project, offering a mix of housing that will meet the growing needs of the community. The exceptional geographic location of the land and its competitive cost represent a tremendous opportunity to increase the supply of housing near the heart of the village while protecting nature and improving our network of walking trails.

Increasingly in Quebec, it is recognized that municipalities must intervene to ensure that housing projects meet the need for affordable housing while respecting the environment and architectural character. The Vieux Verger project is intended to be an ecological and community-based project that will not only meet the needs of future residents, but of the entire community.

It is important to note that the Town has no speculative intent with this land. Its goal is to sell the land at no profit in order to provide the future occupants of the units with the lowest possible land costs.

2. What will be the benefits of the land acquisition for the population of Sutton?

The Town's acquisition of the land will allow for the construction of affordable housing to accommodate middle-class families and workers in the local tourism industry. In addition, the Town will ensure that all of the site's sensitive natural environments (wetlands, woodlands) are protected and that the network of walking trails is enhanced.

This densification project within the urban perimeter will make it possible to welcome young families who will contribute to the economic, social and community vitality of our town.

3. What is the size and cost of the land?

The land is 21 acres in size, some of which is wetlands and woodlands that will be protected. The negotiated agreement for its acquisition is \$1,409,000, which is a very reasonable cost considering the current real estate market.

4. How was the cost of the land determined?

The amount of the agreement was based on the fair market value (FMV) of the land, which was estimated by a firm of chartered appraisers on behalf of the Town of Sutton. On the real estate market, this land would be worth much more.



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5. What are the planned acquisition steps?

- November 2, 2022: Council voted by a majority to authorize the signing of an [offer to purchase lots](#) 4,848,122, 6,157,855 and 6,157,856, located on Seymour Street (Vieux-Verger); this agreement is conditional on the approval of a borrowing by-law by the citizens.
- April 5, 2023: Adoption by a majority vote of [Loan By-law number 323](#) entitled "By-law to decree an expense of \$1,570,896 and a loan of \$1,570,896 for the acquisition of lots 4,848,122, 6,157,855 and 6,157,856, located on Seymour Street";
- April 12, 2023: 1st public information meeting to present the design plan for the residential project
- April 13, 2023: posting of project information documents online
- April 13-19, 2023: Filing of citizen comments/questions on the project
- April 20, 2023: public notice of the date of the register and other details of the register. The number of signatories required will be indicated on the notice in accordance with *the Municipal Elections and Referendums Act*, in order to use current data, but is expected to be approximately 500;
- April 26, 2023: 2nd public meeting to answer questions received from citizens on the acquisition of the land and on the project as a whole.
- April 29, 2023: opening of the register allowing citizens to signify their opposition to the borrowing by-law, in accordance with the Act. If the required number of signatures is reached, Council will decide by resolution (at the May 3 meeting) to continue the process by holding a referendum vote or to abandon the acquisition project.

6. Who will pay for the loan and how much will it cost taxpayers?

As this is a project that benefits all citizens, this municipal expenditure of \$1,570,896 will be payable by all ratepayers over a 25-year period. The cost per ratepayer is determined at the time of the final expenditure, based on the number of ratepayers and the borrowing rate at that time. As an example, if the expenditure were made today, the cost would be \$28.08/year per homeowner for a property with an average value of \$468,093 (see [FAQs on Loan By-law Number 323](#)).

It is important to understand that the Town's goal is to resell this land, as quickly as possible, to a third party or parties who will be able to realize the Town's vision to provide affordable housing. Ultimately, the price of this resale will have to pay for the full costs paid by the Town.

It is also important to note that, over time, the Town will obtain additional tax revenues on a recurring basis over the life of this project.

7. What is the estimated cost of construction of the infrastructure required for the residential project and who will pay for it?

The cost of building the infrastructure was estimated in June 2022 by the Public Works and Capital Assets Department at \$2,000,000 (road, water, and sewer). As mentioned above, two possibilities are being considered: either the Town will build the infrastructure before the land is resold and the cost



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will be included in the sale price, or the land will be sold before the infrastructure is built and the future developer will be responsible for it.

8. What are the residual risks?

Given that the Town will not be building the residential project itself, the residual risks of the transaction are threefold:

- 1) The risk that the cost of the land may be too high on resale, although the acquisition was made based on the fair market value established by the certified appraiser. However, the value of the land remains attractive, given the comparisons on the open market.
- 2) The main risk is if the Town does not acquire the land because, in that case, the land could be acquired by one or more private owners who would build prestigious residences on the site and harm the chances of protecting all of the site's sensitive natural environments (wetlands, woodlands) and reserving one of the last remaining lots in the village core for a residential development that would be accessible and advantageous to the Suttonian community.
- 3) Another risk is to keep the Vieux Verger land longer than expected. On the other hand, the Fair Market Value (FMV) should increase at least with the rate of inflation and at most with the demand for available land for housing near the village core.

9. How long will the Town retain ownership of the Vieux-Verger property?

It is in the Town's best interest to keep the land for as short a time as possible. Specifically, the goal is to hold the land for a maximum of two years while this exciting project comes to fruition.

10. Will the Town be willing to sell the land for less than it paid for it if a buyer is not found within two years?

When the Town is ready to resell the land, the public will be notified, and the cost of the land sale will be publicly advertised. No sale will be made for less than the purchase price.

As for the price of the land, the loan by-law provides that the proceeds of the sale will be applied to the amount of the expenditure in order to repay the loan.

11. Why have there been no residential projects on this land in the past?

The private owners of the land faced major development obstacles in the form of road access and connection to municipal water and sewer services. Social acceptability of their project was also a major issue that stalled the project.

The Town has the legal means and infrastructure in place to address the issues of access and provision of required services.



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12. Why acquire this land when the Town owns another 5 acres of land near the Gagné Estate?

The 5-acre municipal land near the Gagné estate is located in an agricultural zone and is outside the urbanization perimeter of the Town of Sutton. Therefore, its development cannot be considered in the short or medium term.

13. How will the Town ensure the ongoing affordability of the units built?

This is the Town's biggest challenge. All models are being considered, including emerging business models such as dismemberment of ownership, NPO or trust models. The Town's goal is to avoid real estate speculation and to maintain some form of affordability of future housing over the long term.

14. Which buyer profiles will be targeted?

The Town's goal is to ensure a supply of housing for young families, workers in the tourism industry and people wishing to remain in Sutton when their current residence no longer meets their needs.

15. How will the Town select the developer(s)?

The Town of Sutton will first select the business model that best meets the objectives of affordability of housing in the long term. Then, in compliance with municipal laws, it may proceed by invitation on the basis of a performance booklet focused on the basic principles of the project (financial accessibility, environmental protection, sustainability of the business model). It will then select the most appropriate real estate developer(s).

16. Will the Town protect the wetlands on the property?

As announced and confirmed at the public meeting on Wednesday, April 12, all wetlands on the site will be protected. The residential development will occupy only 29% of the site.

17. Does the Town have any other land available for affordable housing within the Town?

The Town does not have any other land suitable for this type of affordable housing project. However, the Town does own a 5-acre parcel of land in the agricultural zone, located near the Gagné sector, which will have to be de-zoned before any construction can take place. Such a rezoning cannot be done in the short or medium term.

18. Is the Vieux-Verger project the best way to provide access to affordable housing?

At this time, this project is the best and fastest way to meet the housing needs in Sutton. The Town's involvement at this level would ensure the feasibility of the project and allow for a good number of homes to be built in the coming years, while keeping the community's interests at the heart of the project.



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19. Why not impose a land reserve on the land rather than purchase it?

The Town could have imposed a land reserve on the property, i.e., prohibiting all construction on the property while it considered its acquisition. However, the Town had already considered whether to acquire the land and this step was unnecessary.

20. What is the concept of the residential project?

The Town has commissioned CB Architect to develop a [design plan](#) for the project, based on its vision of a community-based and environmentally friendly project. This plan was unveiled at a public meeting on April 12, 2023, and a second meeting will be held on April 26 to discuss the financial elements.

The design plan calls for the construction of 81 units of various sizes, including multi-units, duplexes, mini-homes, and micro-homes, as well as a community building and gardens, an outdoor amphitheatre, a children's play area, a bike path and landscaped trails.

21. Does the Town need to own property to have control over future construction?

The Town is not required to own the site to ensure compliance with construction criteria, which can be controlled through regulatory tools. However, the highest level of control over a site is achieved through ownership of the site, as this allows the Town to meet its objectives, which include ensuring social acceptability of the project, preservation of sensitive natural features and affordability of housing.

22. Isn't the terrain of the Vieux-Verger too rough?

Despite a certain difference in level on the site, the land is relatively flat and allows for the implementation of the project presented at the public meeting on Wednesday, April 12.

23. How will access to the Vieux-Verger site be provided? What are the criteria that led to the choice of access to the site?

Access to the residential project will be via Cimetière and Larrivée streets. The exit will be via Seymour and Mountain streets. In addition, active mobility and emergency services access will be provided via Domaine-Mon-Louis Street and Chemin des Tournesols.

In selecting the accesses, the Town considered the following: reducing the road base, reducing traffic, limiting automobile use, reducing GHG emissions, encouraging active mobility, optimizing infrastructure (water, sewer, roads, electricity, etc.), reducing congestion at the intersections of Cemetery, Mountain, and Main Streets, and protecting the riparian buffer, pathways, and the creek.



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24. Will the housing units be for sale or rent?

The Town is not in a position to answer this question at this time. As noted above, the Town is evaluating all business models to meet its housing affordability objectives.

25. Who should I contact to indicate my interest in purchasing (or leasing) a unit?

The Town is not in a position to answer this question at this time. Information will be made public in due course.

26. What are the associated costs (other than land acquisition) that the Town may have to pay between now and the resale of the land?

As previously mentioned, all project development costs will be included in the land sale price in due course. Among them, certain expert opinions to be paid by the Town will be necessary for the realization of the project. Also, the cost of building the infrastructure (street, water, and sewer) will be included in the sale price if it is completed prior to the sale, unless the land is sold without infrastructure.

27. What is the purpose of the registry?

In accordance with *the Act respecting elections and referendums in municipalities*, the register allows citizens who oppose the borrowing by-law to purchase the Vieux-Verger property to signify their opposition. According to the public notice that will be published on April 20, a certain number of signatures will be required (approximately 500) which, if reached, will lead Town Council to decide by resolution, at the next Council meeting on May 3, whether to proceed with a referendum vote or to abandon the project to acquire the land.

The Town is confident that, by holding two public meetings and thanks to the answers given in this questionnaire, the citizens of Sutton will have enough information to make an informed decision on this innovative, promising, and necessary project.